

13th July 2021

**SUBMISSION from Clare Public Participation Network (PPN) to the
Consultation on a National Action Plan Against Racism**

About Clare PPN:

Clare PPN is a network of 318 community & voluntary, environmental and social inclusion groups from Clare. Each PPN has three 'Colleges' which organise the member groups in terms of their interests and activities – these are environmental college, social inclusion college and community and voluntary college. Clare PPN exists to facilitate the formal participation by the community sector in Clare County Council's decision making structures and to serve as a support and information sharing network for the Community and Voluntary Sector in Clare. It is funded jointly by the Department of Rural and Community Development and Clare County Council but is autonomous and its activities are directed by its members through an elected secretariat.

This submission contains the views and recommendations in regard to the New National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPAR) of those of our Social Inclusion College member groups who have participated in a series of workshops, surveys and public meetings on issues relating to Social Inclusion, Racism and Discrimination. Our participants welcomed the interim report of the Anti-Racism Committee and the Consultation Document and are largely in agreement with the recommendations and measures identified in both. Further to this we have engaged with the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination's Concluding Observations on Ireland issued in 2019 and recommend that CERD is incorporated into Irish Law and that Ireland's reservation to Article 4 is removed.

Our submission here does not seek to repeat the interim report's recommendations but rather to add others, comment on those and the processes through which they might be achieved and to note particular local experience in County Clare.

In relation to the formation of a new NAPAR our consultation participants were concerned with 5 distinct levels of racism in Ireland:

1. Systemic Racism – deliberate or unintentional racism built into our structures and systems which prevents or diminishes the realisation of the human, social, cultural and economic rights of those affected.
2. Institutional Racism – where institutions of the state and public bodies including An Garda Síochána and Local Authorities conduct their work or provide their services in ways which perpetuate racism, discrimination and cause trauma for ethnic minority groups.

3. Political Racism – where elected representatives, political organisations and registered political parties act in ways which exacerbate or stoke racism.
4. Interpersonal Racism – where members of an ethnic minority or racialised groups are subjected to personal racism or discrimination in their communities, work places or places of entertainment or in the attitudes of the majority community towards them.
5. Political or Social Exclusion – where members of ethnic minorities or racialised groups are not represented on decision and policy making bodies – from national and local government to school boards and community group committees.

They wished to note also that while they understand the parameters of this consultation relate to the creation of a new National Action Plan Against Racism and not in particular to state policies regarding housing, International Protection, Education etc. that to really address and prevent racism in Ireland significant changes are needed on a whole range of policy areas and practices.

They note the following in particular:

1. Housing policy in Ireland must be oriented away from the provision by the private sector of state funded housing solutions such as HAP which expose members of racialised or minority ethnic groups to particular discriminatory and exclusionary practices. The state must take it upon itself to directly provide affordable, social and cost rental housing at sufficient levels to end housing insecurity and all of its knock on effects on marginalised and racialised communities. These changes must plan for and provide suitable culturally appropriate, community based housing for migrants, international protection applicants, the Traveller community and other racialised groups who face intersectional exclusions on the basis of residency status, disability gender or family circumstances as well as all of those otherwise entitled to state support.
2. The system of Direct Provision should be phased out as agreed in the current programme for government and the White Paper on Ending Direct Provision, this will require significant changes in housing policy as noted above. **The continued availability of targeted supports for those exiting Direct Provision must be guaranteed within this process.** An amnesty for those more than two years within the International Protection system as recommended in the Catherine Day Report should be granted with the status given to those exiting the system entitling them to access social welfare supports and be eligible for family reunification and eventual citizenship on a par with other migrant groups. Our members note that international evidence has demonstrated that the removal of barriers to progress and systemic segregation alongside sufficient integration supports can allow many international protection applicants or refugees to become self-sufficient within relatively short periods of time, so initial spending on such measures is likely to prove economically sensible as well as beneficial for the human rights and wellbeing of those concerned. Our members also note that the placing and location of DP and emergency accommodation centres in rural communities has provided a fruitful site of organising for far right and ethno-nationalist

actors and while those involved in instigating tensions around such events are responsible for those actions, it is also incumbent on state to ensure that it enshrines respect for community integration in its own practices around the locating of migrants and refugees. Good information, sufficient resourcing of services, an end to institutionalisation of large groups of people and a period of preparatory work with host communities and those arriving in the communities would be extremely beneficial.

3. That the status, living conditions, housing and accommodation needs and health of the Traveller/Minceir Community in Ireland require immediate sustained and resourced action by the state in partnership with the Traveller/Minceir Community. Our members consider that many aspects of the comparative disadvantage faced by the Traveller/Minceir community are caused directly by racism, the trauma of racism, exclusion and discrimination by public bodies and a lack of provision of culturally competent services. In particular, we support recommendation of the NTACC that responsibility for Traveller Accommodation be removed from Local Authorities and instead organised by a national body with a dedicated remit to ensure that culturally appropriate homes are provided for Traveller families and individuals. We note the successful approach of the Traveller-led Housing Body CENA in this respect and recommend that its work is supported and funded on a long-term basis.
4. That similar but culturally appropriate measures, including the dedication of sufficient resources be allocated to secure the wellbeing and realise the human rights of all members of the Roma Community in Ireland. The Roma community experiences many of the same discriminatory practices as the Traveller community does in Ireland and has experienced all forms of racism all across Europe including in Ireland.
5. At the moment the nexus between Ireland's immigration and asylum processes and its social welfare system mean that people not meeting certain residency or immigration criteria or people who become undocumented or rely on their spouse's immigration status can find themselves entirely unable to access state supports and reliant on inconsistent charitable responses. This is particularly acute in cases where intimate partner violence or abuse mean that in particular women & children can find themselves trapped. A new National Action Plan Against Racism should analyse and propose remedies for people in these circumstances – ensuring that no person in the state is without access to state supports to meet their basic needs. The individual rights of children in the state must also be realised as regards residency status and access to supports should not be based on the immigration status of their parents.

Further to the above, our participants would like to make the following recommendations for consideration or inclusion in the NAPAR

1. The need for National Integration Strategies to be well-resourced, funded multi- faceted and with actions and targets for employment, political participation, and cultural participation in existing structures as well as

support for the formation of new or altered structures by diverse communities.

- 2. The inclusion of all public bodies including An Garda Siochana under the equal status acts.**
3. Ireland must invest specifically and deliberately in the realisation of the human economic and social rights of migrants resident in Ireland. This is not merely altruism, it is a necessary investment for the betterment and cohesion of our whole society.
4. A nationwide resourced independent Migrant Information Service based on **or in** the Citizen's Information Service in Ireland would be a positive step. This service should provide independent advice in confidence to those using the service. It should be separate entirely to INIS, Department of Justice, Department of Social Protection etc. Our participants consider that such a service would assist migrants to access their entitlements, employment, education and help them navigate Ireland's systems and laws correctly and in so doing would benefit the wider community as well as those availing of the service.
5. Continued research, education and awareness raising within all public bodies about racism and its traumatic and ongoing effects.
6. Our member groups considered that the creation of 'Intercultural Worker' positions within local authorities or other similar bodies might be an asset both internally to these bodies and in ensuring that those from non-majority cultural backgrounds have a point of contact and engagement.
7. The need for early enfranchisement of migrants in Ireland – currently participation is restricted to Local Authority Elections only for many groups and this is not conducive to political participation, or effective representation of our diverse population.
8. The need for local Migrant Forums to be established in participation with diverse migrant communities and resourced to ensure that they provide a pathway towards political participation and influence on policy decisions for migrants in Ireland. These would need to be resourced and formalised and have a remit to consult widely and use appropriate community development and community organising practices to ensure engagement from marginalised groups within migrant communities and in particular to ensure that the voices of women are heard. We note particular achievements of the Migrant Rights Centre in Ireland in this type of work and also of the Belfast based Practice and Participation of Rights Project. We further note that the effectiveness of migrant led grassroots organisations such as the Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland demonstrates strongly the existing capacity of diverse communities to effect and influence change even when excluded from formal political structures.
9. The need to address the prohibitive costs of accessing citizenship in particular for families.
10. The need for an amnesty or other mechanism towards secure residency for those waiting more than 2 years within Ireland's international protection system as recommended in the Catherine Day Report.
11. An end to institutional living for international protection applicants.

12. The need for public bodies to themselves take affirmative action in their employment practices to ensure that they progress on an agreed timescale to having workforces that reflect the diversity of Ireland's population. In particular we would like to see commitments made within the public and civil service, local authorities, An Garda Síochána and within the teaching and legal professions.
13. The resourcing of community development projects and community and public facilities to ensure that empowered communities can act to secure their needs and quality of life and that public shared spaces are available in each community in which people can engage freely.
14. That the strategy would reflect that those from migrant, ethnic minority and other racialised groups frequently exist already in multi-cultural contexts in Ireland and that therefore this strategy should not be framed in terms of a negotiation between migrants and indigenous white Irish populations but rather a multi-lateral strategy across and between groups in an already diverse society.
15. Our participants expressed concerns about the locating of measures to tackle hate crime within the criminal justice system although they agree that measures are needed. They noted the disproportionate numbers of the Traveller community and those from socio economically deprived backgrounds who are incarcerated in Ireland. An internal study publicised in 2020 of An Garda Síochána found that **no frontline Garda had a positive view of the Traveller Community** and that 75% of frontline Garda surveyed had a negative view of Roma people. *'Opinions of other ethnic minorities were somewhat better. However, significant proportions of frontline gardaí still had negative views of Indian and Pakistani people (21 per cent), Arabs (30 per cent) and Black African (30 per cent).* Our participants would welcome further engagement and consultation on how hate speech, and the racialised elements of crimes can be penalised and prevented without allocating more power to organisations and systems that have both systemic and direct racism built into their structures and cultures. We note that our recommendation above that An Garda Síochána should be subjected to the Equal Status Acts as one partial remedy to the above concern. We further note that access to free legal aid and where necessary standardised and regulated translation services for those from racialised and ethnic minority communities should be promoted and extended to ensure that access to state services, justice in the legal system and support when making complaints is widely available.
16. On the issue of 'Political Racism' Clare PPN in particular has been concerned on many occasions with statements and comment from within our mainstream political system by elected representatives and candidates in election processes. We note for example that some Councillors in Clare frequently criticise and generalise about the Traveller community in media and at meetings and that official documents from the Local Authority which do not relate to crime mandate the involvement of An Garda Síochána in engagements with Ethnic Minority Communities when attempting to access standard services. We note further that for example a candidate in the presidential election was allowed to target an ethnic minority as part of his

campaign and worse still campaigned around a specific identifiable Traveller family and attempted to hold a 'political meeting' where they lived- we would consider that such an act had the potential to incite specific and targeted hatred and that sanctions to disqualify those who engage in such behaviour from holding or campaigning for office should be considered. We also note that even those who have campaigned against the provision of much needed Traveller Accommodation in their constituencies have been rewarded with ministerial office by our mainstream political parties. We are fully aware that none of the above will be news to those drafting a new NAPAR but stress that a code of conduct for political parties in receipt of state funding should be developed which can ensure that the targeting of specific ethnic minorities, or racialised groups or generalising about these groups in negative ways is effectively prohibited.

17. Political Racism- far right organising. Our participants noted that in our work with Clare PPN, our staff and representatives have been targeted by far- right activists for their work around migrant and refugee solidarity. We would like to see training around social media targeting and far- right organising methods given to An Garda Siochana as our attempts to engage with them in relation to these issues were unsatisfactory and did not inspire confidence and we fear that those from racialised or ethnic minority backgrounds might in fact fare worse than we did. We note in particular the social media campaign promoting falsehoods about George Nkencho and the slowness of the response to it. Our group also noted that there may be a necessity for an anti- racism plan to engage with the Standards in Public Office Commission and the Oireachtas around standards for those registering political parties in Ireland. We note and support the recommendation that Ireland remove its reservation to Article 4 of CERD which would facilitate further action in this regard. In particular the actions of the National Party concern us in this regard.
18. Our participants support the recommendation to implement Ethnic Equality Monitoring across all public authorities with the proviso that reviews and evaluations of its effects are conducted with the ethnic minority or racialised groups affected on a periodic basis.
19. We note that legislation which serves to criminalise nomadism should be revisited.
20. We recommend that monitoring of the experience of 'over-policing' of ethnic minority and racialised communities in Ireland is identified as an action in the NAPAR
21. We recommend that steps including the widespread provision of welcome and orientation packs and state funded English classes being rolled out nationally for diverse migrant communities be included.
22. We recommend the establishment of a state-funded standardised national translation service to ensure high quality, trained translators are available for all those accessing services or undergoing legal processes.
23. We strongly support the introduction of anti-racism training across all public services, within the education system, for media outlets and for businesses and community organisations. Clare PPN has itself implemented this on a local basis ensuring that all of our representatives are offered anti-racism

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training. We recommend that this be part of induction processes for elected representatives across the political system and that the training itself is of a high quality and delivered by or with ethnic minority or racialised groups with expertise in the area.

In conclusion we commend the committee on the work going into a new National Action Plan Against Racism and we welcome the opportunity to make this submission.

Any queries in respect of this submission may be directed to admin@clareppn.ie

Yours Sincerely,
On behalf of Clare Public Participation Network,
Sarah Clancy
Clare Public Participation Network Coordinator