

Beat: Politics

## Improvements needed in human rights protection in Ireland

### human rights protection in Ireland

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**USPA NEWS** - Several changes in the system for human rights protection are planned or under way in Ireland. The authorities should use this opportunity to strengthen this system and make it more compliant with international standards“[?] said today Nils MuiÅ¼nieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights.

“Long-awaited comprehensive asylum legislation is to be adopted early next year. This is an important step to remedy the present situation in which asylum-seekers, in particular children, spend a long time in facilities designed for short-term accommodation, with negative consequences on their mental health, family ties and integration prospects“[?]. The Commissioner also welcomes the decision to stop detaining children under the age of 16 in the outdated prison facilities of St. Patrick’s Institution and recommends transferring the remaining young offenders to facilities where their educational needs can best be met.

Commissioner MuiÅ¼nieks further calls on the Irish authorities to ensure that the on-going merger of the Irish Human Rights Commission and the Equality Authority does not weaken the effectiveness and independence of national bodies to monitor human rights. “The independence of the new Commission should be clearly reflected in the way its members are appointed, the manner in which its staff is selected and recruited and in the arrangements for the allocation of its budget. It will also be important to ensure that the Equality Tribunal dealing with individual complaints under equality legislation be able to continue to fulfil its quasi-judicial function in an independent manner.“[?]

While noting that legislation on legal recognition of transgender persons is currently being drafted to bring Ireland in line with its human rights obligations, the Commissioner expresses his concern that no clear timeline is provided. “Five years have elapsed since a High Court’s judgment found Ireland in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights in this field. The implementation process should be accelerated.“[?]

As concerns the rights of persons with disabilities, the Commissioner welcomes the efforts undertaken by the Irish authorities to upgrade domestic legislation and recommends continuing the reform process with vigour. He also underlined the necessity to review closely proposed budget cuts for their potential negative impact on the rights of persons with disabilities.

Letter to the Minister of Justice, Mr Alan Shatter, and his reply  
Letter to the Minister for Social Protection, Ms Joan Burton, and her reply  
Letter to the Minister of State, Ms Kathleen Lynch, and her reply

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