

# 2021 — 2022

# About IPRT

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## Who we are

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The Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT) is Ireland's leading independent charity campaigning for a penal system that is just and humane; protects and promotes human rights, equality and social justice; and uses prison as a last resort.

## What we do

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IPRT publishes a wide range of policy positions and research documents; we campaign vigorously across a wide range of penal policy issues; and we have established IPRT as the leading independent voice in public debate on the Irish penal system.

## What we have achieved

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IPRT's effectiveness over recent years is demonstrated by real achievement in terms of progressive policy change, alongside a deepening of wider public debate around prisons and prisoners, and the provision of a key central resource of research and information on prisons and penal reform.

In recent years, key reforms that IPRT's work has contributed to include:

- Strategic Review of Penal Policy, which endorses the principle of imprisonment as a sanction of last resort (2014)
- Stopping out reduced to 31 in April 2022, down from 1,000 in 2011
- Extension of the Inspector of Prisons' remit to include investigations into deaths in prison custody (2012)
- Extension of the Ombudsman for Children's remit to receive complaints from children detained in the adult prison system (2012)
- Legislation introduced to limit the use of imprisonment for failure to pay court-ordered fines (2014)
- Legislation introduced which allows certain minor convictions to become spent after seven years (2016)
- End of the imprisoning of 16 and 17-year-old boys in the adult prison system (April 2017)
- Opening of a step-down unit for women leaving prison (2019)
- Enactment of the *Parole Act 2019*, which establishes the Parole Board on a statutory footing and removes decision-making on the release of life-sentenced prisoners from Ministerial control (July 2021)
- The establishment of the High-Level Task Force to consider the mental health and addiction challenges of persons interacting with the criminal justice system (April 2021)

## How you can support our work

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IPRT relies on the support of a diverse group of friends and donors to underwrite our mission. Contributions from both committed individuals and organisations are essential to our impact on the lives of prisoners and their families, and ongoing efforts to reform Ireland's penal system. We are deeply grateful to all our members and donors for their partnership in this work and are pleased to share this Annual Review detailing our achievements.

**For more information on how you can support IPRT's work, please visit our website [www.iprt.ie](http://www.iprt.ie) or call (01) 874 1400. IPRT is a registered charity (CHY 11091).**

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## Foreword – IPRT Chairperson

### I am delighted to introduce another year of advancing progressive penal reform to our membership, stakeholders, supporters, and Friends.

For another year, IPRT had to do its work differently in response to the pandemic. However, despite the considerable operational and organisational challenges that COVID-19 continued to pose, we managed to do our work effectively. As we emerge from what I hope is the worst of the pandemic, and make strides to embed the lessons learned, I am proud when I reflect on IPRT's work and achievements over the past two and a half years.

While this report will give you an overview of some of what IPRT has achieved this year, I would like to draw focus to one project I am particularly proud of. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) Human Rights and Equality Grant Scheme 2020-2021 generously supported IPRT to carry out a research and awareness-raising campaign focused on the rights and experiences of migrants and ethnic minorities in the penal system in Ireland. The exploratory research study, commissioned by IPRT from the Maynooth University School of Law and Criminology, creates a sound evidence base and raises awareness of inequality and human rights breaches against migrants and ethnic minorities in contact with probation and prisons in Ireland. It was an honour to be a member of the Steering Group for this project and to learn so much from the rich and generous contributions of the other members.

I am heartened that years of work by IPRT on progressive policy reform is culminating in developing opportunities for change over the coming year; the seeds that IPRT has laid over many years are starting to bear fruit. We are awaiting progress on the Penal Policy Review and Action Plan, the report of the High-Level Task Force on mental health and addiction, and a comprehensive review of the Prison Rules 2007. These opportunities for progress did not happen in a vacuum. These are the result of sometimes hard-fought advocacy on issues that don't always carry votes. The solutions presented by IPRT on what works to reduce offending, minimise harm, and keep communities safer continue to be considered by decision-makers.

Setting aside the COVID-19 pandemic and its various impacts on IPRT's work, this past year was a significant one for the IPRT staff team.

After almost 13 years in IPRT, with three years at the helm, Fíona Ní Chinnéide moved on from the IPRT for an exciting new opportunity where her legacy on the criminal justice landscape will continue. Fíona's influence on penal reform in Ireland, and on the path of IPRT, is impossible to quantify. We wish her all the best. Following a robust external recruitment process, Saoirse Brady was appointed Executive Director by the Board of IPRT and commenced in the role in May 2022. We said a fond farewell to Lorraine Whitty in July, and both Pamela Drumgoole and Sarahjane McCreery will finish up with IPRT to take up new opportunities in September. My sincere thanks to Saoirse, Molly, Sarahjane, Lorraine, and Pamela for all stepping up and taking on an additional volume of work at different stages this year to ensure the work of the organisation continues amidst significant change – I'd particularly like to acknowledge Molly Joyce, who acted up and did an excellent job while the Executive Director role was vacant.

It continues to be a great privilege to work with my fellow Board members, whom I wish to thank for their hard work, expertise, and ongoing commitment to the organisation. I continued to work this year alongside Professor Aislinn O'Donnell, Kevin Gregory, Joan O'Flynn, Kathleen Leader SC, and Niall Walsh. On behalf of my Board colleagues, I would like to thank David Perry BL, who stepped down from the Board in November 2021. We also welcomed two new Board members during the year. Ashling Golden and Dr Cormac Behan were co-opted to the Board in January and May respectively, and their expertise is strengthening our ability to form evidence-based policy solutions that will work on the ground.

The Board made the decision in January 2022 to extend the Strategic Plan 2017-2021 by a year given the change in Executive Director and the wider context of the pandemic. Considerable work is underway on the formation of a new Strategic Plan, with many of our friends and other stakeholders – old and new – currently feeding into targeted consultations about IPRT's future. This work is being ably spearheaded by our Executive Director, Saoirse. IPRT will be in a position to launch our ambitious but deliverable new Strategic Plan in early 2023. Based on almost three decades of strong research and

evidence, coupled with careful and timely analysis of the policy and legal issues that have arisen, we have managed to formulate a unique, constructive, and effective perspective. This, I know, will continue throughout the lifetime of the next Strategic Plan. I would like to thank our funders, including Pobal, the Department of Justice, the Community Foundation for Ireland, Katharine Howard Foundation, Mercy Congregation Solidarity Committee, St Stephen's Green Trust, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) for their ongoing support. Their generosity and belief in our work allows IPRT to build a sustainable funding base and continue to champion human rights and penal reform in Ireland.

Finally, I would like to extend a special thanks to our members, Friends and supporters. This key network of support provides critical funding for the core campaigning work of IPRT. They are at the very heart of IPRT, and we share our successes with them.



**Dr Seamus Taylor**  
IPRT Chairperson,  
August 2022

## Introduction – IPRT Executive Director

Despite having only joined the Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT) team in May 2022, it is with great pleasure that I present this report on IPRT's activities over the past 12 months.

IPRT's small but dedicated team continued to work tirelessly against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the pandemic may have changed our ways of working, we continued to be highly productive and impactful. This is despite a changeover in Executive Director, and a reduction in staff capacity at various points during the year. It is a testament to the team that IPRT maintained an impressive public profile.

As the only organisation in Ireland dedicated solely to penal reform, the achievement of IPRT goals is essential for people encountering the criminal justice and penal system. In the last 12 months, progress on key objectives in the extended Strategic Plan has included: publication of the General Scheme of legislation intended to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture; progress towards the inclusion of the principle of imprisonment as a last resort in policy and legislation; a review of the functions and powers of Prison Visiting Committees; and groundwork underway for the introduction of sentencing guidelines. These are just the headline issues; IPRT continued to turn the dial on nearly all of the issues contained in our Strategic Plan.

I am excited to have been appointed to lead the development of the next Strategic Plan. Not only is this an opportunity to shape the coming years of IPRT's work, but it allows me to see IPRT through the eyes of our stakeholders and get a sense of our strengths and opportunities for growth. Considerable work is underway on this ambitious strategy, and I would be happy to discuss this with any of our supporters.

A core focus of our work over the period was ensuring that regimes in the penal system are humane and reflect human rights standards as a minimum in the short-term, striving for international best practice in the medium to long-term. The main vehicle that drives this ambition is our annual flagship report. In February 2022, IPRT launched the fifth edition of Progress in the Penal System. The report reflects on the past five years of monitoring the Irish penal system: the progress made, the areas where change has been slow, and the issues about which we still have a limited understanding due to a lack of data.

I believe we are at a tipping point for progressive penal policy in terms of commitments made, political leadership and the current momentum to see meaningful change for the better in the system. We are closer now than ever to the ratification of OPCAT and the establishment of the National Preventative Mechanism. We have also seen the Government set out its stall in the Review of Policy Options for Prison and Penal Reform, published in August 2022, which sets out a comprehensive and ambitious roadmap to transform not only the prison system as we know it but the entire penal system. IPRT will continue to monitor progress and advocate for significant government investment over the coming years, to ensure that this plan – which has so much potential – does not become just another nicely written paper that sits on the shelf.

None of the work presented here could have been achieved without the IPRT staff team. I cannot thank them enough for their unflagging determination, energy, and enthusiasm over the last year in delivering our mission and for their warm welcome when I joined the team. My sincere thanks to Molly, Sarahjane, Pamela, and Lorraine (who left IPRT in July 2022), along with the volunteers who extended our work. I'd also like to acknowledge the legacy of Fiona Ni Chinnéide, who left IPRT for a new role in February 2022 after almost 13 years with IPRT. Many of the achievements in this Review are the results of her excellent leadership of IPRT over the period. Her vision set IPRT on a path of growth and development that I look forward to building on further.

I would like to extend my personal thanks for the ongoing support, guidance, direction, and expertise I have received from all members of the IPRT Board, in particular Dr Seamus Taylor as Chair. They have been beyond generous with their time, sharing their institutional knowledge and vast expertise with me as I transition into my new role.

I would like to acknowledge the continued support of Pobal, the Department of Justice, Community Foundation for Ireland, St Stephen's Green Trust, Katharine Howard Foundation, the Mercy Congregation and IHREC. Last – but certainly not least – I would like to thank our

individual donors, members, and Friends whose support makes the impact of our work possible. I have been so fortunate to join an organisation where our work is deeply understood and championed by so many. The level of respect and autonomy that continue to be afforded to IPRT by all of those who fund us is a testament to the positive relationships we have forged and to the effectiveness of our work.

The State has made progress with its policy commitments, but IPRT's fearless voice is needed more than ever to make sure that these commitments are delivered and that rights are realised. I hope you will continue to support this work for another year.



**Saoirse Brady**  
Executive Director,  
August 2022

## Our Vision and Our People

IPRT's vision is of a penal system that is just and humane; protects and promotes human rights, equality and social justice; and uses prison as a last resort.

### Patron of IPRT



**Michael D. Higgins**  
President of Ireland

### Advocates of IPRT



**Paula Meehan**  
Poet



**Peter Sheridan**  
Author and Director



**Ivana Bacik**  
Teachta Dála



**John Lonergan**  
Former Governor  
of Mountjoy Prison

### IPRT Board of Directors

IPRT is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors, made up of a minimum of seven members with expertise in a range of areas relevant to penal reform. The Board focuses on the broader strategic goals of the organisation. At least seven members of the Board are elected at the organisation's AGM and further members may be co-opted by the Board.



**Dr Seamus Taylor**  
Chairperson  
Lecturer in Social  
Policy, Maynooth  
University



**Prof. Aislinn  
O'Donnell**  
Vice Chairperson  
Professor of  
Education,  
Maynooth  
University



**Kevin Gregory**  
Treasurer  
Director of  
Finance, IT &  
Governance with  
Barnardos Ireland



**Kathleen  
Leader SC**  
Secretary  
Barrister,  
Senior Counsel



**Joan O'Flynn**  
Independent  
Consultant



**Niall Walsh**  
Manager,  
Pathways Centre



**Liz Leavy**  
HR Director



**Miranda Trouabal**  
Teacher, Pathways  
Centre



**Ashling Golden**  
Justice  
Programmes  
Manager, Solas  
Project (co-opted  
Jan 2022)



**Dr Cormac Behan**  
Lecturer, TU  
Dublin (co-opted  
May 2022)



**Eddie D'Arcy**  
CEO, Solas Project  
(until Sept 2021)



**David Perry BL**  
Barrister (until  
Nov 2021)

## IPRT Staff

In 2021-2022, the day-to-day work of IPRT was carried out by a team of 4-5 staff.



**Saoirse Brady**  
Executive Director  
(from May 2022)



**Fiona Ní Chinnéide**  
Executive Director  
(until February 2022)



**Molly Joyce**  
Legal and Public  
Affairs Manager,  
Deputy Director,  
Acting Executive  
Director (February  
– May 2022)



**Sarahjane McCreery**  
Senior Policy and  
Research Officer



**Pamela Drumgoole**  
Communications  
Officer



**Lorraine Whitty**  
Membership  
& Governance  
Officer (until  
July 2022)

## IPRT Volunteers

Our work is supported by a team of dedicated Policy & Advocacy Volunteers, who bring their skills and passion for social justice and penal reform to their work with IPRT.

- **Eamonn Sullivan:**  
August 2021 - October 2021
- **Ellen Hyland:**  
September 2021 - January 2022
- **Hannah Edwards:**  
October 2021 - January 2022
- **Liam Ryan:**  
February 2022 - May 2022
- **Daniel Quinn:**  
February 2022 - May 2022
- **Colleen Ralph:**  
July 2022 - August 2022

## Our Strategic Priorities

IPRT is committed to reducing imprisonment, ensuring access to human rights in prisons, and progressive reform of the penal system based on evidence-led policies.

The focus of our activities is on: the use of imprisonment, including sentencing policy; alternatives to custody and diversion; and the treatment and rehabilitation of those in detention. All of our work is underscored by our commitment to promoting equality and to combating social injustice.

All of IPRT's actions over the period were guided by our strategic priorities, as outlined in our Strategic Plan 2017-2021. **The Board made the decision in January 2022 to extend the Strategic Plan 2017-2021 by a year given the change in Executive Director.** At the time of writing, considerable work is underway on the formation of a new Strategic Plan, with stakeholder engagement and internal planning at an advanced stage. IPRT will be in a position to launch our ambitious but deliverable new plan in early 2023.

### 01

#### Progressive Penal Policy

IPRT advocates for a national penal policy that is:

- just and humane,
- promotes effective non-custodial responses to crime, and
- uses prison as a last resort.

### 02

#### Humane Penal System

IPRT promotes a national penal system that is:

- humane as experienced by people who are detained,
- protects and promotes human rights and equality, and
- strives to achieve international best practice in formal regimes, daily practices and overall culture.

### 03

#### Our Organisation

IPRT ensures that the organisation is a sustainable, well-resourced, respected and collaborative stakeholder in penal policy in Ireland.

The following pages detail IPRT's considerable efforts towards achieving these objectives, through research, legislative engagement, communications and advocacy.

For more detail on our work during 2021, or our finances, our Directors' Report and Audited Financial Statements 2021 is available on [www.iprt.ie](http://www.iprt.ie)

Due to unavoidable changes in staffing, plans to consolidate the Directors' Report with our Annual Review for 2021-2022 were delayed. However, we hope to deliver this next year for the first time, under our new Strategic Plan.

## Priority 1 – Progressive Penal Policy

### FOCUS ON: All-Island leadership for safer and more equal communities

The complexities associated with supporting people in the criminal justice system are similar across the island of Ireland. However, in some areas, policy and practice responses in each jurisdiction are more innovative than in the other jurisdiction. IPRT has long recognised the opportunities to learn from other jurisdictions towards the creation of safer and more equal societies.

We were delighted to be awarded funding, in partnership with NIACRO (Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders), by The Community Foundation for Ireland and Community Foundation for Northern Ireland in August 2021. This All-Island funding is supporting a calendar year (2022) of joint working on research, knowledge sharing and leadership in criminal justice reform across the island. Our activities as part of this project include knowledge exchange seminars, the development of shared policy positions on cross-border issues, and the establishment and strengthening of networks of community organisations in both jurisdictions, to support a collective voice in advocating for criminal justice reform.

To kick off the project, we identified two specific areas where we could add value by working together: supporting women in the criminal justice system whose children are in care, and minimising the barriers associated with criminal convictions histories.

While both organisations identified women in prison with children in care as particularly marginalised groups, there is very little known about this cohort of women in either jurisdiction. To help fill this gap and guide the focus of our first knowledge exchange seminar, IPRT and NIACRO were eager to gather information. Both organisations undertook a survey of mothers in prison in each jurisdiction, made possible thanks to the support of the Irish Prison Service and the Northern Ireland Prison Service. Key issues arising from the small-scale surveys included: mixed experiences of support for parenting their children from prison; inconsistent

communication and information about their children; feelings that their voice was not generally heard in child-care proceedings; and insufficient levels of contact with their children.

We hosted our first Knowledge Exchange Seminar (KES) in Stormont Buildings in Belfast on 24 May 2022, on the topic of women in the criminal justice system whose children are in care. This was the first (and won't be the last!) cross-border coordinated event in IPRT history. We were delighted to welcome approximately 70 attendees to the invite-only seminar. Speakers included Ronnie Armour, Director General of the Northern Ireland Prison Service and Martin Galgey, Governor of the Dóchas Centre in Mountjoy. Sarah Beresford, Prison Reform Trust Associate, presented on the impact of maternal imprisonment on children and promoted positive approaches. Attendees included representatives from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, the Probation Service and NI Probation Board as well as service providers, NGOs, and prominent academics in the field. We proactively ensured that voices of experience were weaved into all discussions on the day, and suggestions from the in-prison surveys were included in a briefing document for attendees. Nine women from the SAOL Project's 'BRIO Programme' attended on the day, and also shared their personal experiences and ideas for reform in a pre-recorded video. The KES also featured a discussion with a woman, supported by NIACRO, who had cared for her friend's children while her friend was imprisoned.

IPRT and NIACRO have long-established strong reputations and relationships with government departments, statutory agencies and wide networks of voluntary/community organisations. The seminar allowed us to connect key stakeholders, to build capacity outside of our organisations, bringing a "multiplier effect". We will now work together and with external stakeholders to develop workable initial joint policy and practice recommendations as a result of the knowledge shared during the seminar.

Following on from the success of this event and building on the knowledge shared, IPRT has planned an All-Party Oireachtas Group on Penal Reform briefing on women in prison. This is an opportunity for women with lived experience to speak directly to legislators about opportunities for reform in this area.

While the project is only at the half-way mark at the time of writing, the partnership has benefitted our work more widely than anticipated. It has allowed both partners to mutually benefit from the other's expertise and research in nearly all areas of our work, which has enriched all of our outputs.

Another central piece of this All-Island work is exploring the feasibility of the creation of a criminal justice network to be a strengthened unified voice for policy reform in the Republic, learning from the experiences of a similar model in the North. Over the period of the Review, IPRT has conducted extensive surveys, met with a range of stakeholders (online and in person), and has gathered knowledge about the operation of similar structures in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and in England and Wales. During autumn 2022, IPRT will explore the viability of those structures in the Republic.

Following on from a decade of tireless campaigning from IPRT, our work on minimising the barriers associated with criminal convictions histories will continue in winter 2022 in the second half of this All-Island project.

This project was kindly supported by the All-Island Fund, through the Community Foundation for Ireland and the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland.



## Priority 1 – Progressive Penal Policy

### FOCUS ON: Diverting people with severe mental health issues from prison

The inappropriate use of prisons to hold people with mental illnesses is one of the most critical problems within the Irish prison system. Ireland is failing people with mental illness and allowing prison to be used to fill gaps in wider mental health services.

While appropriate treatment in prisons is necessary, keeping people out of the criminal justice system in the first place is paramount if we are to meet the needs of vulnerable men and women. It is IPRT's position that properly resourced mental health care provision in the community will reduce the numbers encountering the adult criminal justice system.

A series of actions towards improving the situation for people in the penal system with mental health needs were undertaken in 2021 and 2022, including:

- Following years of IPRT campaigning on mental health and imprisonment, and a call for a High-Level Taskforce in our Programme for Government asks, this was established in early 2021. During this period, IPRT was one of a select group of stakeholders invited to present to the High-Level Task Force on its Terms of Reference in July 2021. This, we believe, is in recognition of our unrelenting advocacy in this area. IPRT emphasised to the Task Force the importance of diversion from the criminal justice system, potential solutions to the Central Mental Hospital waiting list crisis, and the potential for adopting "trauma-informed services" in responding to the mental health and addiction needs of individuals. We eagerly await the publication of the Task Force's Final Report and Implementation Plan in autumn 2022.
- IPRT engaged directly with Inspector of Mental Health Services, Dr Susan Finnerty, to inform the Mental Health Commission's research 'Access to Mental Health Services for People in the Criminal Justice System' (July 2021). When the comprehensive research was published in November 2021, IPRT was a strong voice in the media debate, particularly highlighting that many of the findings relate to issues that have been prevalent in the justice system for many years, with little action.
- Nearly all of our various submissions to national and international processes (see page 18) heavily focused on the unmet mental health needs of people in contact with the penal system in Ireland and the deficient systems of diversion in place. The pervasive impact of this issue across all areas of the penal system and beyond is unquantifiable. As well as focusing on mental health in nearly all of our general submissions, we also made a discrete submission to the Oireachtas Sub-Committee on Mental Health regarding its role in conducting Pre-Legislative Scrutiny on the *Mental Health (Amendment) Bill 2021*.
- Mental health in prison was – once again – one of the core standards assessed in *Progress in the Penal System 2021*. A focus on mental health carried across the report, the remarks of many of the speakers and respondents at the launch event (February 2022), our engagement with stakeholders, and our media appearances.
- In 2021, IPRT was awarded funding from IHREC under the 'Progressing the Rights of People with Disabilities' strand of the Human Rights & Equality Grant Scheme 2021-22 to undertake a scoping study entitled 'Access to rights for people detained in secure forensic mental health facilities in Ireland'. The project will scope the need for a national policy and advocacy strategy to promote the rights of people with disabilities detained in secure forensic mental health facilities in Ireland. IPRT has commissioned the Centre for Disability Law and Policy at University of Galway to conduct this research which will be published in late 2022.
- A significant portion of our media engagement across the period related to mental health. While IPRT is proactive in seeking coverage on the vital issues of the day, mental health is by far the primary issue that the media approaches IPRT for comment on. While IPRT remains prepared and ready to challenge regressive narratives around offending and imprisonment when necessary, it has been heartening to see over the period that members of the media and public alike have become increasingly supportive of our positions on investment in adequate mental health services for people in contact with the criminal justice system.

Through engagement with organisations such as Mental Health Reform and our legislative submissions on the *Mental Health (Amendment) Bill 2021* and *Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) (Amendment) Bill 2021*, IPRT has continued to develop its knowledge on the rights of people in prison with mental health and/or psychosocial disability. As our knowledge and evidence base grows, and as the Government and other stakeholders take strides towards recognising and responding to the issues IPRT and others have highlighted for many years, our work in this area is set to expand in the years ahead.

## Priority 2 – Humane Penal System

### FOCUS ON: The rights of migrants and minority ethnic groups in the Irish penal system

The disproportionate representation of migrants and ethnic minorities in criminal justice systems across the globe is well documented. However, issues of racial and ethnic equality in the Irish penal system are under-explored. Very little information exists on the needs and lived experiences of minority ethnic and non-Irish people in prisons and on probation in Ireland, particularly in terms of accessing rights and accessing justice.

To bridge this gap in understanding, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) awarded IPRT funding in 2020 to pursue a research and awareness-raising campaign focused on the rights and experiences of migrants and ethnic minorities in the penal system in Ireland.

With this project, we sought to spotlight any differential outcomes in key parts of the penal system, including sentencing, probation and prisons; examine potential discrimination within custodial and non-custodial sanctions; and identify any discriminatory practices experienced by migrants, foreign nationals and ethnic minorities in the penal system.

The cornerstone of this project was an exploratory research study. This was independently commissioned by IPRT from the Maynooth University School of Law and Criminology. We were delighted to be able to bring an expert Steering Committee on board for the research, made up of Dr. Seamus Taylor, Khatuna Tsintsadze, Nuala Kelly, Dr. Lucy Michael and Dr. Bashir Otukoya.

Following months of engaging rights-holder perspectives through qualitative research and exploring trends through data analysis, *"Sometimes I'm missing the words": The rights, needs and experiences of foreign national and minority ethnic groups in the Irish penal system* was launched on Thursday 27 April 2022.

The event featured a lively and informative conversation with David Lammy MP, author of a renowned independent review into the

treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system in England and Wales. We were particularly grateful to have substantive responses from the Irish Prison Service (IPS) and the Probation Service at the launch.

Based on an analysis of the quantitative data provided by the IPS, the research found that foreign nationals may receive longer sentences than Irish nationals for certain offences. Further analysis, along with interviews with professional stakeholders, established that the IPS data was deficient in the areas of ethnicity and religion. Interview data revealed that foreign nationals and minority ethnic people in prison faced significant challenges concerning access to services, respect for different religious backgrounds, as well as language and communication barriers. IPRT made 18 recommendations for addressing the barriers identified by the research. We called on stakeholders to improve data recording and ethnic equality monitoring across all penal data collection systems, to update the Irish Prison Rules to include the human rights protections that are specific to migrant and minority ethnic prisoners, and to reform the complaints system in a way that includes a facility for complaints from prisoners to be made in a range of languages and mediums. The issues raised in the report were well-covered in broadcast and print media.

The report was later publicly welcomed by Minister of State with responsibility for Law Reform, James Browne TD, at the Annual ACJRD conference, where he stated that the Department of Justice was examining the recommendations to inform future practice and operations. This is incredibly positive.

As well as this research project, IPRT continued as a member of the Traveller Justice Initiative Steering Group, we included minority groups as a cohort for consideration in our submission to the Review of the Prison Rules, we worked with experts to produce a blog for our website for anti-racism month, we presented to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community on 'Travellers' experiences in prison and related matters', and we met with the Prison Officers' Association to discuss various issues, one of which was reports of racism in the prison system. Additionally, in July 2021, IPRT used the preliminary findings from the research process to inform a submission to the National

Anti-Racism Committee as part of the public consultation for the National Action Plan Against Racism. We included an ethnic equality question in our annual prisoner member survey to better understand our membership profile and the issues they are facing. IPRT also issued a public statement in response to alleged discriminatory behaviour by Irish Prison Service staff.

With the evidence now in hand, our advocacy on migrants and minority ethnic groups in the penal system has a solid base to grow from in the years ahead.



This project was supported by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, under the Human Rights and Equality Grants Scheme 2020-2021.



## Priority 2 – Humane Penal System

### FOCUS ON: Accountability on an international stage

While Ireland's international human rights obligations still applied throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, opportunities to report on Ireland's performance on those obligations were curtailed. However, IPRT was ready and eager to meaningfully contribute to rights-based reporting processes again during this period.

In keeping with the developing times we are in, IPRT participated in its first-ever virtual human rights session as part of Ireland's third review under the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in November 2021. The UPR takes place every four or five years and is an important lever for reform that sees Ireland defend its human rights record in front of all UN Member States. IPRT engaged extensively with the UPR process, including making our own submission, feeding into a joint submission led by the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) and submitting to the State Report. IPRT was among just four civil society organisations to virtually present to the recommending States at the UPR pre-sessions. We made succinct and targeted recommendations on detention issues.

The recommendations to Ireland by our peers were adopted on Friday 12th November. Of 103 States that engaged with Ireland, over 20 made recommendations on ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT) (including a couple that used IPRT's exact wording), and 11 (including very strong points by Norway, Denmark and Luxembourg) made recommendations to Ireland on issues relating to detention and IPRT's areas of work. On 1st July 2022, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights wrote to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney TD, to highlight areas requiring "particular attention" over the next four and a half years, before Ireland's next UPR cycle. OPCAT ratification was on the list of priority issues raised by the High Commissioner echoing IPRT's call which we raised with recommending States in both our submission to the process and our pre-session presentation.

We believe that our engagements with the UPR process – coupled with years of persistent advocacy – contributed directly to the publication of the long-awaited Draft General Scheme of the *Inspection of Places of Detention Bill* in

June 2022, shortly before Ireland's review under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (*detailed below*). This legislation is intended to ratify the OPCAT.

In early July 2022, IPRT Executive Director Saoirse Brady travelled to Geneva as part of a delegation of Irish NGOs to engage directly with the UN Human Rights Committee in advance of Ireland's examination under ICCPR. Saoirse participated in both an informal and a formal session with the Committee members in advance of the State's review by the Committee, with the goal of securing strong and realisable commitments on penal issues.

A considerable number of the Committee's Concluding Observations and recommendations related directly to the overarching matters flagged by IPRT in our engagements. In particular, IPRT welcomed the clear focus by the UN Human Rights Committee on issues pertaining to people deprived of their liberty including prison overcrowding, access to adequate mental healthcare, the failure to publish reports relating to the Dóchas Centre, the overrepresentation of Travellers in the penal system and the need to ratify the OPCAT.

The progress achieved since Ireland's first reviews under these mechanisms demonstrates the importance of international monitoring and oversight, as well as the importance of civil society engagement with international monitoring bodies. However, IPRT was disappointed that many of the Concluding Observations made in previous reviews were forced to be repeated once again, particularly recommendations to expedite the ratification of the OPCAT and establish a National Preventive Mechanism.

Our engagement with international human rights bodies and mechanisms didn't stop there. We also made our first-ever submission to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as part of the 70th Pre-Sessional Working Group of the CESCR, focusing on Ireland's over-reliance on imprisonment as a response to social issues and socio-economic disadvantage. IPRT also made a submission to the Draft State Report to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in November 2021, focusing on children with experience of familial imprisonment, and we will be preparing a more detailed submission in late summer/early autumn 2022 which adds an additional focus on child justice.

The UN Committee Against Torture was due to examine Ireland in 2021. However, due to COVID-19, this has been delayed. Given both the importance of this Convention to protect the rights of people in prison in Ireland and the reforms that have been made possible through engaging with the Committee, IPRT is preparing for rigorous engagement with the Committee when the review is scheduled.



IPRT Executive Director, Saoirse Brady, at the United Nations in Geneva, July 2022.



Former IPRT Executive Director, Fiona Ní Chinnéide, making an online oral statement at the UPR pre-session, October 2021.

## A Year in Images



1 The IPRT team saying a fond farewell (for now) to Fiona on her final day as Executive Director, February 2022.



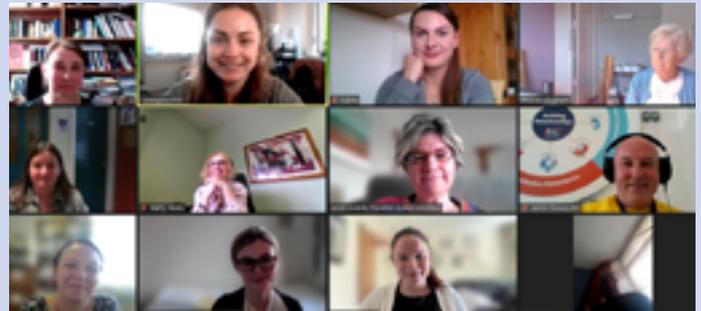
2 Saoirse Brady, IPRT Executive Director, speaking at the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Disability Matters, June 2022. Image: Oireachtas TV. (See page 18).



3 Saoirse, Molly and Sarahjane at the launch of Mental Health Reform's 'Dual Recovery' report, May 2022.



4 All-Party Oireachtas Group on Penal Reform Co-Chair visit to Mountjoy Prison, March 2022.



5 The sixth meeting of the Action for Children and Families network, June 2022.



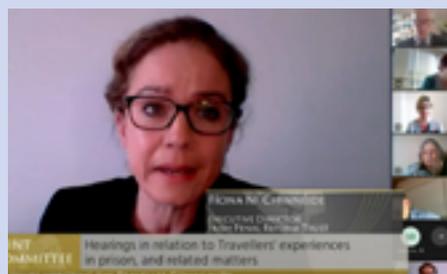
6 All participants at the launch of the IPRT/Maynooth University "Sometimes I'm missing the words", April 2022. (See page 9).



7 IPRT and NIACRO team members at the Knowledge Exchange Seminar held in Stormont, May 2022. (See page 7).



8 The IPRT team welcoming Saoirse on her first week at the helm of IPRT, May 2022.



9 Fíona Ní Chinnéide, former IPRT Executive Director, speaking at the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community, October 2021. Image: Oireachtas TV. (See page 18).



10 Attendees at the IPRT/NIACRO Knowledge Exchange Seminar in Stormont, May 2022. (See page 7).

## Priority 3 – Our Organisation

Ensure IPRT is a sustainable, well-resourced, respected and collaborative stakeholder in penal policy in Ireland.

### Governance

As an organisation that seeks to hold the State to account, it is crucial that IPRT itself maintains the highest levels of governance and accountability.

IPRT is registered with the Companies Registration Office (CRO Number 21844), the Charities Regulatory Authority (RCN 20029562) and as a Registered Charity with the Revenue Commissioners (CHY Number 11091) and meets all requirements to file returns to the Register of Lobbying.

IPRT recorded its full compliance with the Charities Regulator Code in November 2020 and continues to meet all relevant regulatory reporting requirements.

### IPRT Office

IPRT ensures that robust levels of organisational systems, structures and practices are in operation to ensure a sustainable organisation and a high-quality place of work for staff.

IPRT continued to facilitate remote and hybrid working for all staff throughout the period. Since early 2022, the IPRT team has been operating on a hybrid basis, with considerable work underway on the development of a hybrid work policy. This policy will be trialled during late 2022.

During 2021 and 2022, the IPRT staff team engaged in professional coaching to improve communication, effectiveness and productivity.

IPRT has moved to Multi-Factor Authentication, created a disaster recovery plan and devised a data back-up procedure, to minimise risk of data breaches and enhance cyber security. An external review of our GDPR policies and practices took place in 2022.

### Finance

IPRT is committed to ensuring that the organisation's finances are managed to the highest standard, and in line with established accounting practices.

Since 2015, IPRT has produced FRS 102 SORP compliant accounts. The FRS 102 requirements relating to the trustees' annual report, fund accounting, the format of the statement of financial activities and additional disclosures are aimed at providing a high level of accountability and transparency to donors, funders, financial supporters, and other stakeholders. The 2020 accounts, prepared by Best Practice Accountant – Chartered Accountants (Mary-Louise O'Loughlin ACA) were approved at the IPRT AGM in September 2021 and submitted to the Companies Registration Office. The 2021 accounts are for approval at the IPRT AGM in September 2022.

An independent audit is conducted each year by the auditors who bring to the attention of the Board any matters of concern. The auditors found the 2021 financial statements to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of IPRT and of its resources and have been properly prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2014. IPRT's auditors are Crowleys DFK, who are authorised by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland. The auditors are invited to the IPRT AGM each year.

The Finance, Audit, Risk and Human Resources Committee (FARHR) consults in advance of each Board meeting, and updated management accounts are disseminated to the whole Board at each meeting. Detailed information on our financial management processes, as well as copies of IPRT Financial Policies and Procedures, is available on request.

### Our Funders

IPRT is in receipt of multi-annual funding from a number of diverse sources. IPRT is deeply grateful to our funders for their belief in both the issue of penal reform and in IPRT's approach.

Having benefited from Pobal funding under the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO) 2019-2022, we were pleased to be successful in securing Pobal SSNO funding 2022-2025 in June 2022. This multi-annual core funding, alongside our other diverse donors, allows us to plan long-term strategic penal reform advocacy work.

In July 2019, IPRT secured a multi-annual grant from the Department of Justice and Equality for a further three years. IPRT hopes to renew this funding in late 2022. This combined funding covers the core costs of the organisation, including core staff and office costs.

The Community Foundation for Ireland continues to be a close partner in IPRT's work. The Foundation, through its own generous commitments and donor-advised funds, has helped us to realise ambitious initiatives that are transforming our penal system. Our multi-annual donor-advised grant for a Senior Policy and Research Officer and the flagship 'Progress in the Penal System' (PIPS) project continued over the period.

IPRT's continuing independence is recognised by all funders as essential to the integrity of our work.

IPRT also benefited from pro bono support on areas such as data protection and sentencing research, thanks to the support of the PILA Pro Bono Programme operated by the Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC).

## Project Funding

Funding from grant-giving bodies is essential to allow IPRT to carry out important research projects in line with organisational strategic objectives.

In 2020, we received new three-year funding through the Community Foundation for Ireland and the Mercy Congregation for a project targeted at lasting legal and policy reform. This funding continued during the period. Funding from the Katharine Howard Foundation and the St. Stephen's Green Trust for IPRT's three-year initiative that aims to reduce harm for children and families affected by imprisonment also continued.

In 2021, IPRT was awarded €4,460 from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) to conduct a scoping study 'Access to rights for people detained in secure forensic mental health facilities in Ireland'. Given our increasing focus on mental health in prison (*see page 8*), this support for building our knowledge base in this area is vital.

IPRT, along with partners Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO), secured €20,000 in August 2021 under The Community Foundation for Ireland's All-Island Fund to deepen our partnership and broaden cross-border collaboration (*see page 7*).

In early 2022, we also secured a small grant from the MACRO Community Resource Centre Shared Fund, which supported us with upgrading our IT equipment.

At the time of writing, we have received positive news about two other additional funding streams to expand on existing areas of our work.

## Friends and Members of IPRT

IPRT's Members are integral to our organisation and make an important contribution to our work. Their belief in and commitment to penal reform is a driving force for our organisation. Our membership continued to grow over the period, with increasing numbers of organisational members, individual members and members in prison or who have family members in prison. This speaks to both the reach of our work and growing support for penal reform.

The continued support of the Friends of IPRT during the pandemic has enabled us to be responsive and dynamic. Thank you to our Friends, a dedicated group of supporters who have placed a high value on IPRT's mission. Friends of IPRT are asked to contribute €250 or more, with many pledging to give over three years.

## Sustainability

Considerable efforts in this area in recent years meant that IPRT's core funding was secured up to end of 2022. Work on developing new revenue streams as well as demonstrating impact for existing funding renewals continued over this period. We are pleased to report that much of our core funding has been secured for an additional three-year period (*see below*).

## Financial Statement

### Supplementary information relating to the financial statements. Schedule 2: charitable activities and other expenses.

For the financial year ended 31 December 2021		2021(€)	2020(€)
	<b>Income</b>		
	Department of Justice & Equality	132,500	132,500
	Pobal	90,000	90,000
	Membership	2,510	2,130
	Donations	4,415	4,913
	Projects	138,096	71,988
	Miscellaneous	2	-
	Research services	-	1,216
	<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<b>€367,523</b>	<b>€302,747</b>
		2021(€)	2020(€)
	<b>Expenditure</b>		
	Wages and salaries	224,902	196,225
	Social security costs	24,835	20,412
	Staff pension costs	8,186	6,000
	Staff training	4,598	1,671
	Human resources	930	1,430
	Rent and utilities	7,907	7,907
	Insurance	1,229	1,418
	Office equipment	12	828
	Cleaning	451	172
	Repairs and maintenance	403	546
	Stationery	1,197	979
	Postage	498	725
	Courier	146	39
	Website and social media	3,687	3,302
	Prisoner engagement and building alliances	1,017	485

	2021(€)	2020(€)
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Events	-	621
Telephone and broadband	2,952	2,766
Computer hardware and software	4,043	2,268
IT support	3,329	2,642
Migrants and Minority Ethnic Groups in the Penal System expenses (IHREC)	15,590	89
Children and Families Initiative expenses (SSGT and KHF)	7,409	78
Demand for Digital expenses (CFI)	352	2,211
Mental Health Advocacy expenses (IHREC)	90	-
Research and Policy expenses (CFI)	13,932	392
Penal Policy and Law Programme expenses (CFI)	1,698	90
Impact expenses (CFI)	6,281	5,198
Publications and reports	941	3,379
Commissioned research	1,500	-
Staff travel	-	69
Other staff expenses	2,584	441
Meetings	484	411
Volunteer and intern expenses	440	429
Board expenses	162	-
Accountancy	5,749	5,891
Audit fees	3,690	3,690
Bank charges	319	256
General expenses	468	117
Membership and subscriptions	1,471	1,320
Depreciation	423	1,519
<b>Total</b>	<b>€353,905</b>	<b>€276,016</b>

## Communications

Our consistent media work is an important way for IPRT to reach new audiences, help shape public debate on crime and punishment, and persuade policymakers of the need for progressive reform. This complements our other engagement, research, and advocacy.

IPRT plays an important role in fostering wider public and political understanding of the role that penal reform plays in creating safer and more equal communities with better outcomes for everyone.

Through the combined use of social and traditional media, IPRT extends the reach of our core messages and nurtures increased engagement with the issues at stake and those affected.

### Media

Our high public profile and standing with media outlets is due to our commitment to evidence-based analysis of the issues. Across the period, IPRT has been able – due to its authoritative voice – to shape the debate on crime and justice.

As well as responding to media queries and relevant news items when journalists turn to us for comment, we also proactively seek media coverage on important issues, and provide an alternative voice in public discussion of crime and penal policy. Our research and campaigns are normally covered in the media reasonably and fairly.

Media engagement this year included interviews on RTÉ Radio News at One, Today with Claire Byrne and Morning Ireland; Newstalk FM's Breakfast, The Hard Shoulder, Moncrieff Show, Pat Kenny Show and Newstalk News; along with regional radio stations ranging from Wexford to Tipperary, Waterford to Castlebar, Cork to Donegal and Dublin to Galway. IPRT comment appeared regularly in The Irish Times, Irish Examiner, Independent, the Irish Mirror, the Irish Daily Mail the Sunday World and The Times (Ireland edition). IPRT's voice on penal reform was also featured in specialist outlets such as the Medical Independent, Law Society Gazette and Irish Catholic, along with regular inclusion in online news outlets RTE.ie, TheJournal.ie and Irish Legal News.

IPRT was also featured on several podcasts during the period, which offered the opportunity to explore nuanced issues with balance. This included the 'On the Margins' Podcast, hosted by Senator Lynn Ruane, which explored the breadth and depth of IPRT's work. IPRT had the opportunity to explore the purpose of sentencing on Newstalk's 'Inside the Crime' podcast. We have other podcast engagements lined up and look forward to exploring this format more in the coming year.

- Online articles: **100+**
- Radio interviews: **35**
- Print publications: **35+**  
(including several front-page reports)
- TV appearances: **4**
- Press releases: **15**

### Website and Online Presence

Online channels have become a key tool for achieving progressive social change in Ireland. IPRT's online presence is an invaluable resource acting as an archive of over 25 years of IPRT research and providing a hub of relevant research and emerging policy developments, which serves as a central source of information and updates on penal reform for media, policymakers, researchers, and other key stakeholders. Following a rebrand and website redevelopment in recent years, updates to the website across 2021-2022 included more advanced mechanisms to allow for efficient searching of older materials, improvements to page load times, as well as form and database improvements. Website development work also included work on cookie collection and notification.

IPRT proactively uses social media tools to extend our audiences, foster wider debate, and nurture international relationships with prison reform movements around the world. We had sustained growth in followers across social media platforms during the period (+7% on Twitter; +8% on Facebook; +27% on Instagram). To make sure you're the first to hear our reactions to the issues of the day and to see recent developments from around the world, be sure to join us on social media.

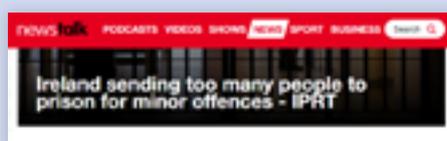
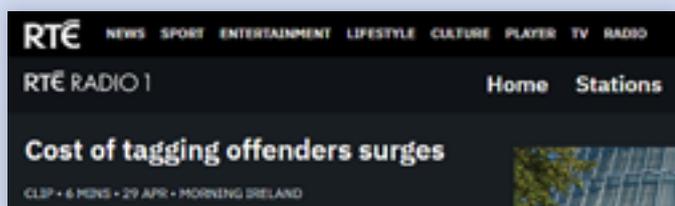
Additionally, we were able to make good use of YouTube to upload webinar recordings and other materials, including a project animation (relating to children and families). This has meant that we have been able to reach audiences who might not have been able to attend in-person events, including members of the Oireachtas whose schedules don't always permit event attendance and people based in other countries.

[iprt.ie](http://iprt.ie)  
[twitter.com/iprt](https://twitter.com/iprt)  
[facebook.com/irishpenalreformtrust](https://facebook.com/irishpenalreformtrust)  
[instagram.com/irishpenalreformtrust](https://instagram.com/irishpenalreformtrust)

## IPRT Media Coverage

IPRT works hard to keep human rights and penal reform issues on the public and political agenda. We continue to have a respected voice and stimulate informed debate in this space.

A small sample of the headlines of pieces we contributed to in 2021 and 2022 are featured below.



## Research, Policy and Public Affairs

Based on almost three decades of in-depth research and careful analysis of policy and legal issues, IPRT has formulated a distinct, constructive and effective perspective on criminal justice issues that has earned us a credible reputation. Our published research and policy papers are available at: [www.iprt.ie/research-centre](http://www.iprt.ie/research-centre)

IPRT regularly makes written and oral submissions to consultation processes on penal policy but also on linked issues such as human rights, women's rights, the rights of minority groups and crime policy issues, where they relate to our core objectives. IPRT both promotes the need for a national criminal justice policy that is informed by robust data and research, and also develops evidence-informed policy solutions to support policy development and decision making. Furthermore, IPRT actively monitors Ireland's international treaty obligations and leverages these to ensure adequate compliance with international human rights standards.

As well as Oireachtas presentations and engagements based on the submissions below, this period also saw previous legislative engagement come to fruition with IPRT appearing before the Disability Matters Committee in June 2022 on access to justice for people with disabilities in Ireland, and with IPRT appearing before the Joint Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community in October 2021 to discuss Travellers' experiences in prison in Ireland and related matters.

Opportunities to engage with international human rights processes have begun to return following COVID-19. IPRT's track record of achieving real and lasting reform through engaging with these processes is set to continue and grow over the coming period (see page 10 for more).

### Policy Submissions

- *IPRT Submission to the National Anti-Racism Committee (July 2021)*
- *Action for Children and Families of Prisoners Submission to the Review of Prison Rules (October 2021)*
- *IPRT Submission to the Draft State Report to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (November 2021)*
- *IPRT Submission to the Irish Prison Service Public Consultation on the Review of Prison Rules (November 2021)*
- *IPRT Submission to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on the Review of the Equality Acts (December 2021)*
- *Action for Children and Families of Prisoners Submission to the Public Consultation on the next Government Policy Framework for Children and Young People in Ireland (February 2022)*
- *Action for Children and Families of Prisoners Submission to the consultation on the review of the Action Plan on Bullying and Anti-Bullying Procedures for Schools (July 2022)*

### Oireachtas Submissions

- *IPRT Submission to the Joint Committee on Justice on Anti-Social Behaviour (January 2022)*
- *IPRT Submission on the General Scheme of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) (Amendment) Bill 2021 (January 2022)*
- *IPRT Submission to the Joint Committee on Justice on rehabilitative opportunities within the prison system (March 2022)*
- *IPRT Submission to Pre-Legislative Scrutiny of the Mental Health (Amendment) Bill 2021 (April 2022)*

### Publications

- *Progress in the Penal System: The need for transparency (February 2022)*
- *"Sometimes I'm missing the words": The rights, needs and experiences of migrants and minority ethnic groups in the Irish penal system (April 2022)*

### Submissions to International Monitoring Bodies

- *Oral submission to Universal Periodic Review (UPR) pre-session (October 2021)*
- *IPRT Submission to the 70th Pre-Sessional Working Group of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (January 2022)*
- *IPRT Alternative Report on Ireland's Fifth Review under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (May 2022)*

## Alliances and Engagements

**Our vision for the penal system cannot be achieved alone. We continue to build strategic links and alliances with others in order to strengthen our overall capacity for creating change.**

Given the size of IPRT, where possible, we proactively try to increase our impact through working in partnership and in alliance with other organisations to achieve common policy goals. To demonstrate our support for common human rights issues, in 2021/2022 IPRT was an active organisational member of Mental Health Reform, Children's Rights Alliance, Irish Network Against Racism, Prevention and Early Intervention Network (PEIN), the Wheel, the Association of Criminal Justice Research and Development, the Irish Council for Civil Liberties and the National Women's Council.

### Constructive Engagement

Over this period IPRT has maintained longstanding relationships with stakeholders, as well as developing new alliances.

A comprehensive overview of the stakeholders we regularly engage with is available in previous editions of the IPRT Annual Review, including those in civil society, statutory bodies, the State, legislature, academia and international bodies. Throughout the period IPRT enjoyed positive engagement of note with the Office of the Inspector of Prisons, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Mental Health Commission, National Forensic Mental Health Service, Prison Officers' Association, and Ombudsman for Children, along with the Department of Justice, Irish Prison Service, Probation Service, the Courts Service and other relevant policymakers and oversight bodies.

IPRT further engaged with the community by inviting guest speakers to meet with the team, to help our understanding of issues on the ground, and discuss priority areas of work. These included representatives from NI-based NIACRO and UK-based NGO Women in Prison. New and strengthened relationships over the period include: SAOL Project, HAIL Housing, Clinks, Quality Matters and Fair Trials.

Further alliance building during 2021 included the establishment of a 'Solicitor Panel', which brings together solicitors working in areas relating to prison litigation so that we can hear directly from those who are regularly engaging with the courts and prisons about what is happening on the ground. This feeds into our broader advocacy work.

In early 2021, the All-Party Oireachtas Group on Penal Reform was re-established. The Group is jointly chaired by Deputy Jennifer Carroll MacNeill and Deputy Ivana Bacik, with secretariat support provided by IPRT. It provides a forum for members of all parties and independents, across the Dáil and Seanad, to discuss penal reform issues, engage directly with leading experts in the field and work together to create positive and lasting reform of the Irish penal system. Activities during this period included: the second open meeting for all TDs and Senators (October 2021), which focused on spent convictions and mental health, with contributions from Senator Lynn Ruane and Pat Bergin (Head of Service, National Forensic Mental Health Service); and a visit to Mountjoy and Dóchas Prisons by the co-chairs and the secretariat (March 2022). The third open meeting for all TDs and Senators, focusing on women in prison, is scheduled for July 2022. IPRT deepened engagement with many members of the Oireachtas, including Justice Spokespersons in particular.

Work of the Action for Children and Families of Prisoners network continued apace during the period, with three meetings of the full network and additional meetings with stakeholders by network Co-Chairs IPRT and UCC Centre for Criminal Justice and Human Rights. Visit [www.actionforfamilies.ie](http://www.actionforfamilies.ie) for more.

### Presentations

During the period, IPRT delivered presentations to key groups and diverse audiences, ranging from policy stakeholders to students. We spoke at a large number of external conferences and seminars, including events hosted by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Dublin Rape Crisis Centre and the Children's Rights Alliance, the ACJRD, universities, student societies, and others. This included a debate on the harms caused by imprisonment, alongside Senator Barry Ward, hosted by UCD Literary and Historical Society. We continued to make presentations to Recruit Prison Officers on our work, key current issues, and the importance of accountability and penal reform for the prison system.

### Events

Many of IPRT's events over the period have been detailed in other sections of the Review. As an overview, these included: an All-Party Oireachtas Group on Penal Reform meeting (Oct 2021); an information meeting on the Review of the Prison Rules 2007 (Sept 2021); a Knowledge Exchange Seminar in Stormont (May 2022); and the launch of ground-breaking research on migrants and minority ethnic groups in the Irish penal system (April 2022). Events also included three meetings of the IPRT 'Solicitor Panel' (Sept 2021, Dec 2021, March 2022).

IPRT hosted the second Prison Law Seminar online on 21st October 2021 on the topic of Developing Sentencing Guidelines for Ireland: *The Principles and Purposes of Sentencing*. The keynote speaker was Ms Justice O'Malley, Supreme Court judge and Chairperson of the Sentencing Guidelines & Information Committee (SGIC). This was the first time she spoke publicly about the work of the SGIC. The event helped contribute to discussion and debate around sentencing through the views shared with attendees by our expert speakers, and through front-page coverage in both *The Irish Times* and *Irish Examiner*. A response at the event by the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre helped to dispel myths that victims and offenders cannot work together towards sentencing reform.

IPRT published and launched *Progress in the Penal System: The need for transparency (2021)* (or 'PIPS 2021') in February 2022, the fifth in a series of annual reports benchmarking progress in Ireland's penal system. The 2021 report reflects on the past five years of monitoring the Irish penal system: the progress made, the areas where change has been slow, and the issues about which we still have a limited understanding due to a lack of data. Chaired by Dr Seamus Taylor, we were pleased to invite contributions from esteemed speakers and respondents, including: Sinéad Gibney, Chief Commissioner of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC); Prof Ben Crewe, University of Cambridge; Caron McCaffrey, Director General of the Irish Prison Service; Mark Wilson, Director of the Probation Service; and Prof Ian O'Donnell of UCD.

## Alliances and Engagements continued

### Consultations

IPRT took all opportunities to further the penal reform agenda and to gather knowledge about broader issues in the criminal and social justice landscape to inform our work this year. Details of our submissions to formal consultations are noted on page 18.

IPRT was one of a select group of stakeholders invited to consult with the High-Level Task Force on the mental health and addiction challenges of persons interacting with the criminal justice system on its Terms of Reference in July 2021.

In late 2021, the Irish Prison Service launched a public consultation to inform its review of the Prison Rules 2007. IPRT submitted a detailed 61-page submission and also organised an informal information meeting on 13th September 2021 to build capacity for those interested in submitting to the consultation, which included input from prison law expert Prof Mary Rogan.

In early 2022, IPRT was consulted to inform the draft and editing of an upcoming theatre production depicting the experiences of women in prison in Ireland and the challenges they face both in prison and on release.

IPRT continued to participate on the steering committee of the Traveller Justice Initiative in 2021/2022, and as a member of the steering group of a Mental Health Reform project on 'Mental Health in Irish Prisons'.

### Prisoners and Prisoners' Families

Through our qualitative interviews for research, our annual prisoner members' survey, responding to queries, and conducting occasional prison visits IPRT regularly engages with prisoners and their families. This informs our strategic priorities and provides impetus for further action, investigation or research.

Although not service providers, we regularly receive queries from prisoners and prisoners' families regarding legal or administrative concerns about the prison system. This was all the more pronounced with prisoners and their families contacting IPRT in relation to the impact of COVID-19.

COVID-19 continued to limit our ability to visit prisons in Ireland over this period. However, we were pleased to be able to visit Shelton Abbey, Mountjoy, Loughan House and Castlereagh Prisons and meet people in custody and/or staff.

We were able to disseminate hundreds of copies of our updated *Know Your Rights* booklet to people in prison and their families, thanks to the support of the Irish Prison Service who enabled

a small-scale information campaign to be run by IPRT in all prisons across the country. In the community, IPRT launched an online version of the booklet on [www.rightsinprison.ie](http://www.rightsinprison.ie), supported by a pro bono developer.

IPRT dealt with over 200 information queries over the period. Common queries raised by prisoners and their families in 2021 and 2022 include: booking visits; review of sentence length (as reported in the media at several points during the year); access to temporary release and open prisons; access to healthcare; access to education and services; supports (both financial and psychological) for children and families of prisoners; parole; and access to supports and accommodation on release.

The information obtained through these various channels all feeds into IPRT's advocacy work and helps inform our policy asks.

The key issues raised by people currently in prison, by way of the Annual Prisoner Member Survey, will be presented at the 2022 AGM.



The sun splitting the stones on an IPRT staff visit to Shelton Abbey, September 2021.



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