

**Examination of the United Kingdom's 6th periodic report to the UN
committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**



**Submission from Conradh na Gaeilge to the UN committee on Economic,
Social and Cultural Rights**

August 2015



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Section 1: Executive summary and Introduction

Conradh na Gaeilge is the democratic forum for the Irish-speaking community and works on behalf of the Irish-speaking and Gaeltacht community to promote the language throughout the whole of Ireland and around the world. Since its foundation on 31 July 1893, members of Conradh na Gaeilge have been actively promoting Irish in every aspect of life in Ireland, from legal and educational affairs to the development of new media and services through Irish. Conradh na Gaeilge currently has over 180 branches in addition to numerous individual members.

Conradh na Gaeilge have been actively working to secure protective legislation for the Irish language in Northern Ireland for a number of years. We have also been working with local communities, Irish Language groups and other NGO's to address inequalities that exist for Irish speakers in the north.

To date we have campaigned extensively for a rights based Irish language Act, lobbied and worked with the newly established super-councils for better provision of local government services through Irish and the implementation of the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages (which was ratified by the UK Government in 2001), examined the lack of provision for children with special educational needs within the Irish medium education sector and lobbied for better allocation of funding to meet the needs of the burgeoning Irish language community. All of this work was carried out in conjunction with local communities and stakeholders within and without the Irish language community who make use of international and national commitments made by the UK Government and her local assemblies to judge how effectively their rights are being met on the ground.

The report will provide a community-based viewpoint on how the policies and practices in place in Northern Ireland relating to the Irish Language, some of which are detailed in the UK's report to the committee, are performing to realise meaningful change, development and rights on the ground.

Section 2: Summary of recommendations from Conradh na Gaeilge to the committee contained in this report

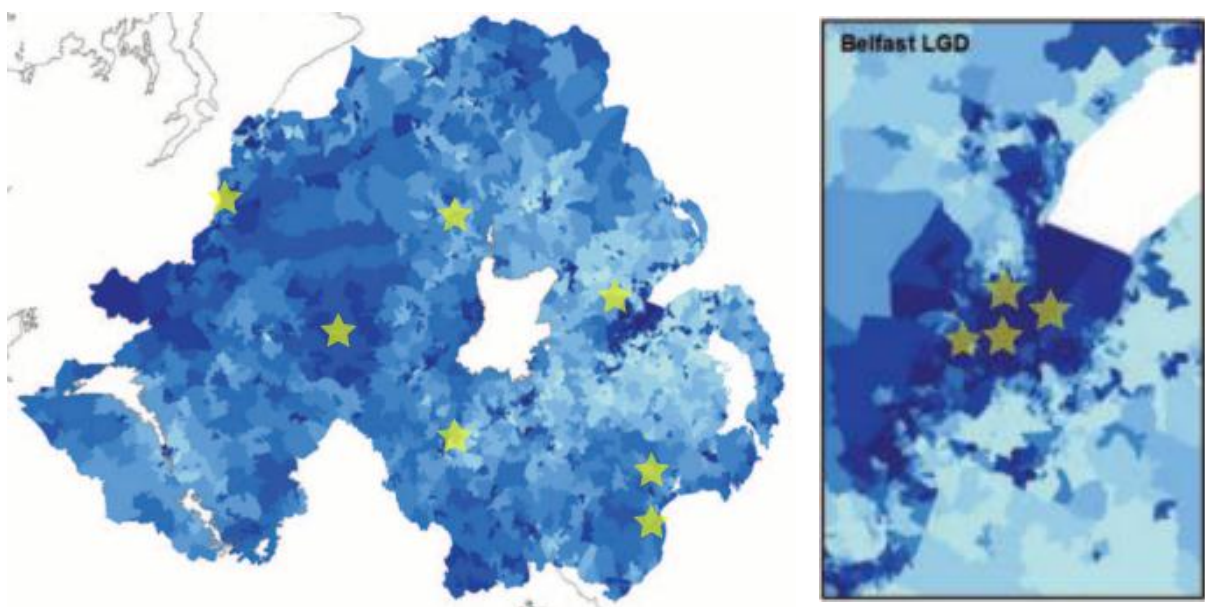
2.1 General Issues - Progressive realisation

Conradh na Gaeilge support the position of other NI based NGO's, including the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) and the Human Rights Consortium, that it would be much more valuable if the UK government submitted a more analytical, rather than descriptive, report. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights allows for the "progressive realisation" of the rights guaranteed. In turn, as the UK government should be seeking to highlight whether it is progressively realizing rights over several examinations, its reports should go beyond mere description and contain baseline data, measures of progress (or regression), and a plan of action for improvement.

The current report contains no baseline data or performance indicators, and is silent on a plan of action to meet all Covenant obligations. It simply lists information, particularly new legislation, but provides no analysis or indication of the state of "progressive realisation" since the last examination.

Conradh na Gaeilge and the groups and communities we work with make use of the articles in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the related General Comments in their work to monitor if these standards are being made real in their own communities, specifically if their cultural rights as outlined in ICESCR are being implemented and afforded to them. As many of the Irish language groups and communities are located in communities which, according to the government's own figures, are among the most disadvantaged in the north, our work also tests whether government is successfully according 'due priority' to the most vulnerable groups as required by the Committee's General Comments.

Breakdown of deprivation levels within Irish Language Community:



Above are the results from the analysis of the 'Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures 2010' and a list of the current locations of all the Irish language groups which are currently funded under the Scéim Phobal Gaeilge through Foras na Gaeilge. As can be seen from the locations of these groups, they are frequently located in areas which are at the most disadvantaged end of the poverty indicators. These illustrates the importance of continued and increased provision of services in these areas, and also shows that there is a strong demand for services to be delivered through Irish in these areas.

One of the Key Findings of 'Knowledge and Use of Irish in Northern Ireland' published in February 2014 by DCAL and NISRA found that "Adults living in the least deprived areas are less likely to have knowledge of Irish than those living in the most deprived areas (13% and 19% respectively)."

Given that the UK is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, it is questionable the extent to which the limitation of the "progressive realisation" of Covenant rights should apply to the UK at all, given that the covenant states that it should be implemented 'to the maximum of its available resources'. Conradh na Gaeilge reiterates the Committee's view that the UK government is in a position to realise the full protection of economic, social and cultural rights without any further delay. In 2009 the United Nations Committee for Social, Economic and Cultural Rights expressed concern that the Irish Language Act had not been legislated for. The UN Committee contrasted this with the more favourable positions in Wales and Scotland and advised that in relation to compliance with duties under the UN Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) that: "...the State party, or the devolved administration in Northern Ireland, adopt an Irish Language Act with a view to preserving and promoting minority languages and cultural heritage...".

It has been acknowledged by various oversight committees (outlined below) that, given the acknowledged difficulties within the power-sharing assembly at Stormont and the lack of political consensus on the language, the UK Government must, therefore, fulfil its obligations legislating for the Irish Language through Westminster. Furthermore, the commitment to legislate for the Irish language in the St Andrew's Agreement of 2006, did not include a prerequisite of cross party support. It stated:

"The [UK] Government will introduce an Irish Language Act reflecting on the experience of Wales and Ireland and work with the incoming Executive to enhance and protect the development of the Irish language."

It is clear that at present there is no prospect of the Northern Ireland Assembly legislating for the Irish language in the context of opposition from considerable numbers of unionist elected representatives. The independent Human Rights Organisation, The Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ), has taken the position that given the UK government's commitment to the Irish language Act constitutes an international obligation which is not being discharged by the regional legislature, the obligation should fall to the UK Parliament. Conradh na Gaeilge endorses this position. The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission also highlighted the obligations to legislate for treaty-based commitments in specific

relation to the Irish Language Act in its own submission to the Committee of Experts on the implementation of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (COMEX):

“While treaty compliance can be achieved by regional authorities meeting relevant standards, if a devolved government fails to deliver the state does not escape the obligations that it assumed, and the Commission therefore expects the UK Government to ensure that legislation is enacted. The Commission understands that a similar situation arose in 2007 with reference to another international obligation, namely the EU Gender Directive on Goods and Services, where, in the reported absence of agreement in the Northern Ireland Executive, the UK Government legislated on the matter.”

The UK government has powers to direct action (including legislation) be taken by a Northern Ireland Minister in order to fulfil international obligations. However, these powers have not been exercised in relation to the Irish Language Act, in spite of commitments made at St Andrew’s 2006, obligations under ICESCR and the Framework Convention for National Minorities and the recommendations of COMEX.

We hope this information will be of some assistance to the Committee. Conradh na Gaeilge is supportive of the submissions the Committee may receive from other civil society groups in Northern Ireland.

- **The Committee may want to ask the government what steps it will take to objectively measure progressive realisation, and when the government expects to meet its obligations under the Covenant?**

Section 3: List of Issues

3.1 Progressive realisation of Cultural rights - The Irish Language Act - Acht na Gaeilge

The Covenant calls on each party state to take steps that lead to the full implementation of rights by all appropriate means, 'including particularly the adoption of legislative measures.' Despite committing to introduce an Irish Language Act 'based on the experiences of Wales and the Republic of Ireland, in the international agreement at St Andrews in 2006, no progress has made in terms of safeguarding the rights of Irish speakers through the adoption of legislative measures.

3.11 - Consultation on the Irish Language Act

Since the original commitment made in relation to an Irish Language Act made by the UK Government at St Andrews in 2006, three public consultations have been conducted to assess community support for such legislation. The most recent began in March 2015 and lasted for 12 weeks. The breakdown of the figures below demonstrate two things: a) the community is keen to engage on the issue of Irish language legislation (the responses to the public consultation represent the highest number of responses the local Government has had to a public consultation since its inception) and b) that there is wide and strong support for the introduction of language legislation.

Year	Total number of Responses	% in favour	% against
2006	668	93%	7%
2007	7,500	68%	32%
2015*	13,000+	90%*	10%*

*Final figures are yet to be confirmed although the figures above have been issued by the Government department responsible for the consultation.

3.12 - Surveys and census reports

Since the last ICESCR monitoring round, a number of independent surveys have been carried to gauge attitudes and perceptions on the Irish language. A UK-wide census was also carried out in 2011. Both the surveys and the census demonstrate an undeniable trend of growth within the Irish language community along with more positive perceptions and attitudes to the language from the general population. Despite this growth, there is a continued failure on the part of the state to meet the needs of this burgeoning community.

The following are extracts from the report published by Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), which was commissioned by the Department of Culture, Arts and

Leisure (DCAL) titled; 'Knowledge and Use of Irish in Northern Ireland' published in February 2015.

Figure 1 Knowledge of Irish

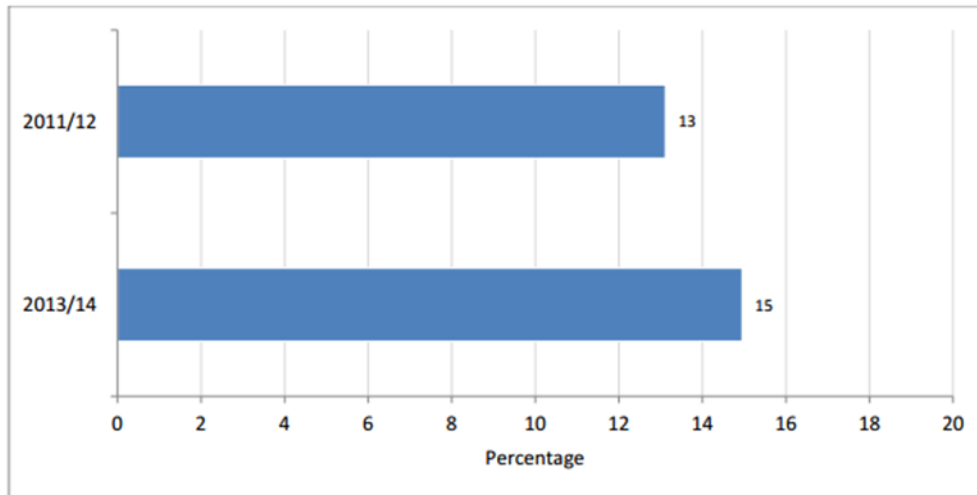
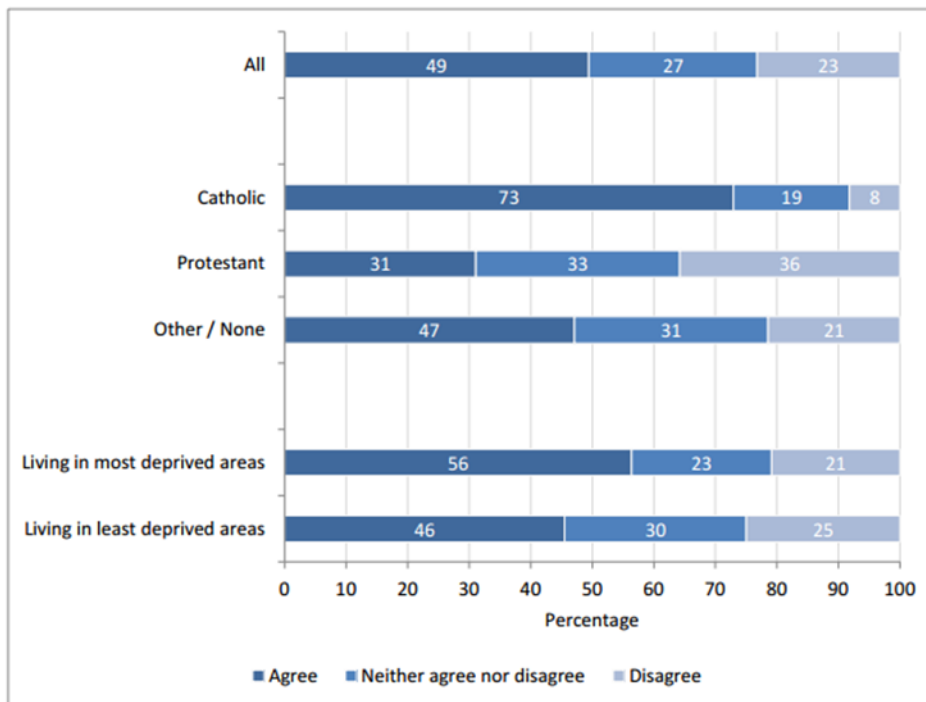


Figure 8 Irish is an important part of Northern Irish culture



According to NISRA, 13% of the population have some knowledge of the Irish language.

A survey carried out by Independent Pollsters, Millward Brown and Conradh na Gaeilge in January 2015 found the following:

63% of people here agree that Irish-medium education should be available for those who wish to receive it.

55% of people agree that Government support should be provided to support local communities develop Irish language strategies for their own area.

54% of people agree that services should be available in Irish for those who seek th

3.13 – International oversight committees

A succession of oversight committees of treaties the UK is party to have called for the implementation of an Irish language Act. The Committee of European Experts (COMEX) which monitor the Implementation of the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML), which the UK Government ratified in 2001 up to clause II and III for Irish, Scots Gàidhlig and Welsh, criticised in the strongest possible terms the lack of progress on national legislation that would protect the rights of Irish Speakers (despite similar legislation being passed for Wales and Scotland) and also on their failure to implement the ECRML. Whilst acknowledging that “the responsibility for the practical implementation of the Charter lies within the devolved administrations” it added that “The UK Government nevertheless has the final responsibility under international law for the implementation of the Charter.” COMEX stated that legislation for the Irish Language was:

“...needed to protect and promote the Irish language in Northern Ireland, as is the case for Welsh in Wales and Scottish Gaelic in Scotland. Furthermore the Committee of Experts agrees with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission that a legislative basis is even more important in the environment of political conflict as a means of achieving reconciliation.”

COMEX noted that it was unlikely legislation to protect Irish would be passed by the Assembly given the need for consensus with unionist and nationalist parties, but that the Act could instead be passed by Westminster given its parallel legislative competence.

In 2011 another Council of Europe treaty body, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for National Minorities (FCNM), included the following provision among only three ‘Issues for Immediate Action’ by the UK to ensure compliance with its obligations under that treaty and called on the UK Government to:

“...develop comprehensive legislation on the Irish language in Northern Ireland and take resolute measures to protect and implement more effectively the language rights of persons belonging to the Irish-speaking community.”

The Committee stated it was ‘deeply concerned by the failure to adopt legislation on the Irish language due to a lack of political consensus in the Northern Ireland Assembly’.

- **The committee may ask the UK Government to provide evidence of measures taken to ensure obligations made at domestic, European and International level regarding legislation for the Irish Language are met?**

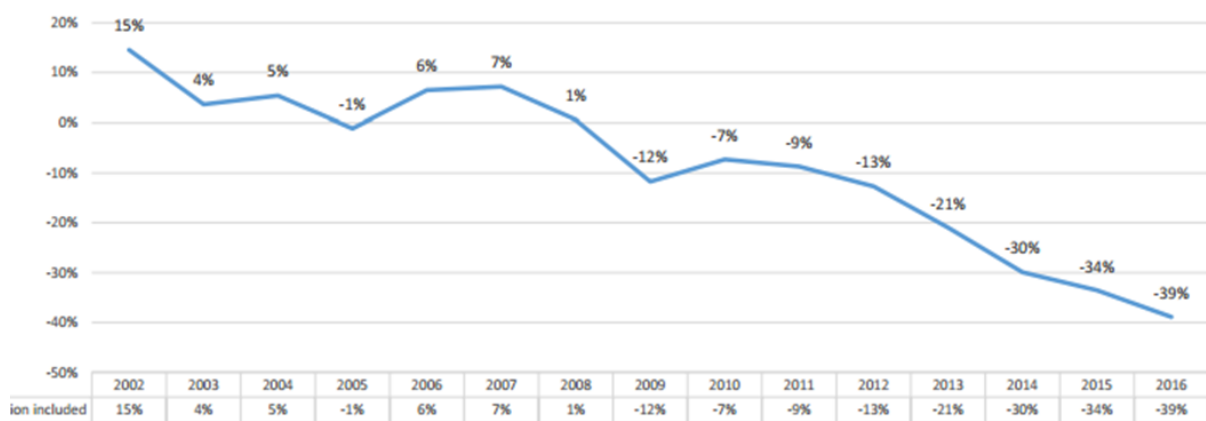
3.2 Impact of austerity

Failure to progress language rights has coincided with the removal of vital services and provisions through a series of cuts which have impacted negatively on the Irish Language community in NI. Given the location of Irish language communities within communities that, primarily suffer disproportionate levels of deprivation, it calls into question whether the UK Government is giving 'due priority' to the most vulnerable groups as required by the Committee's General Comments.

3.2.1 – Funding cuts to statutory agency (Foras na Gaeilge) tasked with promoting the Irish Language across Ireland, North and South.

Foras na Gaeilge provides funding to Irish language organizations, other organisations, and community groups throughout the island to strengthen the status of the language, improve the public's ability in Irish and raise the language's profile. The lack of investment in the Foras na Gaeilge budget has had knock-on adverse effects, especially in terms of the de facto embargo it has placed on the growth and development of existing and new projects.

Foras na Gaeilge's actual inflation adjusted funding since 2001 (2016 estimated)



Foras na Gaeilge Annual Funding (from DCAL only)	
Year	Annual Budget
2012	£3,605,080
2013	£3,502,961
2014	£3,095,150

3.3 The Right to take part in Cultural life

In the Concluding Observations from the 2009 monitoring round, the Committee urged the State party 'to ensure that the Covenant is given full legal effect in its domestic law, that the Covenant rights are made justiciable, and that effective remedies are available for victims of all violations of economic, social and cultural rights.' The right to take part in cultural life, as stated in ICESCR, has not been facilitated by the state through 'given effect in the UK through appropriate legislation and administrative measures', as stated in the UK Governments Final State Report in June 2014. No domestic legislation has been introduced in NI that gives effect to the cultural rights enshrined under ICESCR, regarding the Irish Language.

Northern Ireland remains the only part of the UK or Ireland without legislative protection for its minority language (Irish). Such protection does exist in various European and International treaties such as the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and through ICESCR. The difficulty for Irish speakers in Northern Ireland is that under UK law the provisions of the Charter operate only on the plane of international law and create no rights or obligations in domestic law.

3.31 – Street name policy of Belfast City Council

The absence of enforceability or incorporation regarding International treaties into domestic legislation was referenced on a recent ruling taken by Judge Horner in a judicial review taken by Belfast resident, Eileen Reid. The case was taken against Belfast City Council in relation to their decision to refuse to erect an additional street name plate in Irish at Ballymurphy Drive, Belfast. Belfast City Council's street naming policy, it was argued, does not facilitate the introduction of bilingual (English/Irish) signs and places onerous obligations on communities wishing to incorporate bilingual signage into their local areas, contrary to the obligations placed on local authorities by the European charter et al. However, in his ruling, Judge Horner stated that:

"As a general proposition international treaties or agreements which, as here, have not been incorporated into national laws are not enforceable".

"A public authority such as the applicant (Belfast City Council) cannot be obliged to treat itself as bound to act in compliance with international obligation".

Judge Horner went further and referenced a previous judicial review, *Mac Giolla Cathain's Application or Judicial Review (2009) NIQB 66 Treacy*, which said:

"The distinction between international law and domestic law has long been accepted by the courts in the UK. Where it is intended to give domestic legal effect to obligations arising from international treaties the method of achieving this is by incorporating the relevant treaty into domestic law, as for example was done by the Human Rights Act 1998 in relation to the principal provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights. This has not been done in relation to the charter."

The ruling meant that a public authority cannot be obliged to treat itself as bound to act in compliance with international obligations.

It is worth noting that under the Administration of Justice (Languages) (Ireland) Act, 1737, it is forbidden for Irish to be used in courts. The issue was examined in The Mac Giolla Cathain Judicial review, mentioned above.

The Administration of Justice (Languages) (Ireland) Act of 1737 is supported by criminal sanctions, making it a criminal offence to use any language other than English in the courts. The fact that this legislation, which dates back to the era of penal laws in Ireland, continues to be in force is a matter of concern to many Irish speakers in Northern Ireland as well as to members of the legal profession. Irish speakers are effectively barred from having access to the courts while this legislation remains in force. Similar legislation forbidding Welsh and Scots Gàidhlig to be used in courts in Wales and Scotland respectively has long since been repealed.

3.32 - Irish Language services and visibility at UNESCO world heritage site, The Giants Causeway

As stated above, the absence of domestic legislation for the Irish language and clarity around adherence to International treaties such as the ECRML and ICESCR have meant the public authorities and statutory bodies have been reluctant and in some cases, oppositional, to development of services and signage in Irish, despite offering similar services in many other languages when not legally-bound. The public opposition of some senior politicians in NI to the Language has helped create the 'do-nothing' attitude that exists within many public authorities towards the language. See below response from the manager of the tourist centre at UNESCO world Heritage site, The Giant's Causeway Copy, to request for the provision of audio tours through the medium of Irish.

Email from the site Manager of the Giants Causeway:



The screenshot shows an email interface. At the top, there is a browser address bar with the URL: https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ui=2&ik=d5b909612f&view=pt&search=cf&cf1_from=Alastair.Walker%40nationaltrust.org.uk&cf2_sizeoperator=s_sizecf2_sizeunit=s_sizecf2_sizevalue=s_sizecf2_sizevalue. Below the address bar is the logo for Conradh na Gaeilge and the name of the recipient, Pádraig Ó Tiarnaigh <padraig@cnag.ie>. The subject of the email is "FW: Tour Request - Irish Language". The sender is Alastair Walker <Alastair.Walker@nationaltrust.org.uk> and the date is 12 Lúnasa 2015 10:40. The email body contains the following text: "Dear Pádraig", "Many thanks for your enquiry.", "There is currently no legislation that requires us to provide services in any specific language. Should there be such legislation in the future we would off course comply. In the meantime we supply services in the languages that are in most demand.", "Regards", "Alastair Walker", "Site Manager", "Giant's Causeway".

- **The committee may ask the UK Government to outline what work will it do with the executive to ensure active participation and enforcement of recent Irish language strategy as it committed to at St Andrews?**

3.4 The Right to Education:

Article 89 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 places a statutory duty on the Department of Education to ‘encourage and facilitate’ Irish-medium education. This duty, modelled on that set down in 1989 for the Integrated Education sector, means that the Department of Education must take steps to ensure the Irish-medium education sector is given the necessary resources and support to grow and develop in line with the demand that exists for it.

The obligation on the State towards the development of Irish medium education also has a strong basis in international and European legislation. ICESCR clearly states the obligations on states to ensure that the education provided is culturally appropriate:

“States have obligations to... fulfil (facilitate) the acceptability of education by taking positive measures to ensure that education is culturally appropriate for minorities and indigenous peoples, and of good quality for all;...”

The need for concrete and positive steps to promote the right to culturally appropriate education is reinforced in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Despite the legal duty outlined in domestic legislation, a number of problems have arisen over the last number of years which highlight the ‘ambiguity’ of the statutory duty and the lack of clarity around what exactly the ‘special measures’ entail.

Below are two examples of issues specific to Irish Medium Education. It is by no means an exhaustive or comprehensive list but an overview of some the problems that currently exist.

3.41 -The right to access & Tuistí an Tuaiscirt campaign

Despite the growth of Irish medium education over the past number of years, there remains only one stand-alone Irish medium school at post-primary level. The reason for this limited choice is historical but failure to practically apply the statutory duty relating to Irish Medium Education continues to hinder this development. Transport to and from school is a critical part of this.

Research published in August 2014 by Tuistí an Tuaiscirt found that the failure to provide transport was costing parents in north Belfast a combined annual bill of approximately £31,400, and importantly it was acting as a deterrent in terms of parents choosing where to send their children after primary school. 79% of parents of children attending Irish medium Nurseries and Primary schools in North Belfast said that existing transport provisions were a significant obstacle to sending their children to Coláiste Feirste - the only Irish medium education secondary school in the north of Ireland.

In the 2011 High Court case of *Coláiste Feirste v Department of Education* (2011) NIQB 98, Justice Treacy found that the Minister and Department for Education had the legal power to develop unique transport arrangements for the Irish medium education sector. Justice Treacy found that the statutory duty was to have ‘practical consequences and legislative significance.’ Indeed a similar duty exists for the integrated sector, and the provision of transport was an important factor in the growth of this sector.

Following a successful campaign led by the parents and supported by The Participation and Practice of Rights (PPR) group, the Department has allocated a budget of a maximum £70k per annum for a period of three years after which the arrangements will be reviewed. The arrangement is also subject to review following the outworking’s of the Independent Review of Home to School Transport. Parents and the school believe that the current arrangements and proposals can see this issue resolved. The fact that it took a successful court case and an intensive parents-led campaign to get to this stage highlights the urgent need for a more detailed analysis and a clear framework of what ‘special measures’ should be taken to ensure compliance with the statutory duty. The difficulties facing other young people attending Coláiste Feirste outside of North Belfast remain.

3.42 - Special Educational Needs (SEN) within Irish medium schools.

The lack of focused, bespoke provision to support the needs of children with SEN who are educated through the medium of Irish has long been an issue of concern for the sector. It is often the case that when a child is diagnosed with having special educational needs that the parents will be advised to remove that child from the Irish-medium school that they have selected for their child and to enrol them in an English speaking school. Doing this infringes upon the parents’ right to choose Irish-medium education for their child, and also raises serious questions in relation to the rights of the child to receive education in their mother tongue, as recognised under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Anecdotal evidence indicates serious problems within the Irish medium sector with the diagnostic tools available to them to properly identify SEN within children in an Irish medium setting. Additionally, educational psychologists have indicated that another problem faced by the Irish-medium sector in the identification of SEN is the lack of assessment materials in Irish. Pupils who are being educated through Irish ought to be assessed in Irish in order to give the most accurate results. These psychologists have also indicated three major challenges that they face in their work, which include “personal Irish language competence (24%), the lack of assessment material in Irish (20%) and accurate diagnosis of learning difficulties (12%).”

In Wales, where they also have a system of immersion education, every effort is made to ensure that the assistance and support given is through the medium of Welsh, in keeping with the child’s education. Their Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs states:

“All other bodies which help pupils and their parents, but which are not covered by the Welsh Language Act, should also, in so far as they are able, ensure that their services are delivered in Welsh and/or English as appropriate. It should be remembered that Welsh or English speaking children and young people’s progress will be hindered if they do not

receive services in the language in which they are most comfortable, and this applies equally to those pupils receiving Welsh medium, English medium or bilingual education.”

In instances where a pupil’s special educational needs are deemed so severe that education in a mainstream school cannot meet their needs, this shouldn’t automatically mean that the option of Irish-medium education is not available to them. There are approximately 38 dedicated units for special educational needs at primary level, none of which cater for pupils who speak Irish. Units which can provide this support should be established so that parents are not faced with the choice of sending their children to a specialist unit or helping their child to learn Irish.

Four key issues to be addressed re SEN in Irish medium education sector are:

- Additional funding
- Adequate assessment tools
- Educational Psychology – through Irish
- Intensive Learning Unit

In general terms, there also needs to be an acknowledgment that Irish medium education is different and trying to use a system designed to meet the needs of children with SEN within an English medium setting will not address the specific needs of children with SEN in Irish-medium education. In September 2015, a second, stand-alone Irish Medium secondary school will be opening in south Derry. This, and the continued growth of Irish medium primary and nursery schools makes it imperative that swift action is taken to address the serious problems with SEN support and provision within the Irish medium sector.

A failure to ensure that children with Special Educational Needs are properly catered for within the Irish-medium sector means that the statutory duty to ‘encourage and facilitate’ Irish-medium education is not being properly fulfilled.

- **The committee may ask the UK Government to outline in detail what ‘special measures’ they are taking to ‘encourage and facilitate’ the growth of Irish medium Education?**

3.5 The right to live free from fear and concluding remarks

'Recognizing that, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his economic, social and cultural rights, as well as his civil and political rights...'

Preamble, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

During the period under review, the language has been consistently attacked and ridiculed by some of the most senior politicians in NI. These attacks, whilst fuelled by ignorance and running contrary to the spirit of the covenant, also leave the Irish language community feeling vulnerable, impacts negatively 'on the ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear' and is a clear obstacle to creation of conditions 'whereby everyone may enjoy his economic, social and cultural rights.' The fact that these unjustified attacks happen in the absence of any clear legal-bound rights framework for the Irish Language only adds to these feelings of isolation and fear and demonstrates that, in the absence of domestically enforceable rights, communities can be left exposed to marginalisation and, at worst, demonization.

The difficulty which Irish speakers now face is that agreements like The Good Friday Agreement, St Andrews Agreement, the Charter and ICESCR have raised among Irish speakers the expectation that they have certain rights and that the state has certain obligations in relation to the use of Irish which they do not in fact have in law. By definition rights which cannot be enforced are not rights at all.

The disconnect between the international agreements referred to above and the domestic law in Northern Ireland is now so great that there is a danger that Irish speakers will increasingly find themselves in conflict with the authorities as they seek to assert language rights which they have been given to believe they have but which in fact they do not.

As the sovereign Government with ultimate responsibility for her commitments under ICESCR, the UK Government must bring forth adequate language legislation to address the issues outlined above and to address her long-standing domestic, European and International obligations.

4. Appendices

4.1 Press coverage of Language Rights campaign

Consultation on language act ends

BY EVAN SHORT @evansms
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THE closing of a public consultation process into an Irish Language Act was marked by Conradh na Gaeilge handing in a large number of submissions to Culture Minister and North Belfast MLA Carál Ní Chuilín.

Conradh na Gaeilge facilitated a series of public meetings and action forums to discuss public opinions and to raise and encourage participation from Irish language groups and from the general public during the 12-week consultation. Thousands of submissions had already been received by DCAL and last Wednesday Conradh na Gaeilge presented thousands of additional submissions to the Minister in Belfast.

Uachtarán Chonradh na Gaeilge, Cóilín Ó Cearbhaill, said: "Conradh na Gaeilge has collected and facilitated thousands of submissions during this consultation period. The quantity of responses in favour of language legislation displays the huge demand for an Irish Language Act.

"The participation of the community greatly supports the consultations in 2006 and 2007 and shows that the demand is positive and continuous. The same language legislation has been in place in Scotland and in Wales for years and the time has come that the



THE LATEST STAGE: Ursula Ní Shabhaois, Pádraig Ó Tiarnaigh and Ciarán Mac Giolla Bhéin hand over the consultation documents to Culture Minister Carál Ní Chuilín

same parity and equality was in place in the North of Ireland."

Ciarán Mac Giolla Bhéin, Language Protection and Representation Manager, said they utilised a number of methods to ensure people were engaged.

"Through internet campaigns, response forms, working alongside Irish language groups and organisations, and through the fantastic work being done with young people, we have succeeded in raising the question of the Irish language as an equality issue.

"Now the government must listen to the people and take

action based on their needs.

This is only the beginning."

Minister Ní Chuilín reaffirmed her commitment to an Irish Language Act on accepting the submissions.

"I'm delighted with the thousands of responses we had to the consultation which closed last week and it will take some months to go through them all. Responses were returned from across the community and demonstrate the high levels of interest there is in Gaeilge. It's very important that Acht na Gaeilge is supported by the Assembly Executive because the Irish language threatens no one, it belongs to us all."



Over 12,000 responses to language consultation

90% support a draft Irish Language Bill: Findings

IRISH language organisations have welcomed the massive public response to the consultation on draft Irish language legislation, with over 12,000 responses registered since February.

The Department of Culture Arts & Leisure (DCAL) confirmed the figures in a statement this week, outlining that over 90% of responses were supportive of the draft Irish Language Bill.

That figure is an increase on the 65% that supported a similar consultation in 2007, in which 11,000 responses were submitted.

Culture Minister Carál Ní Chuilín said: "I am pleased to have received more than 12,000 responses from people of all ages and backgrounds, across the north and beyond. More than 90% of respondents were in favour of the Irish Language Bill. The support is overwhelming but

facilitate a part of this process, and would like to commend all of the people and groups that came together in support of this campaign."

Just before the consultation process drew to a close, Minister Ní Chuilín visited West Belfast Irish language community group Glór na Móna's fun day as part of Féile Liam Uí Mhuiri for young Gaels in the Falls Park. Children and young people presented the Minister with their submissions containing their thoughts and needs as young Irish speakers regarding an Irish Language Bill.

Brónagh Fusco, Development Worker for Glór na Móna told the Andersonstown News: "Irish language and community organisations across the north co-ordinated and took part in internet campaigns, response forms, and through the fantastic work being done with young people, the Irish language community succeeded in raising the question of the Irish language as an equality issue.

"There was a fantastic

Ireland - Religious and Social Affairs

Protesters call for equality for Irish speakers



🕒 Saturday 12 April 2014 22:25



The protest, organised by Conradh na Gaeilge, is part of An Lá Dearg

Protesters calling for equality for Irish speakers have demonstrated in Belfast city centre.

The protest, organised by a consortium of Irish language groups, is part of An Lá Dearg - a national campaign to highlight what organisers say is a lack of rights and equality for the Irish speaking community both in Northern Ireland and the Republic.

Several thousand people took part in the demonstration today.

(See: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2014/0412/608524-irish-language/>)

4.2 Press coverage on surveys measuring attitudes to the Irish Language

www.u.tv/News/2015/08/07/Irish-language-attitudes-positive-across-island-42567



Irish language attitudes 'positive' across island

EDUCATION 07 AUG 2015

A report has found a positive attitude towards the Irish language by members of the public in all parts of the island of Ireland.



The primary factor in NI was 'learning Irish for its own sake'. ©Getty

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Story by UTV Staff, Belfast

However it added that this does not translate into significant use of the language.

The findings were based on two all-island surveys conducted in 2001 and 2013 for the Economics and Social Research Institute.

It said 17% of people in Northern Ireland and 57% of people in the Republic of Ireland have fluency in the language.

4.3 Press coverage from COMEX report of Jan 2014

www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-25750658

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N. Ireland N. Ireland Politics

Irish language policy of Northern Ireland Executive criticised

By Robbie Meredith
BBC News NI

16 January 2014 | Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Executive has been strongly criticised over how it promotes the Irish language in a report published by the Council of Europe.

The council is a human rights organisation with 47 member states.

Stormont failed to provide the council with information on the use of both Irish and Ulster-Scots, because the NI parties could not agree a submission.

The council's report said more should be done to promote Irish, including in NI's courts and the assembly.



The report said the Irish language is not adequately promoted in schools, government or the media

4.4 Press coverage of judicial review against Belfast City Councils street name policy

www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-26719245

A west Belfast resident has launched legal proceedings against Belfast City Council over its policy on Irish language street signs.

Eileen Reid, from Ballymurphy Drive, has been granted leave to seek a judicial review over being denied dual-language name plates on her road.

Her lawyers claim the method for surveying householders is unlawful.

They claim residents who did not respond were wrongly counted as being opposed to dual signage.

Ms Reid was canvassed about having supplementary Irish street signs erected on her street.

Under council criteria, two-thirds of those questioned need to declare themselves in favour before the new plates can go up.

It is understood that out of 92 eligible residents, 52 confirmed they wanted Irish signs, with only one opposed.

However, the remaining 39 did not respond to the survey.

According to Ms Reid's legal team these non-returned votes were wrongly counted as being opposed to dual signage.

They contend that the two-thirds policy does not comply with a requirement in local government legislation for the views of residents to be taken into consideration.

Her lawyers also claim that Belfast City Council is also in breach of its obligation to promote Irish under the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages.

(See: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-26719245>)

4.5 Press coverage of Tuistí an Tuaiscirt Campaign

www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-15450402

Colaiste Feirste wins bus funding challenge

25 October 2011 | Northern Ireland

A refusal to provide a dedicated bus service to NI's only post-primary Irish language school must be reconsidered, a High Court judge has ordered.

The judge ruled the Department of Education failed to properly consider its obligation to encourage the development of Irish medium education.

He granted a judicial review being sought by the board of governors at Colaiste Feirste in west Belfast.

They wanted funding for a bus service for 11 pupils coming from Downpatrick.

In September 2010, former Education Minister Caitriona Ruane decided not to financially back the pilot transport scheme on the basis of an economic assessment.

It had also been claimed that providing a bus to go directly to the school would set a precedent and lead to similar requests from all sectors.



(See: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-15450402>)

THE IRISH NEWS
WEDNESDAY AUGUST 13 2014

EDUCATION 23
Education Correspondent Simon Doyle

Irish-medium school students facing a daily walk through the city's most violent interfaces or £31k travel bill

SCHOOL JOURNIES: People from Colaiste Feirste on their way to the Falls Road junction, past Donegal Street to school in west Belfast.

FAMILIES of children who live too close to Belfast's only Irish-medium secondary school for a free bus pass, are facing staggering travel costs this year.

A new research report has found north Belfast families will be burdened by a collective \$31,000 to send their children to Colaiste Feirste in the west of the city.

The report has been published today by Tuistí an Tuaiscirt, a campaign that aims to resolve the issue.

Free transport for post-primary education is provided only to those who live at least three miles away from school. This is based on the shortest walking route between the door of the pupil's permanent home address and the nearest entrance door of their nearest suitable school.

The Ardoyne and Cliftonville areas fall just short of this three-mile cut-off, meaning the choice being parents is either pay for two buses – one into town and one out again – or walk through notorious sectarian hotspots.

From there, they turn onto Shankill Road and then the Laragh Way peace-line, the scene of numerous violent clashes over the years. The alternative would be to go down Twaddell Avenue Road.

Tuistí an Tuaiscirt says despite a favourable court ruling in 2011, there are still no dedicated buses provided for students from north Belfast with children being educated in Irish-medium schools developed and carried out questionnaires regarding the failure to provide transport.

District questionnaires were distributed to two groups of parents – one for parents of Colaiste Feirste students and one for parents of north Belfast national and bancoil pupils.

The research sought two perspectives – the financial costs to parents and families reconsider sending their children to the institution.

The report showed that 79 per cent of nursery and primary parents need "current transport provisions are a significant obstacle to sending their children to Irish medium secondary school".

Just shy of 60 per cent said the issue of transport could prevent them sending their children to Colaiste Feirste.

Breda Cloos is a parent with two children at Colaiste Feirste.

"We're hoping our report is helpful to the minister in sorting this issue out. The report provides strong evidence of the negative impact which the failure to provide transport is having on the development of Irish-medium education, and how putting buses on would help the department to meet their legal duties," she said.

"The Good Friday Agreement committed to addressing the historic lack of resources or support provided to Irish-medium education, and we still have a long way to go."

— Breda Cloos

In the 2013/14 academic year, there were 105 north Belfast students enrolled in Colaiste Feirste. In 2014/15 this is expected to increase to 122.

When calculated together, the combined approximate annual bill came to \$13,650 in 2013/2014.

If the questionnaires completed were representative of the current and projected north Belfast student

4.6 Press coverage of attacks on Irish Language by political representatives

www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-29895593

DUP MP Gregory Campbell has been barred from addressing the Northern Ireland Assembly for a day for failing to apologise for an Irish language parody.

A row developed on Monday, after he began his address to the assembly with: **"Curry my yoghurt can coca coalyer"**.

The Irish sentence "go raibh maith agat, Ceann Comhairle" translates as "thank you, Speaker" and is used by nationalist MLAs in the chamber.

The Speaker said his conduct fell "well short of standards expected from MLAs".

However, as Mr Campbell is currently at Westminster, the ruling has limited impact.

'Spirit of mockery'

Mr Campbell said he would not apologise for his words during the Irish language debate at Stormont on Monday.

Censuring Mr Campbell on Tuesday, Speaker Mitchel McLaughlin told the assembly: "The spirit of mockery was blatant and reflects badly upon this House and the deputy Speakers.

"I am not prepared to allow such a breach of standards to pass without consequence.

"Be in no doubt, if humour was in the Member's intention, it failed miserably."



My tolerance gets stretched beyond any credibility when I hear Irish ad nauseam on hundreds of occasions for no purpose other than a political one

Gregory Campbell, DUP

(See: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-29895593>)

www.thejournal.ie/gregory-campbell-toilet-paper-1794090-Nov2014/

'Curry my yoghurt' DUP MP says he would treat Irish Language Act 'like toilet paper'

Gregory Campbell also joked about his earlier controversial comments.

Nov 22nd 2014, 9:07 PM 47,760 Views 182 Comments

Share 1162 Tweet 184 Email 22

Updated 9.10 pm

THE DUP POLITICIAN who mocked the Irish language earlier this month has said he would treat a proposed Irish Language Act "as no more than toilet paper".

Gregory Campbell made the comments at the DUP conference in Belfast and was also applauded for holding up a pot of yoghurt to the delegates, a reference to earlier controversial comments.

Referencing what he termed a "republican wish list", the MP and MLA accused Sinn Féin of "trying to lull unionists into agreeing to costly projects such as a Bill of Rights, and their long demanded Irish Language Act".



Gregory Campbell says 'never' to an Irish Language Act.
Image: Twitter/DUPOnline

(See: <http://www.thejournal.ie/gregory-campbell-toilet-paper-1794090-Nov2014/>)