

Private and Confidential

Proposed Special Envoy on Civic Space

Commented [HEH1]: Any other suggestions?

Why focus on civic space¹?

Ireland's human rights priorities include the protection and promotion of civil society space and human rights defenders. Ireland has developed a strong profile internationally in this area and therefore can speak with credibility on these issues.

Broadening the scope to civic space (rather than civil society space) would ensure the role could focus on the human rights which create an enabling environment for civil society including freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. Equally, the rubric of civic space would present an opportunity for the mandate to engage on issues of gender equality and LGBTI rights in a constructive, inclusive way.

It is widely accepted that civic space is under significant pressure globally due to, inter alia, an increase in repressive laws and policies, security measures being used as a pretext to restrict freedoms and attacks and harassment against human rights defenders, journalists and civil society actors.

Areas of thematic focus

Civil society space

Human Rights Defenders

Right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly

Gender equality

Commented [HEH2]: Not sure if we want to include?

Rights of LGBTI persons

Potential activities

Commented [HEH3]: I have kept this intentionally vague e.g. did not reference LGBTI national strategy, work in Coalitions etc. See what you think.

1. Represent Ireland at high level events in multilateral fora including:

- Human Rights Council
- UN General Assembly 3rd Committee
- Commission on the Status of Women

¹ Civic space is the bedrock of open, democratic societies. It is the set of conditions which enable individuals and civil society organisations to organise, participate and communicate without hindrance or discrimination and therefore play a role in the political, economic and social life of society. This can only happen when a state upholds its duty to protect its citizens and respects and facilitates their human rights to associate, assemble peacefully and freely express views and opinions.

- OSCE Human Dimension
 - Council of Europe
2. Speak at human rights events organised by Ireland's Embassies (this could be combined with engagement at **country level** on thematic issues).
 3. Provide leadership to Ireland's work on civil society space and human rights defenders.
 4. Collaborate with UN/regional/bilateral partners such as:
 - The EU's Special Representative for Human Rights, Eamon Gilmore and FRA Director Michael O'Flaherty
 - Existing networks of bilateral Human Rights Envoys and Ambassadors
 - The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Office
 - Relevant UN Special Procedure mandate holders e.g. on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association, Human Rights Defenders, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
 5. Engage with civil society and NHRIs at home and abroad.

Commented [HEH4]: I have used this as a way to incorporate the request of "country visits" as I don't think this would be a helpful focus.