

Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights

Ref.: OL IRL 2/2025

(Please use this reference in your reply)

10 December 2025

Excellency,

I have the honour to address you in my capacity as Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 53/10.

In this connection, I would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information I have received concerning the **introduction of a new equality ground of socioeconomic disadvantage in the Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2024**, as part of a broader effort to modernize Ireland's equality framework, including transposing elements of the EU Pay Transparency Directive and enhancing protections against indirect discrimination.

The inclusion of this new ground constitutes potentially a very important milestone and one that could mark a significant step in recognizing poverty-related discrimination in law and ensuring equality for all individuals, regardless of their economic background. A reference of socioeconomic disadvantage among the prohibited grounds of discrimination could contribute to strengthening the legal recognition of intersectional discrimination and promoting a more inclusive and equitable society. By acknowledging this new ground in its anti-discrimination framework, Ireland is taking a progressive step toward addressing structural inequalities that disproportionately affect people living in poverty.

Socio-economic discrimination is a growing and well-documented concern in Ireland,¹ which has led to exclusion, stigma, and unequal treatment among people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Recent Central Statistics Office data (2024–2025) shows that socio-economic background is one of the most common discrimination grounds, particularly in job-seeking (27 per cent) as well as in workplaces, health services, social settings, and interactions with the national police.

In July 2022, I presented a report to the Human Rights Council on *“Banning discrimination on grounds of socioeconomic disadvantage: an essential tool in the fight against poverty”* ([A/77/157](#)). My report addresses the issue of discrimination on grounds of socio-economic disadvantage and how poverty-related discrimination – often referred to as “povertyism” – is a systemic issue that affects access to essential services such as employment, education, housing, and social protection. It identifies the strengthening of the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of socio-economic disadvantage as a key tool towards poverty eradication. I argue in the report that discrimination based on the ground of socio-economic background should be treated as a specific ground in anti-discrimination frameworks, which should address not only direct discrimination but also indirect discrimination.

¹ See: ATD Fourth World - Ireland: [Does it only happen to me?](#) and, [Breaking Barriers](#).

The impact of socio-economic discrimination on people's lives and dignity is very clear. Excluding socio-economic status from Ireland's equality legislation means that discrimination based on socio-economic disadvantage is neither officially monitored nor addressed, leaving affected individuals and communities without legal recourse. Moreover, public sector duties to promote equality and prevent discrimination do not extend to this form of disadvantage, resulting in a gap in institutional accountability. This omission particularly impacts communities experiencing multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination, who remain unprotected under the current legal framework.

By contrast, including socio-economic status as a protected ground would mark a progressive shift in Ireland's equality landscape. It would bring Ireland in line with 11 other EU Member States that already prohibit such discrimination, reinforcing its commitment to international human rights standards. (The European Commission, which carries out regular analysis of anti-discrimination law across Europe, noted in its [2024 Comparative Analysis of Non-discrimination Law in Europe](#) that 11 of the 27 countries in the European Union include the prohibition of discrimination on some form of socio-economic status in their legislation.) This reform would also empower public bodies to take affirmative action and foster cultural change through equality duties, helping to address systemic exclusion documented in domestic evidence. Overall, the inclusion of socio-economic status would strengthen legal protections and promote a more inclusive society.

I therefore welcome the steps taken by the Government of Ireland to ensure that its anti-discrimination framework effectively prohibits (direct and indirect) discrimination on grounds of socio-economic disadvantage, and that affirmative action is considered to address the systemic nature of the discrimination people in poverty face. I would like to encourage the inclusion of a new equality ground of socioeconomic disadvantage in the Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2024, as soon as possible. I also note that the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in its March 2024 [Concluding Observations on the fourth periodic report of Ireland](#), expressed concern over the absence of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in Ireland. It explicitly recommended that socio-economic status be included as a prohibited ground of discrimination and called for robust legal mechanisms to address both direct and indirect discrimination, including affirmative action.

As it is my responsibility, under the mandate provided to me by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to my attention, I would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned points.
2. Please provide an update on the timeline that the Government envisage for the final decision on the inclusion of socio-economic status in the Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2024, and the next procedural steps.

This communication, as a comment on pending or recently adopted legislation, regulations or policies, and any response received from your Excellency's Government

will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) after 48 hours. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Olivier De Schutter
Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights