

Irish Penal Reform Trust
Strategic Plan

2017 —
21

About IPRT

The Irish Penal Reform Trust is Ireland's leading non-governmental organisation campaigning for rights in the penal system and the progressive reform of Irish penal policy. We work to reform the penal system by:

- Working to ensure that Ireland's penal policy and practice complies with human rights standards and strives towards international best practice
- Promoting equality and combatting social injustice
- Campaigning to ensure prison is only ever used as a sanction of last resort

Development of Strategic Plan 2017–2021

This Strategic Plan builds on IPRT's work since our establishment in 1994, and earlier strategic plans. In developing the Plan, IPRT consulted with key stakeholders during 2015. We did this with the dual objectives of reflecting on lessons learned and identifying key priorities for the future. This work identified some key points to inform the next stage of our development:

- IPRT remains firmly established as the principal non-governmental organisation concerned with penal reform in Ireland as a professional, credible and authoritative voice.
- IPRT plays an important role in linking those concerned with penal policy both with each other and with related areas of social policy.
- The number and scale of strategic objectives identified must remain proportionate to the size and capacity of the organisation.
- IPRT must strengthen its monitoring, tracking and evaluation mechanisms to identify where we have been most effective in creating and sustaining change.
- IPRT must focus on financial sustainability, capacity and future development as a long-term priority for the organisation.
- IPRT continues to focus on key issues of good governance, transparent financial stewardship and organisational accountability.

Implementation of the Strategic Plan

Once adopted, a cycle of annual organisational and team work plans will be created reflecting the agreed actions and key success indicators for monitoring progress, appreciating learning, reviewing environmental opportunities, and refining individual and organisational plans of work. Developing a learning cycle for IPRT will ensure on-going evaluation and reflection on the work, which will maintain the flexibility and adaptability of the organisation to respond to emerging issues and opportunities. The Board will commission an external independent mid-term evaluation early 2019.

Context for IPRT's Work in the period 2017–2021

Based on our own analysis of the policy environment, we are formulating this Strategic Plan on a number of initial assumptions that we predict will continue over the relevant period:

- The use by the State of imprisonment as a sanction will continue to be a relevant concern.
- Within the penal system, existing human rights issues will persist and new challenges will present themselves.
- There will be opportunities for change in policy, law and practice, with the potential for significant reform.
- There is very likely to be political change.
- IPRT will be well-placed to contribute to these processes of change and will be financially sustainable.

Vision

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.

Mission

IPRT’s mission is to work towards progressive reform of penal policy and practice to achieve a penal system in line with our vision.

Values

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| Independent | Committed | Fair | Authoritative |
| we are fearless in our voice and in our actions | to holding the State to account | we are committed to tackling social injustice | we are guided by human rights frameworks and best international standards |
| Informed | Constructive | Engaged | Accountable |
| our advocacy is based on high quality research and evidence-informed policies | we are constructive in our work with others in the penal system | we are mindful of the importance of engaging directly with people in prison and their families | we are committed to the highest levels of good governance and financial integrity |

Our Perspective on Change

IPRT has identified the following as the five most effective tools for bringing about the long-term goals we wish to achieve:

01

Production of High Quality Research

The quality of IPRT research and the importance of its contribution to the body of knowledge of the criminal justice system has earned the organisation a credible reputation. We now have a robust suite of policy positions and research reports. While we will continue to produce research to inform evidence-led policy and will continue to develop our role as a focal point and resource for the growing body of research in the field of Irish criminology, going forward we will streamline and focus this work into a centrepiece annual publication. This will build a central bank of up-to-date knowledge on key areas and inform single-issue submissions, consultations and briefings as they arise throughout the year.

02

Creation of Evidence-Informed Policy Solutions

IPRT will continue to translate high quality research findings into evidence-informed policy solutions presented in an accessible format to decision makers in briefings, position papers and short reports. We will endeavour to build on our existing relationships and secure more structured engagement with policy-makers and legislators to ensure that IPRT is centrally placed in the Irish penal policy-making process.

03

Advocacy and Campaigning at all levels

To most effectively advance a penal reform agenda, IPRT will influence and persuade through both domestic and international fora, campaigning at Irish, Council of Europe and United Nations (UN) levels. Over the period of the plan, there will be key opportunities for international and domestic advocacy, which we will maximise.

In addition to this, as a “public body” the Irish Prison Service now must, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect human rights with regard to the totality of their functions. We will utilise this section 42 duty under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 to promote further reform by working with the IPS and the IHREC.

04

Public Communication and Awareness Raising

IPRT uses and will further develop the use of a variety of strong communications and awareness-raising techniques and tools to challenge, inform and promote reform, in particular:

- disseminating the facts and dispelling the myths about the penal system, prisons and prisoners;
- stimulating and providing platforms for inclusive public debate; and
- providing information on rights and issues within the penal system.

We are confident that we can continue to improve and raise the level of public discourse more generally by our use of evidence-based analyses and by retaining and developing IPRT’s distinct and constructive voice as a penal reform organisation.

05

Building Alliances and Capacities

We recognise that IPRT cannot achieve the vision it has for the penal system alone. We must continue to build strategic links and alliances with others in order to strengthen overall capacity for creating change. This will require us to identify and cultivate allies, partners and champions in our core priority areas who can in their own areas of work contribute positively to secure our overall objectives.

IPRT remains a steadfastly evidence-informed advocacy and campaigning organisation. However, we are also aware that prisoners and their families remain marginalised and excluded from public life and that there is a lack of advice, information and litigation services for prisoners and their families in Ireland at present. We will therefore, where possible, advocate for and build the capacity of those organisations that do provide support services for those in contact with the penal system and their families.

Improving our links with both those with direct personal experience of the penal system and those who work within the system will also enrich the credibility of IPRT as an informed actor in penal policy-making. We will ensure that, as far as possible, our Board reflects and includes representatives with some personal experience of the prison system; we will continue to invite the feedback of serving and former prisoners and families to our work; and we will ensure that, wherever possible, our empirical research reflects the input of those directly affected by the policy areas which we research.

Strategic Priorities 2017–2021

| | 01 | 02 | 03 |
|---------------|--|--|--|
| | <p>Advocate for a national penal <u>policy</u> that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • just and humane, • promotes effective non-custodial responses to crime, and • uses prison as a last resort. | <p>Promote a penal <u>system</u> that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. | <p>Ensure IPRT is a sustainable, well-resourced, respected and collaborative stakeholder in penal policy in Ireland.</p> |
| GOAL 1 | Contribute to the development of an Irish penal policy that operates a long-term, system-wide and evidence-informed approach to the causes and contributing factors to offending. | Work to ensure that regimes in prisons and children detention facilities 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. | IPRT is financially sustainable having built good relationships with existing funders and attracted new sources of funding to sustain the organisation. |
| GOAL 2 | Promote reform of Irish sentencing practice in a number of key strategic areas. | Advocate for the positive transformation of systems of accountability and governance of the penal system in the area of inspection, complaints and monitoring. | Sustainability and governance of human and financial resources are core focus of Board, which ensures the highest governance standards for the organisation. |
| GOAL 3 | Advocate for an Irish penal policy that is focused on non-custodial responses to crime, and which has rehabilitation and social integration at its centre. | Campaign for a robust system for ensuring the prompt and thorough implementation of recommendations, observations and commitments of domestic and international bodies is in place. | IPRT develops a strong integrated evaluation, learning and planning cycle. Robust organisational systems, structures and practices in operation to ensure sustainable organisation and high quality place of work for staff. |

Advocate for a national penal policy that is:

- 1
- just and humane,
 - promotes effective non-custodial responses to crime, and
 - uses prison as a last resort.

| | | What We Will Do |
|-----------------|--|--|
| GOAL 1.1 | Contribute to the development of an Irish penal policy that operates a long-term, system-wide and evidence-informed approach to the causes and contributing factors to offending. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will engage with relevant stakeholders and increase awareness and understanding of the importance of evidence-led penal policy and practice. • We will work towards securing a long-term commitment to a coherent and evidence-informed penal policy. • We will strive to ensure that our recommendations are increasingly reflected in policy through our ongoing research, advocacy and policy work. • We will engage with public and political debate around crime and punishment to build more informed debate, and counteract the demonisation of offenders. |
| GOAL 1.2 | Promote reform of Irish sentencing practice in a number of key strategic areas. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will advocate for publication of sentencing data and analysis on a regular basis. • We will campaign for the abolition of mandatory sentencing regimes. • We will promote the inclusion of the principle of imprisonment as a last resort in policy and legislation. • We will explore the potential of Sentencing Guidelines Framework and/or Council in the Irish context. |
| GOAL 1.3 | Advocate for an Irish penal policy that is focused on non-custodial responses to crime, and which has rehabilitation and social integration at its centre. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will advocate for reducing the average number of people in prison from 79 per 100,000 in 2016 to 50 per 100,000 by 2021. • We will promote an increase in the use of non-custodial effective responses to crime as a means of reducing the numbers in detention without net-widening. • We will promote rehabilitation and social integration as central concerns of Irish penal policy. • We will engage with the Oireachtas in working towards the creation of independent Parole Board established on a statutory footing, and functioning in a fair, transparent and accountable manner. |

Strategic Priorities

2017–2021



Our Vision Realised

- Government makes a long-term commitment to a coherent and evidence-informed penal policy.
 - Relevant agencies have embedded research capacity to support innovative best practice and evidence-based initiatives.
 - Crime data and analysis published on a regular basis.
 - More informed public debate on the issues.
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- Coherent and transparent sentencing practice, based on principles of proportionality, effectiveness and imprisonment as a last resort is in place.
 - Better outcomes and reduced re-offending rates for people in contact with the criminal justice system are achieved.
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- Reduction in annual committal rates.
 - Government commitment to policy of de-carceration.
 - Government commitment to treating non-custodial effective responses to offending as the default response of the criminal justice system to crime.
 - National consistency in availability, use and operation of community sanctions and restorative justice options nationwide.
 - A penal policy which promotes, supports and invests in rehabilitation and social integration.
 - Fully independent Parole Board established on a statutory basis.

Promote a penal system that is:

- 2**
- 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.

| | | What We Will Do |
|-----------------|---|--|
| GOAL 2.1 | Work to ensure that regimes in prisons and children detention facilities 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. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will pursue the progressive realisation of the rights of those within the penal system in all our activities • We will provide information, case studies and policy solutions as guidance on international best practice to inform stakeholders. • We will prepare, publish and promote an annual analysis of international human rights standards as they relate to Irish prisons and penal policy, to track and achieve measurable improvements in human rights standards and to hold the Government to account on these issues. • We will campaign to promote the abolition of the use of solitary confinement and restricted regimes. • We will advocate for increased open prison provision and step-down facilities for male and female prisoners |
| GOAL 2.2 | Campaign for the positive transformation of systems of accountability and governance of the penal system in the area of inspection, complaints and monitoring. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will actively campaign for structures and practices which support better accountability in the penal system including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a properly resourced independent prisoner complaints system such as the Ombudsman – the introduction of domestic legislation to achieve the ratification of OPCAT – the strengthening of the Office of Inspector of Prisons and reform of the Prison Visiting Committees – establishment of a fully independent Prisons Authority on a statutory basis • We will articulate and promote a deeper appreciation of the concept and benefits of accountability in the penal system among relevant stakeholders. |
| GOAL 2.3 | Advocate for an Irish penal policy that is focused on non-custodial responses to crime, and which has rehabilitation and social integration at its centre. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will utilise the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) Act 2014 section 42 duty to promote reform. • We will advocate and advise departments and agencies to introduce a mechanism for the tracking and implementation of the relevant recommendations of domestic and international monitoring bodies. • We will campaign for the implementation of the <i>Joint Strategy for Women who Offend</i>. |

Strategic Priorities 2017–2021



Our Vision Realised

- The penal system in Ireland is humane as experienced by people detained.
- By 2021, all prison and children detention regimes in Ireland reflect international human rights standards as a minimum.
- Ireland is perceived internationally as a model of best practice in its formal regimes, daily practices and overall culture of the penal system.
- There is a shared understanding of the importance of human rights compliance.

- Establishment of a prisoner ombudsman or extension of the remit of the general Ombudsman to include complaints from prisoners
- OP-CAT (Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture) ratified
- Office of Inspector of Prisons' capacity and independence strengthened
- Prison Visiting Committees reformed and professionalised
- Irish Prison Service established as a fully independent Prisons Authority on a statutory basis

- The Irish Prison Service s. 42 statement of intent in respect of human rights and equality is realised.
- Relevant recommendations and commitments of domestic and international bodies are promptly implemented.
- The *Joint Strategy for Women who Offend* is implemented.

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

| | | What We Will Do |
|-----------------|---|--|
| GOAL 3.1 | IPRT is financially sustainable having built good relationships with existing funders and attracted new sources of funding to sustain the organisation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will work to retain funding from current funders for a further three-year term 2019-2021, while also maintaining focus on income diversification. • We will work to attract further Trust, Foundation and/or donor funding to grow the organisation. • We will strive to involve, engage and respond to our members. • We will grow our membership to 500 members and Friends of IPRT to 100 Friends by end 2021. |
| GOAL 3.2 | Sustainability and governance of human and financial resources are core focus of Board, which ensures the highest governance standards for the organisation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will meet best practice standards of governance at board level and will continue to broaden board expertise and skills through active Board development. • We will maintain all obligations in respect of SORP, CRO, CRA and Governance Code. • A dedicated Board sub-committee will keep financial sustainability and governance under regular review. |
| GOAL 3.3 | IPRT develops a strong integrated evaluation, learning and planning cycle. Robust organisational systems, structures and practices in operation to ensure sustainable organisation and high quality place of work for staff. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will expand our staff capacity in a sustainable manner over the period to meet the needs of our objectives as set out in this Plan. • Our support, supervision and professional staff development practices will be reviewed and improved. • Our staff handbook will be reviewed and updated to reflect current best practice and legislation. • IPRT Board will monitor progress in meeting annual organisational workplan targets at each Board meeting and will incorporate learning and reflection cycle into each Board meeting. • IPRT Board will commission an external independent mid-term evaluation of the work of IPRT in early 2019. |

Strategic Priorities 2017–2021



Our Vision Realised

- Funding from key funders retained for a further three-year term 2019-2021.
 - New sources of funding secured to grow the organisation in a sustainable manner.
 - Annual AGM survey of prisoner members is conducted and engagement with prisoner members is improved.
 - Active membership of 500; active 100 Friends of IPRT.
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- IPRT is sustainable and viable as an advocacy and campaigning organisation.
 - Highest governance standards for the organisation are achieved.
 - IPRT maintains positive balance of retention and renewal of Board members and supports ongoing Board development.
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- IPRT is strategic and influential in its activities.
 - IPRT staff levels are maintained at levels proportionate to the needs of the organisation.
 - Positive staff feedback on continuous professional development, supervision and review practices.
 - Evaluation, learning and planning cycle integrated into individual and annual workplans and Board review sessions.
 - External independent mid-term evaluation of IPRT in takes place early 2019; recommendations and learning acted on.

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