

Atheist Ireland

Statement to Session 14 of OSCE/ODIHR Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 30 September 2015



by Jane Donnelly, Human Rights Officer, Atheist Ireland

Ireland openly discriminates against atheists and members of minority faiths in our education system.

The Irish State claims that it is constitutionally obliged to support this discrimination, in order to buttress religion.

Almost all of our primary schools are funded by the state but run privately by churches, 90% by the Catholic Church. The State cedes control of the education system to these churches.

They can insist that children of non-Catholic families are baptised into the Catholic Church in order to get into their only local publicly funded school.

They are legally obliged to integrate religion throughout the entire curriculum, and no opt out is provided.

Also, Ireland legally denies teachers equal access to the teaching profession, in almost all State funded schools, if they are atheists or members of a minority faith.

Not only that, but Ireland claims an exemption from the European Employment Equality Directive in order to continue this open religious discrimination.

All of our equality laws support this religious discrimination.

To add insult to injury, Ireland is now amending this law to protect Catholic LGBT teachers, which of course we support, but retaining the right to discriminate against teachers who are atheists or minority faith members.

This religious discrimination, coordinated jointly by the Irish State and the Catholic Church, breaches the human rights of freedom of religion or belief, freedom from discrimination and equality before the law.

Ireland has ignored eight separate requests from the United Nations and Council of Europe to end this religious discrimination.

We ask the OSCE to ask Ireland and the Holy See to end this religious discrimination, and to respect our human dignity and our human rights.