

# Equality Commission for Northern Ireland – United Kingdom



## Brief profile

### Contact details

- **Postal address:** Equality House, 8-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast, BT2 7DP, UK
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- **Person of contact for media enquiries:** Ciaran Bradley (+44 28 90 500 695)

### Overview

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI)'s mission is to improve people's lives through the responsible and effective use of its powers.

In general terms, the Commission's statutory remit provides that it is to promote equality of opportunity and affirmative action, work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination, keep relevant legislation under review, promote good relations between persons of different racial groups and oversee the effectiveness of statutory duties on public authorities.

### Powers

The *Equality Commission for Northern Ireland* is a predominantly promotion-type and legal support body<sup>1</sup>.

## Grounds and fields of discrimination covered

Grounds	Fields	
	Employment	Beyond employment (education, goods & services, housing, etc.)
Gender	◆	◆
Race and ethnic origin	◆	◆
Age	◆	◆
Disability	◆	◆
Sexual orientation	◆	◆
Religion and belief	◆	◆
Political opinion	◆	◆

<sup>1</sup> According to a [European Commission study on Equality Bodies](#), predominantly promotion-type equality bodies "spend the bulk of their time and resources on a broader mix of activities that include supporting good practice in organisations, raising awareness of rights, developing a knowledge base on equality and non-discrimination, and providing legal advice and assistance to individual victims of discrimination" (page 44).

## Detailed profile

### Brief history

The ECNI was established by the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Sections 73 and 74 and Schedule 8) as an independent public body on 1 October 1999, taking on the functions of a number of equality bodies in existence at that time and a number of new responsibilities arising from the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

### Mandate

- **Powers:** the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is a predominantly promotion-type and legal support body;
- **Litigation powers:**
  - Representing in front of courts;
  - Bringing proceedings in its own name;
  - Intervening before the courts;
  - Intervening as *amicus curiae*.

### Grounds and fields of discrimination covered

Grounds	Fields				
	Employment	Education	Housing	Social protection	Goods and Services
Gender	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Race and ethnic origin	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Age	◆	◆	◆		
Disability	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Sexual orientation	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Religion and belief	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Political opinion	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆

### Activities

- Promotional activities aimed at duty bearers (by way of trainings, guidance material, etc.);
- Promotional activities aimed at potential victims (trainings, awareness raising, etc.);
- Communication activities;
- Publications and research projects;
- Influencing Government policy;

- Giving legal assistance to individuals;
- Conducting investigations;
- Number of inquiries / complaints lodged and cases handled per year:
  - **3200** legal complaints;
  - **274** applications for assistance
  - **85** granted assistance

## Structure

### 1. Management structure

- Type: collegiate headed equality body (led by a distinct board);
- Details:
  - The Commission consists of a Chief Commissioner, a deputy Chief Commissioner and up to eighteen other Commissioners all appointed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Under the terms of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Secretary of State for NI, in making such appointments, is obliged as far as practicable to secure that the Commissioners as a group are representative of the community in Northern Ireland.
  - Commissioners establish the overall direction for the organisation, set the policy framework and oversee the delivery of planned results against objectives and targets.
  - The Commission appoints the Chief Executive to lead the staff team to achieve the organisation's objectives and staff are organised in four Divisions – Advice and Compliance; Legal, Policy and Research; Communication and Promotion; and Corporate Services.

### 2. Institutional structure

Type: stand alone dedicated national equality body.

Details: the Commission is an independent public body.

### 3. Nomination of senior staff and board:

The Commissioners are appointed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, following public advertisement and a selection process. The Commission appoints the Chief Executive and senior staff.

### 4. Number of staff:

119 (31 March 2012)

## Operating budget (for the parts of the organization dealing with equality issues)

For the financial year 2011 – 2012, the Commission's budget comprised £6.8million of grant-in-aid from its sponsor Department, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

## Accountability (reporting to)

The Commission's sponsor department in the Northern Ireland Executive is the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister. In general terms, the sponsor department is responsible for negotiating

the resources allocated to the Commission and it is accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly for the activities and performance of the Commission.

**Contact details (address, key contact person, website)**

**Address:**

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