

To: Arts Council NI  
Place, Identity & Art  
MacNeice House  
77 Malone Road  
Belfast, BT9 6AQ

From: Community Relations Council  
6 Murray Street  
Belfast

Date: September 2006

**Issue: EQIA on Place, Identity & Art**

The Community Relations Council's Policy Development Programme has a specific interest in assisting statutory organisations in Northern Ireland to carry out their Section 75 (2) duties. We are also keen to stress the need of benchmarking new and developing policies against government priorities as set out in A Shared Future and the Racial Equality Strategy.

We are keen to make comment on the new Arts Council's policy 'Place, Identity and Art', particularly on the decision not to undertake a full EQIA, despite acknowledgement from the Arts Council that the policy will have an adverse impact on the grounds of religion.

From the initial information on the Arts Council's website it appears that this programme is designed and directed towards faith based organisations who, for ethical reasons, will not apply for lottery funding. This lack of funding could have a negative impact on the level of activities these groups could undertake. The Community Relations Council is supportive of policies and programmes that target disadvantaged groups throughout our society, and we support the activities that should be undertaken by the groups as outlined in the guidance notes.

However on closer examination of the information we received we are very concerned that this programme is only available to 'small groups in Protestant working class communities', or groups that are based in these communities, rather than to all those excluded from availing of lottery funding as a result of principled objection. By the Arts Council's own admission, this programme will discriminate on the grounds of religion (those not from the protestant faith), and if a full EQIA was carried out we believe it would also find the policy would have an adverse impact on the grounds of race and political affiliation.

The Community Relations Council is growing more concerned that certain policies directly contradict the ethos and objectives of A Shared Future. CRC has engaged with and supported community and voluntary groups to create safe places for dialogue, build relationships and work together to end suspicion and fear and the new government priority 'A Shared Future' was the next step in bringing our communities together. Furthermore equality legislation was enacted to ensure that various groups within our society could not be discriminated against on the grounds of religion, age, sex, race, political affiliation, gender, marital status, disability, dependents and moreover the Good Relations Duty of Section 75(2).

The Arts Council appears to have determined that only protestant groups cannot use lottery funding without any supporting research evidence. CRC urges the Council to undertake a full consultation to examine what other faith based groups could potentially have similar issues surrounding lottery funding.

The Arts Council quote statistics from government's policy 'Renewing Communities', and use the low educational attainment of certain wards as an indicator that one community is more disadvantaged than another. We would like information as to why 'education attainment' was the primary measure and not income or unemployment, or the many other indices and the basis on which educational disadvantage was specifically singled out.

It is crucial that all policies target social need, on the basis of need. If this is not the case we are in danger of individuals, groups and communities deciding programmes such as Place, Identity, Art are biased and discriminatory, and this does not deliver the shared future we are all working towards.

Peter Hain stated at the NIC ICTU conference in April 2006 that 'there can be no alternative to a shared future. Segregation and division is not an option' and more importantly in terms of this specific policy *'Sustainable peace in Northern Ireland will require many years of effort. But the government is determined to set the direction towards a normal civic society in which all people are of equal value, where differences are resolved through dialogue, and where people are treated impartially'*. CRC is committed to the principle of sharing over separation and acknowledges the need for short, medium and long term approaches to achieving this. We recommend the Arts Council adopt a similar approach in this funding programme and deliver a programme that develops confidence within communities and encourages 'partnerships between communities and engender a sense of pride in space shared with neighbours'.

The Community Relations Council asks that the Arts Council embark on a full consultation exercise and a subsequent EQIA on Place, Identity and Art and we would like to offer our assistance in any way we can.

Yours sincerely

**Duncan Morrow**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Community Relations Council**