

Consultation Review of European Parliament Constituencies

I write on behalf of Focus:The Identity Trust, the only Charity on the island of Ireland to lobby and advocate exclusively on the Human Rights of those transgender and intersex individuals and their families currently protected by equality and human rights legislation in Northern Ireland ie. those individuals intending to, currently undertaking or those who have undergone any part of a supervised process of gender reassignment. We have examined the back ground documents and believe that this group of individuals is arguably the most marginalised and vulnerable in Irish and UK society.

Those of us in the North, and those of us who identify as Irish and European Citizens feel particularly vulnerable at the possibility of the UK exiting Europe without any agreement in place to adequately protect our hard fought for rights.

It has to be recognised that without recourse to Europe and particularly the European Convention on Fundamental Human Rights and access to the European Courts the rights of transgender individuals would never have been recognised either by Britain or indeed the Republic of Ireland. It took brave transgender individuals to challenge both jurisdictions through the European Justice systems before they were forced to introduce legislation to protect our rights to equality of treatment before the law and to have our true gender identity recognised (2004 in the case of Britain and 2015 in the Republic of Ireland).

This happened only through force of European Court judgments against both administrations.

We have reviewed the terms of reference of your consultation and background documentation and it would appear to us to be essential that the two additional MEPs seats be allocated to the North.

We believe this would ensure that the particular interests of not just our constituency, but all Irish citizens rights would be protected going forward as provided for by the Good Friday Agreement

One of our representatives attended the Taoiseach's recent reception marking 25 years of the decriminalisation of homosexuality in the Republic and received a personal assurance from him that he would not abandon our constituency post Brexit.

What better way to ensure and deliver on that commitment than to allocate these two additional MEP seats to the North, thus ensuring direct access to all the European Institutions for all the Irish citizens across the whole island.

Patrick Monteague

Chairperson

Focus:The Identity Trust