



Qu 1: What should the new body do?

The new body should be fully compliant with the 'Paris Principles', and should therefore be mandated not only to protect, but also to promote human rights. As indicated in the Paris Principles, a key function of the new body should be to encourage Irish ratification of/accession to international human rights instruments, and this should be clearly stipulated in the legislation establishing the new body. This implies a public information role as well as advocating for human rights and equality with public bodies.

TASC concurs with the Equality and Rights Alliance, of which TASC is a member, that new legislation should be introduced consolidating the powers of this new entity. This would ensure that the same legal instruments could be deployed across both the equality and human rights strands. At a minimum, such legislation should introduce a socio-economic ground in equality legislation (alongside the existing nine grounds) and should also introduce a positive duty for the public sector to strengthen the commitment in the Programme for Government to require public bodies to have due regard to equality and human rights in carrying out their functions

The merged entity should develop and implement robust methods for 'proofing' policies and public spending from the perspective of equality and human rights *in advance*. It should likewise be mandated to develop and implement robust methods for equality and human rights 'auditing' of *existing* policies and public spending. One part of this larger role should be to equality proof and audit the annual budget, as per TASC's [pre-budget submission](#) and TASC's equality analysis of Budget 2011 ([Winners and Losers?](#)).

Qu 2: What features and functions does it need to do these things?

The new body must be sufficiently resourced not only to carry out the functions outlined above, but also to interact in a meaningful way with international human rights bodies. It must also be fully independent, and members of its governing body must – as referred to in the Paris principles – be fully reflective of different groups in society. The process through which the governing body is appointed must be fully transparent, and in this regard we refer to TASC's recent Paper on independent public appointments, available for download [here](#).

Qu. 3 How should it be structured and what working methods should it use to achieve the above?

In order to ensure independence, the new body should be empowered to appoint its own staff, who should preferably not be seconded from central government. Members of the governing body should be appointed for a fixed term and rotated over time.

The body should be sufficiently resourced to provide for a city-centre office, with access to suitable meeting spaces and public event spaces. It should also have a significant budget for research – for example, the best comparison might be made with the work the Combat Poverty Agency used to conduct before its abolition.