

Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence consults on plans to bring the Charities Act into force

Alan Shatter T.D. Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence today published a consultation paper on his plans for bringing the Charities Act 2009 into force. The aim of the Charities Act is to support public trust and confidence in charities by introducing statutory regulation of charities, fostering good practice, and increasing transparency and accountability.

The Minister said: "**Charities play a vital role in our society and economy. We want to support them in this by putting in place a system of regulation that is proportionate, responsive, and sensitive to the needs and concerns of both charities themselves and the donor public.**

We have delayed bringing this legislation into force as we considered how best to achieve the objectives of the Act in a context of Government spending reductions. While this is clearly going to be challenging, it remains my view that there is both a need and widespread support for effective and affordable regulation of the charities sector. The Charities Act 2009 provides the framework for this. Working within this framework with flexibility and creativity, I am confident that we can support public trust and confidence in the charities sector, as well as assisting charities to achieve and maintain high standards of governance and accountability. Charities are the recipients of significant investment – from the donor public, from their volunteers and workers, and from the taxpayer through Government grants and contracts for services. It is in all our interests that this investment is safeguarded, managed effectively, and ultimately benefits the charitable purpose it is intended for. The statutory regulation of charities will support this.

So that we can achieve this goal in the current budgetary circumstances, I am proposing that charities will be asked to pay a modest and proportionate annual fee to contribute to the costs of maintaining the statutory Register of Charities which is one of the key provisions of the Charities Act. Some initial suggestions on how this might be implemented are contained in the consultation paper.

I encourage anyone with an interest in the charities sector to participate in this consultation and look forward in particular to the engagement of the charities sector, the donor public and other interested stakeholders."

The consultation paper includes proposals and consultation questions on the establishment of a Charities Regulatory Authority and a statutory Register of Charities. It also includes proposals and consultation questions on the types of financial and activity reports that registered charities will be required to provide to the Charities Regulatory Authority once it is established.

To read the consultation paper and to submit a response, go to <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/CharitiesConsult?OpenForm>. The deadline for responses is 20 March 2013. During the consultation period, the Department of Justice and Equality plans to convene a stakeholder meeting on the proposals. Further information on arrangements for this meeting will be available in the coming weeks. It is envisaged that the responses to the consultation will be published in due course.