

Minority Ethnic Matters Overview

MEMO+ is an occasional series of briefing papers on topics of interest to minority ethnic communities in Scotland. It is produced by the [Scottish Council of Jewish Communities](#) in partnership with [BEMIS - empowering Scotland's ethnic and cultural minority communities](#), and is supported by the Scottish Government.

“Scotland’s Future” Scottish Government White Paper on Independence: Equality and Human Rights

On 18 September 2014 there will be a referendum in which voters will be asked the question, “Should Scotland be an independent country?”, and the Scottish Government has produced a White Paper to explain its proposals for the way in which an independent Scotland would be governed.

A White Paper is a document produced by the Government that sets out details of their proposed future policy on a particular subject. It is not a consultation and does not set out alternatives, but only gives details of the Government’s intentions. This White Paper does not, therefore, provide an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of Scotland becoming an independent country, and it does not discuss what should happen if Scotland remains in the UK.

This MEMO+ is one of a series that summarises the main points of the White Paper. Other issues cover Scottish Government proposals for:

White Paper: General Info	Education & Employment	Immigration & Asylum
Culture & Communications	Energy & Resources	International Relations
Defence & Security	Environment & Agriculture	Justice
Economy & Finance	Health & Wellbeing	Third Sector & Civic Society

The Scottish Government’s commitment to Equality and Human Rights

The Scottish Government states unequivocally in the White Paper that if Scotland becomes an independent country, it would “have at its heart the respect, protection, and promotion of equality and human rights”, and that equality of opportunity, and the right to live free of discrimination and prejudice, would be embedded in the proposed written constitution. All areas that are currently devolved – that is, which are the responsibility of the Scottish and not the UK Parliament – are required by the Scotland Act 1998 to comply with the [European Convention on Human Rights](#). The Scottish Government proposes that, if Scotland were to become an independent country, this requirement would be extended to those areas that are currently reserved – that is, which are the responsibility of the UK Parliament.

The White Paper quotes statistics from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development that rank the UK 28th most unequal of 34 countries on a measure of overall inequality; research comparing the earnings of the worst off and those best off that ranked the UK as the fourth most unequal nation amongst the world's richest countries, and data showing that life expectancy in Scotland is significantly lower than in the rest of the UK. The Scottish Government proposes that if Scotland were to become an independent country, it would introduce a joined-up approach to social justice that it hopes would break the cycle of poverty, educational under-attainment, unemployment, and poor mental wellbeing that it believes to be the root cause of these inequalities.

The Scottish Government also proposes that, if Scotland were to become an independent country, it would:

- consider whether additional rights, such as those in the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), should also be included in the proposed written constitution;
- consider strengthening or extending existing equality and human rights legislation;
- develop an enforcement and promotion infrastructure for equality and human rights;
- ensure that the benefits system would be fair, and would respect personal dignity, equality, and human rights;
- ensure that equality and human rights would be embedded in all areas of policy, including education, welfare, employment, and defence;
- work to improve the diversity of people holding public appointments, so that that currently under-represented groups are fully included;
- establish a new Scottish organisation to take over the work of the Equality and Human Rights Commission in Scotland. The existing Scottish Human Rights Commission, and Equality Advisory Support Service would both continue to operate in an independent Scotland;
- sign up to international equality and human rights treaties such as the [Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women](#), the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, with the intention of having a say in shaping the legislation and regulatory frameworks that are developed from them.

[Click here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) for more details about Scottish Government proposals about Equality and Human Rights.

Useful Links

- **White Paper: Scotland's Future: Your Guide to an Independent Scotland**
 - o Full Document <http://82.113.138.107/00439021.pdf>
 - o Summary <http://82.113.138.107/00439013.pdf>
- **Scottish Government referendum website**
<http://www.scotreferendum.com/>
- **UK Government Scotland Office referendum website**
<https://www.gov.uk/government/topics/scotland>

- **Yes Scotland** (Campaign for Scottish Independence)
<http://www.yesscotland.net/>
- **Better Together** (Campaign for Scotland to remain part of the UK)
<http://www.bettertogether.net/>
- **BBC Scottish independence: Referendum library**
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-21618252>



The **Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC)** is the representative body of all the Jewish communities in Scotland. It advances public understanding about the Jewish religion, culture and community, and also works in partnership with other organisations to promote good relations and understanding among community groups and to promote equality. (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438) <http://www.scojec.org/>



BEMIS is the Scottish national Ethnic Minorities led umbrella body, supporting, empowering, and building the capacity of minority third sector community organisations. As a strategic partner with Government, it is proactive in influencing the development of race equality policy in Scotland, and helps develop and progress multicultural Scotland, active citizenship, democracy, and Human Rights Education at the Scottish, UK, and European levels. <http://www.bemis.org.uk/index.html>



The **Scottish Government** is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and social justice for all those who live in Scotland. **One Scotland** is the Scottish Government campaign designed to tackle racism. It aims to raise awareness of racist attitudes, highlight its negative impact and recognise the valuable contributions that other cultures have made to our society – and make Scotland no place for racism. <http://www.scotlandagainstracism.com/>