



Twenty years ago the United Nations adopted the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) . Although Ireland ratified the Convention, it has never integrated it into its Constitution. That is about to change. On 20 September the Irish Government published the proposed amendment to the Constitution to protect children's rights. The Irish people, will vote on the proposal on 10 November 2012. The amendment affirms the rights of the child and allows the State in exceptional circumstances to take the place of parents. It also provides for the legal adoption of children where parents have failed in their duty. The new article also states the best interests of the child should be the paramount consideration in any legal proceedings.

[UNICEF Ireland](#) has, over the years, repeatedly called on the Irish Government to fulfill its international obligations by amending the constitution to strengthen the rights of children. "This referendum, if approved by the Irish people, will fully enshrine these principles in the Irish constitution" said Executive Director of UNICEF Ireland Peter Power. Over the coming weeks, UNICEF Ireland will roll out a campaign called "It's About You" on the Children's Referendum.

The amendment is welcomed by politicians from both the Irish Government and the opposition. Minister for Children, Frances Fitzgerald, said the referendum was a chance to leave behind the country's legacy of failure towards children. She said it would change the Constitution so that it protects children, supports families and treats all children equally. Opposition parties were briefed this morning and Sinn Féin has welcomed the publication of the wording. Its spokesman on children, Caoimhghín Ó Caolain, said that it is a "significant step towards enshrining children's rights in the Constitution".

**Additional links:**

- [More information](#) about the amendment
- “ [Its about you campaign](#) ”
- [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

**Sources:** <http://www.rte.ie> and <http://www.unicef.ie>