

# EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWS & INTERNATIONAL PRINCIPLES

**Yvonne Daly** and **Alan Cusack** discuss the launch of the Irish Méndez Centre for Investigative Interviewing

The approach to investigative interviews, with witnesses, victims and suspects, varies significantly around the world. In some jurisdictions there is still a fixation on obtaining confessions by (almost) any means, while in others there has been a shift towards information-gathering and effective, ethical interviewing. The legal protections and safeguards for suspects held in police detention also differ significantly around the world: in many jurisdictions interviews are still not audio-visually recorded, in some the assistance of a lawyer may be allowed but not funded, and so on. In 2016, the then UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Méndez, proposed the development of a “universal protocol for non-coercive, ethically sound, evidence-based and empirically



founded interviewing practices” (*Report of the Special Rapporteur on Torture, August 5 2016*) with a view to shifting the mindset at a global level, and ensuring both the protection of human rights and the effectiveness of investigative interviews.

His call resulted in an international consultation process and the work of over 80 experts across 40 jurisdictions from multiple disciplinary backgrounds, culminating in the publication of the

“*Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering (2021)*”, known as the “Méndez Principles” (<https://interviewingprinciples.com/>). There are six main Principles and 13 essential legal safeguards. More recently, in May 2024, the *Manual on Investigative Interviewing for Criminal Investigation*, founded on the Méndez Principles, was validated by the UN Department of Peace Operations, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. This manual seeks to operationalise the Principles and ensure that the science which underpins them is brought into effect globally.

In Ireland, the approach to investigative interviewing has transformed significantly in the past 15 years and protections for interviewees have been enhanced also. Improvements could yet be made, but the training provided to members of An Garda Síochána, particularly specialist interviewers, is now of a very high standard, and the focus of the Garda Síochána Interview Model, like the Méndez Principles, is on information-gathering in a subject-specific manner, taking account of individual vulnerabilities and needs.

An important development in this context took place in Ireland on September 18 2024 – the Irish Méndez Centre for Investigative Interviewing was launched by the authors of this article and we will act as co-directors. This is only the second such Centre to be established worldwide – the first one launched just two days earlier in Oslo, Norway – and more are currently at the planning stages. These Centres are being launched under the auspices of a project known as ImpleMéndez, (<https://implemendez.eu/>) which is funded by the COST organisation, and is supporting the implementation of the Méndez Principles.

The Irish Méndez Centre is envisioned as a dynamic hub for those who work in investigative interviewing, policymakers and related researchers. The Centre will work towards increased implementation of the Méndez Principles through organising training and information events, providing relevant public commentary and engaging in research on relevant matters with a variety of



stakeholders. It will be networked to other Méndez Centres as they come on stream and will seek to exchange best practice and knowledge internationally in that context.

September's launch event, which was held at Dublin City University, was attended by more than 80 people from agencies who conduct investigative interviewing in Ireland - An Garda Síochána, the Corporate Enforcement Authority, the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission, the Central Bank, Revenue, Tusla (the Child and Family Agency) - as well as other related professionals (lawyers, interpreters, prosecutors), policy-makers, and academics. Prof Juan Méndez himself sent a video message to welcome the development of this and other Méndez Centres, and he reflected on the importance of pressing for the implementation of the Méndez Principles worldwide in order to ensure that torture and ill-treatment are a thing of the past.

Two of the co-directors of the Norwegian Mendez Centre for Investigative Interviewing - Dr Ivar Fahsing (Norwegian Police University College) and Gisle Kvanig (Norwegian Centre for Human Rights) - were also present to wish those involved in the Irish Méndez Centre well. They spoke about the development of the Principles and the UN Manual, and indicated their hope of working closely with the Irish Centre into the future, to exchange best practice, skills and training. The Chair of the ImpleMéndez Action, Prof Dave Walsh (De Montfort University, UK), noted the large number of individuals involved in that project - numbering over 240 across 53 countries. The Irish Méndez Centre will be able to draw on this deep well of expertise to consult on

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issues of importance, and to bring knowledge specialists to Ireland to deliver training events and workshops.

The launch was also addressed by the Director of Public Prosecutions, Catherine Pierse, and the Police Ombudsman elect, Emily Logan, (who will be the Head of “Fiosrú” once the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024 is commenced later this year). They both reflected on the importance of effective, human rights-compliant investigative interviewing as an aspect of the broader need to uphold and protect the rule of law. Inspector Brian Quirke (An Garda Síochána National Interview Advisor), who has been liaising with the co-directors of the Irish Méndez Centre, then spoke about investigative interviewing in the Irish context.

Finally, we gave an indication of the immediate plans for the Centre which include:

- the creation of an online repository of expert

resources on investigative interviewing;

- an “Introduction to the Méndez Principles” workshop;
- a workshop for members of An Garda Síochána on interviewing child victims of serious crime;
- training for lawyers on the Méndez Principles and their role in upholding procedural and legal safeguards; and more.

Following the launch, a three-hour practical training session specifically focused on interviewing adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder was held for 35 garda interviewers. It was facilitated by Prof Coral Dando (University of Westminster), Dr Katie Maras (University of Bath) and Dr Alan Cusack (UL) and covered many issues from recognising signs of autism, to approaches which can assist in interviewing someone in that context. This was a good example of the sort of areas on which the Irish Méndez Centre can be helpful, and can access national and international experts to share their knowledge.

As co-directors of this Centre, we look forward to engaging further with members of An Garda Síochána into the future, and we are very open to hearing from members on any related issue which of is interest to them. (Contact [yvonne.daly@dcu.ie](mailto:yvonne.daly@dcu.ie) or [alan.cusack@ul.ie](mailto:alan.cusack@ul.ie)). **GR**

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