

Stakeholder Partnerships for the Integration of Migrants - INTEGREAT

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Country Report Ireland

by Doras

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Section I: National Plan on Migrant Integration

1. Overview of Ireland’s National Migrant Integration Strategy

Ireland’s most recent National Migrant Integration Strategy (NMIS)¹ was initiated in 2016 and published in 2017 after public consultations, originally intended to conclude in 2020. The strategy was extended for one additional year to cover 2021 and is due to be replaced with a new strategy in 2022, plans for which have not yet been revealed.

The National Migrant Integration Strategy Coordination and Implementation Committee (NMISCIC) was responsible for monitoring implementation, reviewing progress and making recommendations for future action. It met three times a year from 2017 to 2019. A mid-term progress report was produced in 2019 with input from the NMISCIC, evaluating actions undertaken and progress made. A final evaluation has not yet been published.

This is Ireland’s second migrant integration strategy, the first of which was produced in 2008². Integration is defined in the NMIS as the “ability to participate to the extent that a person needs and wishes in all of the major components of society without having to relinquish his or her own cultural identity” (NMIS, 2017).

The NMIS continues Ireland’s policy of mainstreaming migrant integration into the general work of all Government Departments. Actions detailed in the strategy that apply to all Government Departments include for example, the provision of translated information materials and intercultural awareness training. Furthermore, promoting equality and protecting human rights is mainstreamed across and integrated into the work of all Government Departments and public services.

1.1. Priority areas

The NMIS contains 76 actions aimed at improving migrant integration across a wide range of thematic areas. There are no strategic goals or priority issues identified but the twelve thematic areas addressed in the NMIS include the following:

- General actions
- Access to public services
- Education
- Employment
- Health
- Access to citizenship and residency
- Community
- Political Participation
- Anti-Racism

¹ The Migrant Integration Strategy – A Blueprint for the Future (2017).
https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Migrant_Integration_Strategy_English.pdf/Files/Migrant_Integration_Strategy_English.pdf

² Migration Nation (2008)
https://www.newcommunities.ie/assets/files/pdf/migration_nation_office_of_the_minister_of_integration_2008.pdf



- Volunteering
- Sport
- Implementation

There is a significant focus on ensuring equality of access to public services in various sectors within a mainstreamed system using a whole of government approach.

The following actions are assigned to all Government Departments:

- information provision to migrants in language-appropriate formats;
- ongoing intercultural awareness training for all frontline staff;
- signage in public offices indicating where interpretation is available;
- clear information on how to make a complaint about racist behaviour by staff or another customer.

Specific thematic actions of relevance to the INTEgreat project highlighted in the NMIS include:

Healthcare³:

- Develop the second National Intercultural Health Strategy in 2017.
- Develop an appropriate model for the provision of interpreting services to users within the health area who are not proficient in English.
- The recording of ethnicity as part of ethnic equality monitoring across the health service will be promoted as a means of identifying unique needs of migrants and developing interventions to address these needs.

Employment⁴:

- The Central Statistics Office will continue to publish disaggregated data on unemployment. Central Statistics Office Quarterly
- The Further Education and Training Authority (SOLAS) will through its funding and reporting requirements, require the Education and Training Boards to ensure that their Further Education and Training courses provision meet the specific needs of migrants e.g. language acquisition, knowledge of the Irish working environment, interview skills, c.v. preparation etc. This provision will be either directly on their principal courses or through part-time modular provision parallel to the learners' participation on their principal courses as appropriate.
- Education or training programmes specifically catering for unemployed migrants whose language skills require development will contain a language component.
- Appropriate levels of quality engagement with migrants who are registered jobseekers will be ensured. The promotion of the availability of employment services to 'voluntary engagers' not on the Live Register, if such person is entitled to work here, in the new Pathways to Work strategy will be undertaken.

³ Actions 48-50, p. 30, National Migrant Integration Strategy

⁴ Actions 38-47, pp. 27 to 29, National Migrant Integration Strategy (NMIS)

- An analysis will be undertaken to assess the extent to which the level of joblessness among jobseekers of African origin exceeds that of other groups and determine what action, if any, is required to address any evidence that people of African origin face higher barriers to exit unemployment.
- The Quality and Qualifications Ireland's system for the recognition of vocational skills accredited in other countries will be promoted more widely.
- Proactive outreach and support measures will be undertaken by all public sector employers to increase the number of persons from an immigrant background working at all levels in the civil service and wider public service. There will be a particular focus on increasing the numbers of people from immigrant backgrounds working in front-line services. This work will have regard to public service employment principles of merit and transparency, and to restrictions regarding non-EEA nationals working in the Irish Public Service.
- To make the Civil Service fully representative of Irish society we will aim to have 1% of the workforce from ethnic minorities and will
 - put in place arrangements to identify the number of civil servants from ethnic minorities;
 - broaden our outreach in schools and ethnic communities to raise awareness, educate about the role of the Civil Service and showcase the career opportunities available; ·
 - review the composition of our applicant pool so that we can understand where applicants to the civil service come from and develop targeted measures to encourage those areas of society that are not applying.
- Further activities will be undertaken to raise awareness of State board opportunities among key groups within society that are currently under-represented on State boards, working with Departments and the relevant State bodies in this regard.
- Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) will continue to undertake targeted initiatives to engage with migrant prospective entrepreneurs in line with local need. The LEO Centre of Excellence in Enterprise Ireland will promote best practice activities in this area amongst all LEOs nationally.

Social cohesion (Community integration, Active Citizenship, Anti-Racism):

- Establish local networks aimed at reaching out to hard-to-reach migrant groups so to help them to engage with Government Departments and to provide information on their needs.
- The establishment of a Communities Integration Fund intended to support organisations in local communities (sports organisations, faith organisations etc.) to undertake actions to promote the integration of migrants into their communities.
- Local Integration strategies will be updated.
- A Migrant Integration Forum will be established in every local authority area, ideally through existing Public Participation Network (PPN) structures, and will meet regularly.
- An Integration Network will be established where migrant groups can engage with the Government and public bodies on issues of concern and on barriers to integration.

- In carrying out the reform programme on youth work funding, there will be an added focus on ensuring that young people from ethnic or religious minorities, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have access to youth services in which they will feel safe and protected and which will assist and enhance their integration.
- Local Authorities will take action to have migrant representation on all Joint-Policing Committees.
- An Garda Síochána will continue to implement a victim-centred policy and good investigative practices in racial and other similar crimes to encourage victims to report offences in line with recommendations of the Garda Inspectorate in this regard.
- Local Authorities will develop and publish their policy on the early removal of racist graffiti in their respective areas.
- The current legislation with regard to racially motivated crime will be reviewed with a view to strengthening the law against hate crime, including in the area of online hate speech.
- The issue of the under-reporting of racially-motivated crime will continue to be addressed including through the development of greater contact with marginalised communities.
- Public offices will display information on how to make a complaint of racist behaviour by a member of staff or other customer.
- Arts and culture programmes and policy will assist in the promotion of the arts and culture of diverse communities across Ireland.
- All relevant public sector bodies will explore additional ways of working in cooperation with communities affected by stigmatisation and develop appropriate relationships with minority communities to avoid the danger of external groups having negative influences on marginalised communities.

Capacity building and training⁵:

- The Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 will be enacted.
- Proactive efforts will be made to attract migrants into teaching positions, including raising awareness of the Irish language aptitude test and adaptation period for primary teaching.
- The extension of the Free Fees initiative for Third Level Education to the children of migrants will be explored.
- The numbers of non-English speaking migrant children in schools will be monitored annually and details published.
- Current school enrolment policies will be monitored over time to assess their effect on migrant students.
- The effectiveness of training for teachers on managing diversity and tackling racism will be reviewed.
- The provision of ESOL classes to cater for the language needs of adults from ethnic minorities will be reviewed following the development of ESOL policy guidelines.

⁵ Actions 26-37, pp. 25 and 26, NMIS

- The adequacy of language supports in schools to cater for the language needs of children from ethnic minorities will be kept under review.
- Schools will be encouraged to support migrant parents' participation in the school life of their children
- The use of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages for recognition of English language proficiency will be extended so that people can assess their progress.
- The fostering and development of positive attitudes towards diversity and celebrating difference will continue to form part of the school curriculum.
- Follow-on ESOL programmes will be delivered to enable migrants to acquire more intensive language skills to assist their integration into the workplace.

In parallel to the National Migrant Integration Strategy (NMIS) and following the publication of the NMIS, the White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a New International Protection Support Service (White Paper to end Direct Provision) was published in 2021, which aims to end Ireland's current system of reception and integration support for people seeking asylum and outlines a roadmap for a new system that recognises the need for and promotes integration of asylum seekers in Ireland from the beginning of the asylum application process, rather than after a positive decision is granted. The implementation of this new system and support service, which emphasises and plans for integration support with regard to people seeking asylum, is currently underway and is due to be fully implemented by end of 2024.

The White Paper to End Direct Provision sets out a progressive shift in integration policy specifically focussed on the needs of people seeking in asylum, including commitments to facilitate improved access to services, accommodation, employment, healthcare and training.

In particular, the White Paper seeks to:

- Initiate integration support from the point of arrival in Ireland
- Four month stay in reception centres during which time specialist support will be available to vulnerable individuals
- Move from reception centres to community-based accommodation four months after arrival in Ireland
- Families will be provided with own door accommodation and single rooms will be provided to single adults
- Access to employment and education supports will be facilitated
- Wider supports will be provided locally by contracted civil society and specialist organisations
- Dedicated resettlement support, healthcare and intercultural workers will be assigned as case workers
- Accommodation will be provided near urban centres to improve access to services.

1.2. Governance

Migrant integration policy in Ireland has been in development since the early 2000s when immigration to Ireland increased significantly. Ireland's history of immigration is relatively recent compared with many other EU countries, with the first year of positive net migration recorded in 1995.

Ireland's first national migrant integration strategy was published in 2008, which outlined a number of principles, that remain part of migrant integration policy today. These principles include the mainstreaming of migrant integration policy across all Government Departments, a partnership approach between government and civil society organisations, interculturalism, and mainstreamed local service delivery mechanisms⁶.

Migrant integration policy has been overseen by the Department of Justice since 2008 until October 2020 when this responsibility was transferred to a new Department with responsibility for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). The DCEDIY also has responsibility for coordinating and implementing the White Paper to End Direct Provision, which includes integration policy and practice around people seeking asylum specifically.

The most recent National Migrant Integration Strategy was developed in 2016 and 2017 with input from all government Departments and following a public consultation civil society organisations and communities were also facilitated.

Implementation of the actions outlined in the national migrant integration strategy and other relevant policies, are typically the responsibility of Government Department, public sector bodies and local authorities, with funding also provided to civil society to undertake national and local migrant integration initiatives.

The National Migrant Integration Strategy Coordination and Implementation Committee (NMISCIC) was established under the Minister of State at the Department of Justice, who had responsibility for Equality, Immigration and Integration. Since October 2020, the responsibility for integration was transferred to a new Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY).

The NMISCIC is tasked with monitoring the implementation of the NMIS and is comprised of representatives of Government Departments, public services, local authorities and relevant NGOs working in migrant integration. The NMISCIC is committed to meeting three times per year to review progress and make recommendations for further action in response to emerging needs. The Terms of Reference for the NMISCIC include:

1. To oversee implementation of the Migrant Integration Strategy;
2. To review implementation of all actions;
3. To agree indicators for monitoring progress;
4. To assess whether or not further action is required on specific issues;

⁶ Migration Nation – Statement on Integration, Strategy and Diversity Management (2008)

5. To make recommendations on actions needed to be added to the Strategy or changed to respond to changing needs;
6. To contribute to a progress report to Government at the end of 2018 on the implementation of all actions.

The NMISCIC has not convened since 2019 and a final evaluation of implementation of the NMIS, as planned, has not been published. An interim progress report was published in 2019 evaluating actions taken and progress made at the mid-point of the NMIS implementation⁷. Details of actions taken and progress made by specific Government Departments are also required to be published in annual reports and strategy statements, though this occurs to varying degrees.

The Office of the Promotion for Migrant Integration (OPMI), a unit within the Department of Justice and Equality, had overall responsibility for promoting migrant integration, taking a cross-departmental approach, and for administering funding to local and national bodies to undertake activities that promote integration until October 2020. The OPMI developed, led and coordinated the National Migrant Integration Strategy (NMIS), with input from all Government Departments, civil society and other relevant stakeholders. The cross-departmental approach has been noted as being both an important but challenging aspect of coordinating and implementing integration policy in Ireland⁸.

Since October 2020, the responsibility for integration policy and practice was transferred to a new Department with responsibility for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). This new Department also has responsibility for accommodation and integration supports for people seeking asylum and resettled refugees, including implementation of the White Paper to End Direct Provision.

Migrant integration policy is mainstreamed in Ireland across all Government Departments. Actions outlined in the NMIS are assigned to Government Departments, public services and local authorities for implementation. The development and implementation of sectoral strategies to address migrant integration issues in specific sectors such as health, education and policing, are the responsibility of relevant Government Departments and further support the implementation of the Migrant Integration Strategy. The mainstreaming of Irish migrant integration policy is detailed thematically below in Section II.

Local migrant integration strategies, many of which were developed with financial support from the OPMI, support the local implementation of the National Migrant Integration Strategy. Responsibility for updating local Migrant Integration Strategies lies with local authorities, as outlined in the National Migrant Integration Strategy⁹. In addition, local authorities have the responsibility for establishing a local Migrant Forum in each county to encourage and facilitate

⁷ NMIS Progress Report to Government, Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration (2019) <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/983af-migrant-integration-strategy/>

⁸ Arnold et al. Policy and Practice Targeting the Labour Market Integration of non-EU Nationals in Ireland. ESRI Research Series No. 89, page iv.

⁹ National Migrant Integration Strategy.

participation in local policy development¹⁰. Local Public Participation Networks (PPNS) are civil representative structures, funded by Central Government and Local Authorities, which facilitate the nomination of community and special interest groups on to statutory policy committees.

1.3. Target group

The National Migrant Integration Strategy (NMIS) is broad and inclusive. It applies to all people from a migrant background in Ireland, including people seeking asylum, refugees, EU and non-EU nationals, first and second generation migrants.

The National Migrant Integration Strategy recognises the diversity of needs across the various categories of migrants or vulnerable groups. However, targeted measures directed towards specific categories, such as people seeking asylum, unaccompanied minors or victims of trafficking, are not considered or detailed in the Migrant Integration Strategy (MIS).

In parallel to the NMIS, the Government's White Paper to End Direct Provision outlines a range of proposed actions to promote and support the integration of people seeking asylum in Ireland, to be implemented by end of 2024.

2. Alignment with European Action Plan on Integration & Inclusion 2021-2027

The National Migrant Integration Strategy (NMIS) was published four years prior to the European Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (EAPII). It was not informed by the EAPII but it does share similar objectives, priority thematic issues and proposed actions.

Employment, for example, is recognised in the NMIS as a significant challenge and priority with specific actions and targets to increase employment in the Irish public sector. Ten actions out of a total of 76 outlined in the NMIS are focussed on employment-related actions.

Similar to the EAPII, education is recognised as a priority theme in the NMIS, with twelve actions focussed on improving integration in education. Active citizenship and access to health is also a priority focus in the NMIS and EAPII.

However, other thematic priority issues that feature heavily in the EAPII are not referenced in the NMIS such as housing and enhancing use of digital tools for integration. Housing has been recognised as an important dimension of migrant integration but there is no migrant integration and housing strategy in Ireland. Health is a significant focus in the EAPII but only three actions are assigned to this theme in the Irish NMIS. However, the development of a dedicated intercultural health strategy is outlined and has since been developed by the Department of Health outlining sector-specific actions.

The Irish NMIS refers to and is informed by the EU Common Basic Principles of Integration and other EU migrant integration policies that were published before the Irish MIS. One of the

¹⁰ National Migrant Integration Strategy.

principles is that integration is a two-way process with actions required at the wider community level. This is also recognised in the EAPII and is emphasised throughout the Irish NMIS with actions for the wider Irish population and actions that encourage participation under the guidance of local authorities.

3. Role of local authorities & civil society

Local authorities and the third sector are recognised as playing an important role in the implementation of the Irish MIS. Both local authorities and civil society participated in the development of the MIS and are represented on the monitoring body with responsibility for implementation of the MIS.

Local authorities have responsibility for developing and updating local migrant integration strategies, and for establishing Migrant Integration Forums, which are prescribed actions in the NMIS.

Local authorities

The role of local authorities in general is to deliver a range of services including economic and community development, transport, housing, environment, and recreation¹¹. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage oversees the operation of the local government framework within which local authorities operate. Local authorities do not have a legislative role in Ireland. Local authorities have wide ranging legislative roles in their areas of responsibility and are obligated to ensure all migrant rights are protected in the delivery of their statutory functions. Regarding the NMIS Local Authorities, albeit not a statutory requirement, are assigned responsibility for the following actions¹²:

- Overseeing the development of local migrant integration strategies
- Establishing Migrant Integration Forums
- Initiatives will be undertaken aimed at increasing the number of migrant representatives in local authority fora, like Public Participation Networks (PPNs), and other representative fora.
- Multi-lingual materials on voter registration and on elections will be made accessible and available.
- Take action to have migrant representation on all Joint-Policing Committees.
- Develop and publish their policy on the early removal of racist graffiti in their respective areas.

Locally, migrant integration policy and practice is implemented by local authorities, other public services and civil society. While each county and city has a slightly different structure and services, local authorities are generally responsible for overseeing the development of local

¹¹ See here for more information: <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/departments-and-hereditary-organisations/departments-and-hereditary-organisations-2018-2020/>

¹² NMIS, Action 52 and 53, p. 30.

migrant integration plans in collaboration with relevant stakeholders including services, civil society and communities.

In Limerick, the migrant integration policy is formally adopted by the elected politicians of Limerick City and County Council. The Limerick Integration Working Group (IWG) brings together relevant statutory and non-statutory stakeholders to develop and implement migrant integration policy. This group was established in 2007 and is comprised of more than 20 representatives from statutory and non-statutory agencies, including the local authority, and community groups.

Each local authority also oversees the development of a wide range of local mainstream policies and strategies on issues including community development, housing, transport, education and employment. Local authorities also have responsibility for promoting equality and prohibiting discrimination in relation to its own policies, strategies and services, in line with equality legislation and the Public Sector Duty¹³. Healthcare service delivery is not the responsibility of the local authorities. Local and regional health offices under the management of the Health Service Executive (HSE), are responsible for assessing, planning for and addressing the local needs of people from a migrant or minority background.

The new White Paper to End Direct Provision foresees a strong role for local authorities in identifying addressing the integration needs of people seeking asylum at local and community level. The proposal is to establish interagency working groups chaired by local authorities to coordinate services. This is a similar structure to that which was in place for refugee resettlement integration programmes, which were rolled from 2015 to support the integration of people arriving from Syria, Lebanon and surrounding region. The new system foreseen under the White Paper to end Direct provision is envisaged to be implemented fully by end of 2024.

Civil society

The NMIS does not assign an official responsibility to civil society for implementing specific actions, but it's role is recognised as crucial for implementation more broadly. Actions outlined in the NMIS are assigned to Government Department, public services and local authorities only.

Civil society play a strong role in the implementation of the NMIS at national and local level and can apply to the Department for funding regarding same. Initiatives funded to implement migrant integration actions will broadly be aligned with NMIS actions and priority areas.

There are a number of migrant rights and support organisations in Ireland that play a lead role in migrant integration nationally and locally. Organisations include Doras, the Immigrant Council of Ireland, Irish Refugee Council, Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland, Crosscare, Jesuit Refugee Service Ireland, Nasc, and New Communities Partnership. Local organisations focussed on migrant integration and support include Cultúr, Killarney Asylum Seeker Initiative (KASI), and Tralee Intercultural Centre (TIRC). A further small number of organisation provide specialised

¹³ Section 42 of IHREC Act 2014.

services and advocacy on specific issues including and AkiDWA, an organisation focussed on migrant women from an African background, Spirasi, a support service for victims of torture, the Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland, Irish Network Against Racism, Children’s Rights Alliance and Cáirde, a migrant health organisation.

Civil society organisations in Ireland are funded directly by Government Departments, through EU funding programmes including Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) and through private funding managed by philanthropic organisations.

The new White Paper to End Direct Provision proposes that community and specialist civil society organisations will be contracted to provide integration support services to people seeking asylum at local level.

Section II. Literature Analysis

4. Legal & policy framework relating to migrants on the four dimensions

4.1. Healthcare

Access to healthcare is broadly provided to all residents who have been living in Ireland for one year or more. Legislation regarding access to healthcare services, like all legislation in Ireland, is determined at national level. The medical card system facilitates free access to healthcare services for people with low incomes, including people seeking asylum in Ireland. The medical card facilitates free access to the following services: GP (family doctor) services; Public hospital services; Prescribed medication; Maternity and infant services; Dental services and community healthcare services.

People who are “ordinarily resident” in Ireland can apply for a medical card, eligibility for which is assessed on income grounds. In order to prove that a person is “ordinarily resident” in Ireland, evidence of income and proof of address is required, along with details of immigration permission, visa and employment permits.

People who are undocumented in Ireland face considerable challenges accessing healthcare services, as well as all public services more broadly. They are not eligible for medical cards as they are not considered to be legally “ordinarily resident” in Ireland. People who are undocumented in Ireland do have access to “essential medical treatment”, services necessary for the protection of public health *i.e. COVID-19 vaccine) and health services have discretionary power to waive or reduce fees on hardship grounds. In cases of emergency, an emergency medical card can be facilitated but utilization of this is reportedly rare¹⁴.

¹⁴ MIPEX Health Strand Ireland report <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/primarycare/socialinclusion/about-social-inclusion/researchreports/ireland-mipex-health.pdf>

People seeking asylum in Ireland are offered a voluntary medical screening and vulnerability assessment on arrival to Ireland¹⁵. They have a legal entitlement to access healthcare services¹⁶, but must apply for a medical card and fulfil the means test in order to use healthcare services. In practice, there are often significant delays associated with applying for and accessing medical cards, which has resulted in barriers to accessing healthcare for people seeking asylum¹⁷. The medical card is linked with a person's address and local health office, which needs to be formally changed by way of written application, in the event of a change of address. This can result in ineligibility to a medical card for people who are unaware of this requirement to notify the HSE medical card unit of the change of address. Other related barriers include difficulties navigating the complex system of transferring from a reception centre where on site medical screenings are offered, to a more long-term Direct Provision centre in a different local authority area where one must find a new GP (family doctor) and request a transfer of medical records. Finding a doctor in some local areas is known to be challenging due to the lack of capacity and resources available in some areas.

Healthcare services in Ireland are delivered by the Health Service Executive (HSE) through six National Service Delivery Divisions with responsibility for hospitals, social care, mental health, primary care, health, and well-being¹⁸. A National Social Inclusion Office, which aims to improve participation with and access to healthcare for marginalised and vulnerable groups in Ireland, has responsibility for Intercultural Health policy and service provision¹⁹.

At regional level, nine regional CHOs are responsible for ensuring that local health services are responding to local needs. Each regional CHO has a dedicated Social Inclusion unit that employs a regional coordinator with responsibility for ethnic minority groups. At local level, community healthcare services in Ireland are delivered to local communities through 32 local health offices, with support from the regional CHOs. Social inclusion health services are mostly delivered by national and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) through service-level agreements.

GPs (family doctors) are the primary source of entry into the healthcare system for most. GPs have the option to opt in into the Medical Card scheme and provide service to medical card holders – there is no obligation to provide services to medical card holders. There is a general shortage of GPs in Ireland which leads to barriers accessing healthcare services in practice. This is particularly challenging in some local level more than others, depending on local needs and availability of GP services.

¹⁵ See IPAS website for more information: https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/d9f43-international-protection-accommodation-services-ipas/?referrer=/en/RIA/Pages/Medical_FAQs

¹⁶ This entitlement to access healthcare is enshrined in the Statutory Instrument that transposed the EU recast Reception Conditions Directive into Irish law, S.I. 230/2018.

¹⁷ 12 complaints were received by the Office of the Ombudsman from people seeking asylum regarding medical card applications in 2019 and a further 16 complaints in 2021 regarding broader healthcare issues. See reports by the Ombudsman here: <https://www.ombudsman.ie/publications/reports/>

¹⁸ Health Service Executive <https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/health-system/health-service-executive/>

¹⁹ Information about National Social Inclusion Office published on HSE Social Inclusion webpage: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/primarycare/socialinclusion/about-social-inclusion/>



There are limited specialised migrant healthcare services available in Ireland. A few examples include:

- Spirasi²⁰, a non-governmental organisation, provides specialised support and care to people seeking asylum who have experienced complex trauma and victims of torture.
- A Female Genital Mutilation Clinic (FGM) was established in 2013 by the HSE in partnership with civil society organisations AkiDWA and the Irish Family Planning Association. The FGM clinic provides free specialised support and counselling, funded by HSE National Social Inclusion Office.
- In Limerick, a primary health care service for marginalised groups, including undocumented migrants and asylum seekers, was established in 2014 to improve access to healthcare. This service is particularly crucial for people with no access to medical cards. The project was undertaken by the Partnership for Health Equity (PHE), a collaboration of clinicians, medical educators, social scientists and health care policy makers and planners²¹.

Recommendations have been made by a number of medical and health professional bodies to develop and implement specialised healthcare supports, including specialised mental healthcare, for refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland, in order to address the specific and complex needs presenting^{22,23}.

The National Migrant Integration Strategy (NMIS) outlines just three actions relating to health (actions 48-50, NMIS), one of which assigns responsibility to the Health Service Executive (HSE) to develop a new intercultural health strategy. The other two actions relate to interpreter services and data monitoring.

The National Intercultural Health Strategy is the primary policy dedicated to promoting equality and migrant integration in the health sector in Ireland. It is produced by the Health Service Executive (HSE), which is the government unit under the Department of Health that has responsibility for providing healthcare in Ireland. The current strategy is the second national intercultural health strategy running from 2018 to 2023²⁴. This strategy outlines five strategic goals:

1. Enhance accessibility of services to service users from diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds.

²⁰ More information about Spirasi: <https://spirasi.ie/>

²¹ MIPEX Health Strand report Ireland.

²² College of Psychiatrists of Ireland (2017), The Mental Health Service Requirements in Ireland for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants from Conflict Zones <https://www.irishpsychiatry.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Mental-Health-Service-requirements-for-asylum-seekers-refugees-and-immigrants-150517-1.pdf>

²³ Migrant Health - The Health of Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Relocated Individuals: A position paper from the Faculty of Public Health Medicine (2016) <https://rcpi-live-cdn.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Migrant-Health-16062016.pdf>

²⁴ Second Intercultural Health Strategy 2018 to 2023, <https://rcpi-live-cdn.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Migrant-Health-16062016.pdf>

2. Address health issues experienced by service users from diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds.
3. Ensure provision of high quality, culturally appropriate responsive services to service users from diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds
4. Build an evidence base.
5. Strengthen partnership working to enhance intercultural health.

The National Intercultural Health Strategy details a wide range of specific actions with clear timelines and partners listed. Actions are strategically aligned with other policies, including the health sector-specific actions outlined in the National Migrant Integration Strategy²⁵. The National Intercultural Health strategy takes a whole of government approach to addressing the health needs of migrants. However, the specific health needs of migrants are a priority for the specialised HSE National Social Inclusion Office, which has regional social inclusion teams to implement policy and practice.

The strategy contains several targeted actions that aim to address the needs of specific groups, such as asylum seekers who have experienced torture and trauma, transgender refugees and women from an African background that have been victims of Female Genital Mutilation. A number of specialised civil society and migrant support NGO's are named in the strategy as implementing partners on specific actions, as well as other Government Departments and Health Service Executive units.

In terms of mainstream policy on healthcare issues, the cross-government Healthy Ireland framework was initially launched in 2013 with an updated strategy published in 2021²⁶. This strategy recognises the role of the HSE to proof all policies for marginalised groups, including migrants.

The six themes outlined in the strategic action plan include:

1. Governance and policy.
2. Partnerships and cross-sectoral work.
3. Empowering people and communities.
4. Health and health reform.
5. Research and evidence.
6. Monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

Despite the intended mainstreaming and whole of government approach outlined in this strategy, the MIPEX report on migrant health issues in Ireland notes that there is limited consideration of the impact on migrant health of policies in sectors other than health (MIPEX, 2018).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Healthy Ireland – Strategic Action Plan 2021-2025 <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/441c8-healthy-ireland-strategic-action-plan-2021-2025/>

In terms of local and regional policy and practice, healthcare actions are typically included in local migrant integration plans, overseen by local authorities, while service delivery is the responsibility of local and regional health offices, overseen by the HSE. Healthcare service delivery does not come under the remit of local authorities in Ireland.

In Limerick, the local migrant integration strategy contains the following objectives relating to healthcare²⁷:

- To continue to promote access, awareness and health information for migrants.
- To ensure all frontline staff receive necessary intercultural and diversity training to enable them respond appropriately to the needs of migrants engaging with their services.
- To enable public service providers access good quality interpreters and translators in a timely manner when the need arises.

A HSE representative is a member of the Limerick Integration Working Group (IWG), who takes the lead in implementation of these actions with support from civil society and community groups who also play a role in facilitating access to services and information through direct support services with migrants.

Local and regional health offices, under the overall management of the HSE, are responsible for responding to local health needs, including migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

There is one regional intercultural health strategy, which was developed by the South East Community Health Office, which covers five counties. The HSE South East regional strategy aims to compliment and support the regional implementation of the National Intercultural Health Strategy according to specific local needs²⁸. The target group in the regional strategy is narrower than the national Intercultural Strategy, focussing on Roma, refugees and asylum seekers based on local demographics and needs. The regional strategy has four strategic goals and emphasises health information needs of target groups, increasing access to healthcare for asylum seekers, capacity building for healthcare staff, improving monitoring frameworks and service-user participation mechanisms.

The regional strategy for the South East region is the only regional intercultural health strategy that has been developed to date in Ireland. The development and implementation of a regional strategy for the Southeast region is highlighted as an example of best practice by the National Social Inclusion Office, along with a number of other projects in the same regional CHO including research projects to assess and understand local needs, community partnerships and training initiatives²⁹.

²⁷ Theme 3, p. 21, Limerick Integration Plan 2018-2022.

²⁸ Social Inclusion Services South East Community Healthcare: Intercultural Health Strategy for Roma, Refugees and People Seeking International Protection 2019 – 2022,

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/primarycare/socialinclusion/intercultural-health/sech.pdf>

²⁹ National Social Inclusion Office website, Projects – Social Inclusion Intercultural Health,

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/primarycare/socialinclusion/intercultural-health/projects/>

4.2. Employment

Employment is recognised in the National Migrant Integration Strategy (NMIS) as an important aspect of integration. There are ten actions specifically addressing employment issues outlined in the NMIS.

Access to employment in Ireland is restricted for people seeking asylum and people with certain forms of permission from non-EU countries. Until 2018, Ireland completely prohibited employment for people seeking asylum. Asylum seekers have been given permission to apply for labour market access six months (initially nine months, reduced to a six month wait in 2020) after their application for international protection is submitted. This permission is outlined in the Statutory Instrument that transposed the EU recast Receptions Conditions Directive³⁰. In order to gain access to employment, people must first apply for a permit, which is granted for a 12-month period.

People with refugee status and permission to remain, known as immigration Stamp 4 holders, do not require an employment permit. People from non-EU countries who do not hold refugee status or a Stamp 4 permission, are likely to require one of nine employment permit options in order to legally seek employment in Ireland.

People from non-EU countries who have not come through the asylum and international protection system must apply for an employment permit in order to seek employment in Ireland. The immigration and employment permit system is complex. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment is responsible for administering the employment permit system, as well as identifying and addressing needs in relation to workforce skills. Policies relating to employment permits impact on the employment integration prospects of migrants in that it determines who may access employment and with what conditions.

Responsibility for immigration, international protection and visas is the responsibility of the Department of Justice, who also have responsibility for determining access to employment for people who are not in the employment permit system.

Furthermore, employment activation and support services are the responsibility of the Department of Social Protection, who have responsibility for administering social welfare payments in accordance with entitlements outlined by immigration permissions. People seeking asylum with a labour market access permission, are also eligible to avail of employment activation and support.

At local level, community employment and integration support initiatives often fall under the remit of the Department of Rural and Community Development, who has responsibility for Social

³⁰ S.I. No. 230/2018 – European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018.
<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/si/230/made/en/print>

Inclusion policy and practice. The most recent National Social Inclusion Strategy 2015-2017³¹ recognises the impact of bias and service deficiencies on migrants seeking to enter employment and commits to addressing same.

In terms of employment integration in practice, there are a number of challenges and barriers facing migrants in Ireland, which have been highlighted repeatedly in numerous studies. Analysis of employment participation of migrants in Ireland in 2020 revealed that migrants in Ireland from EU countries had significantly higher employment rates when compared with Irish nationals, while people from an African and Asian background had significantly lower rates³². African nationals have the lowest employment rate than any other group of migrants in Ireland. In 2019, the unemployment rate for African nationals was 12% compared with 5% rate for Irish nationals³³.

A report from 2019 revealed significant levels of discrimination experienced by people from an African background with regards to seeking employment and in the workplace. People from a Black non-Irish background were found to be less than half as likely to be employed than White Irish people and five times more likely to experience discrimination when seeking employment³⁴. Furthermore, people from a black Irish background were found to be twice as likely to experience discrimination when seeking employment and three and a half times more likely to experience discrimination in the workplace³⁵.

The same ESRI report noted that career progression was also affected by ethnicity and nationality, with both Black Non-Irish and Black Irish groups being less likely to be managerial or professional roles, though this trend appears to be narrowing over the period since 2004. Other challenges identified in other reports with regard to employment integration in Ireland include low pay, over-qualification and lack of recognition of qualifications obtained overseas, exploitation, limited English language skills and social networks (MRCI, 2015; McGinnity et al. 2018).

Ireland's equality legislation³⁶ aims to prohibit discrimination when seeking work and in the workplace, but researchers and analysts note that the lack of support for victims of discrimination, the risk of repercussions and the ambiguity around potential benefits for victims to bring discrimination cases, contribute towards a low proportion of cases being taken against

³¹ National Social Inclusion Policy 2015-2017 <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/privacy-statement.html>

³² ESRI Monitoring Report on Integration 2020, p. 27

https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/BKMNEXT403_0.pdf

³³ Ibid. p. 37

³⁴ Arnold et al., ESRI, 2019. https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS89_1.pdf

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ The Employment Equality Acts promote equality and prohibit discrimination in relation to employment. The Public Sector Duty applies to public sector employers, which includes local authorities; health services; education institutions; and companies that are financed by Government. Under the Public Sector Duty, public service employers are obliged to assess, address and publish reports on equality and human rights issues.

employers (McGinnity, 2021)³⁷. In 2020, 17% of cases taken under the Employment Equality Acts were on the grounds of race but these cases are thought to only represent a small proportion of what is experienced³⁸. The effectiveness of this legislation is currently under review, as part of the Programme for Government.

People seeking asylum must apply for a permit in order to gain access to employment, which is granted for a 12-month period. The permit is issued by way of a letter, rather than a card, which has caused some employers question its validity, as was noted in Doras' report from 2021 on employment issues for people seeking asylum. Other barriers noted in this report include administrative barriers like difficulty opening a bank account and obtaining a driver's licence, as well as lack of local references and experience, lack of social networks, social and economic disadvantage, difficulty navigating the systems, childcare issues, all of which are found to be compounded by the length of time people spend in the asylum process (Doras, 2021).

Issues relating to the complex and restrictive employment permit system, including the requirements for salary thresholds and employer-specific permits have been highlighted as problematic and limit the employment integration of migrants in Ireland. There also appears to be a lack coordination between employment permit policy and the objectives of the national migrant integration strategy, with a lack of clarity around employment rights.

Addressing English language skills is essential to facilitate employment integration but there is no national strategy dedicated to addressing this skills gap and provision for English language classes have developed locally by education and training boards in response to local needs (SOLAS, 2018)³⁹. Furthermore, people with limited English language skills face barriers accessing public services, including social welfare support that is intended to support employment activation. Despite efforts made by social welfare services, there continues to be limited use of language interpreter services in practice, due to a lack of awareness of these services.

In terms of employment integration policy and practice, the NMIS actions around employment aim to enable migrant participation in employment, to access employment support services and language skills development. Language skills development will be addressed in the section below focused on Capacity Building and Training. The government institutions responsible for implementing employment integration policy in Ireland, as outlined in the NMIS, include eight public bodies and Departments, as well as local enterprise offices. The mid-term review of the NMIS, the actions relating to the theme of employment are reported to be largely "on track" (6 out of 10 actions), complete (2 out of ten actions), with three actions experiencing "minor problems or delays". While these actions are under the employment theme in the NMIS, they also relate to capacity building and training.

³⁷ McGinnity et al., Measures to Combat racial Discrimination and Promote Diversity in the Labour Market: A Review of Evidence (2021). <https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/SUSTAT110.pdf>

³⁸ Ibid, p. 20

³⁹ SOLAS English language provision and language assessment for low-skilled and unemployed migrants. <https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/7a61ee6ee9/english-language-provision-and-language-assessment.pdf>



Examples of progress in relation to employment integration actions highlighted in the mid-term NMIS report⁴⁰ include:

- Ireland's agreement to opt-in to the EU Receptions Conditions Directive (2013/33/EU), following a court ruling on the right of International Protection Applicants to access the job market, represents a positive step towards enabling access to employment for this cohort.
- The Public Appointment Service (PAS) has reported much improved public awareness amongst migrant communities of PAS and its role, as a result of its proactive engagement on the issue
- An analysis of the extent to which joblessness affects job seekers of African origin more than those from other groups has been completed.

There is no dedicated policy regarding migrant integration and employment in Ireland. A number of mainstream employment polices exist and refer to migrant-specific needs, though there are few targeted measures envisaged.

The Pathways to Work strategy 2021-2025 aims to facilitate access to employment with a particular focus on economic recovery and the challenges presented by rates of unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic⁴¹. The Pathways to Work strategy is the national employment services, support and activation strategy, monitored by the Labour Market Advisory Council which reports to the Department for Social Protection.

The strategy is aligned with and incorporates actions from the National Migrant Integration Strategy, as well as the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021⁴² and the Public Appointments Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021 – 2023⁴³.

The focus in theme four of the Pathways to Work strategy “Working for All, Leaving No One Behind”⁴⁴, recognises the specific employment support needs of people from marginalised and minority groups, including the disproportionate rates of poverty and deprivation they face compared to the wider population. This strand contains a dedicated section and commitments focussed on minority groups that face disadvantage⁴⁵. Actions outlined in this section of the strategy include commitments to provide English language skills training and further education, access to paid internships, reserved placements in the public sector and employment schemes, raise awareness of public sector employment opportunities, subsidies for employers and entrepreneurship support.

⁴⁰ Progress report to Government, p. 47

⁴¹ Pathways to Work 2021-2025 <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-justice/?referrer=http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/National%20Traveller%20and%20Roma%20Inclusion%20Strategy,%202017-2021.pdf/Files/National%20Traveller%20and%20Roma%20Inclusion%20Strategy,%202017-2021.pdf>

⁴² National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-justice/?referrer=http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/National%20Traveller%20and%20Roma%20Inclusion%20Strategy,%202017-2021.pdf/Files/National%20Traveller%20and%20Roma%20Inclusion%20Strategy,%202017-2021.pdf>

⁴³ Public Service Appointments Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2023 <https://www.publicjobs.ie/documents/PASEDIStrategyDocument.pdf>

⁴⁴ Pathways to Work strategy 2021-2025, pp. 61-78

⁴⁵ Ibid. pp. 75-78

Twelve specific commitments are made under this section of the strategy, seven of which are targeted towards members of the Traveller and Roma communities. Though migrants and asylum seekers are mentioned in the strategy, there are no specific commitments targeting people from a migrant, refugee or asylum-seeking background.

The Public Appointments Service is Ireland’s recruitment body for the public service. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021 -2023 is informed by and aligned with the National Migrant Integration Strategy and obligations under the Public Sector Duty to promote equality and prohibit discrimination. The strategy outlines the equality and human rights issues it identified under the Public Sector Duty assessment⁴⁶, including the need for increased engagement with diverse groups, positive action measures, inclusive leadership, and capacity building.

The strategy highlights three strategic priorities⁴⁷:

1. Greater knowledge and understanding of the diversity in the recruitment market and the Irish Public sector
2. Recruitment and selection processes encourage and enable access to candidates from diverse backgrounds
3. Our culture models best practice in ED&I and we support our clients in building inclusive workplaces.

The strategy notes the target to increase employment of people from a migrant background in the public service to 1%, as part of the National Migrant Integration Strategy. However, there are no clear actions detailing how this target will be achieved. The strategy does however aim to increase engagement with people from diverse backgrounds and relevant service providers through targeted information and outreach initiatives to raise awareness of public sector employment opportunities. The strategy does not make reference to specific categories or groups, such as refugees or asylum seekers and there are no targeted measures detailed in the strategy geared towards different groups.

Lastly, the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2015-2017 outlines seven high-level goals outlined in the National Social Inclusion Strategy include, including a goal to build inclusive communities and encourage active citizenship. Specific actions relating to migrant integration are limited and are instead considered as part of broader actions to support “marginalised groups”. Implementation of social inclusion initiatives are largely assigned to the community and voluntary sector, which is highlighted as the preferred model of service delivery. The Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is the main approach for ensuring that communities and individuals from marginalised groups are supported. SICAP is delivered by local

⁴⁶ The Public Sector Duty is a legal obligation enshrined in the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, whereby public sector bodies are required to undertake an equality and human rights assessment and to publish the findings and actions implemented to address same.

⁴⁷ Ibid. pp. 11-15



development companies and funded by the Department with support from EU funds, further outlined below in section 4.

In terms of local policy and practice, employment integration is considered in local migrant integration plans as well as mainstream plans. In Limerick, the local migrant integration plan by the Limerick IWG includes the following objectives:

- To provide guidance to asylum seekers from the moment of arrival to maintain and enhance their skills and capacities in order to aid their long term integration prospects
- To ensure job-seeking and employment supports are accessible to migrants in Limerick
- To create pathways to employment for migrant communities and support ethnic entrepreneurship.

A representative of the local development company is a member of the Limerick IWG and helps to ensure implementation of these actions under the SICAP remit, with support from civil society organisations engaged in employment support projects and information provision services with migrant groups.

Mainstream local and regional strategies relating to specifically to employment vary from one county to another but include the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), developed by local authorities, and a Regional Enterprise Plan. These policies mainstream equality and migrant integration issues throughout including some specific actions, for example to increase participation in education and training amongst migrants⁴⁸,

At local level, local employment services (LES) provide free and confidential information, guidance and job-searching support to people seeking employment. The LES is managed by local development companies. SICAP, also managed by local development companies, delivers a range of employment support initiatives to marginalised communities and individuals, which impact on migrant integration but are not reported under the NMIS structure or progress report. SICAP is managed by 33 Local Community Development Committees (LCDC'S, which are statutory committees of the Local Authority in partnership with Local Development Companies. Employment supports provided include upskilling, CV writing skills, interview preparation and work placement programmes.

Employment supports schemes⁴⁹ that create work placement opportunities for unemployed people are also facilitated via local Intreo offices, under the remit of the Department of Social Protection. These schemes include: Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS); Work Placement Experience Programme (WPEP); Community Employment (CE) Scheme; Tús;

⁴⁸ Action 2.1, Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021

https://www.limerick.ie/sites/default/files/media/documents/2017-07/Limerick%20Local%20Economic%20and%20Community%20Plan%202016-2021_0.pdf

⁴⁹ See more information on employment support schemes here:

https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/unemployment_and_redundancy/employment_support_schemes/schemes_to_support_employment.html

JobsPlus; Community Services Programme. Other supports include the Training Support Grant (TSG; Jobs Clubs; and the Jobs Ireland website with listings of all internship and employment programme placements.

Other initiatives implemented by civil society and specialist NGOs are also not reported under the NMIS structure, unless directly funded by the Department. As such, evaluating the extent of implementation at local level is challenging.

Overall, there is a complex system for coordinating and implementing employment integration policy and practice nationally and locally in Ireland, with numerous actors taking responsibility for different aspects of the work. There is a lack of coordination among the various institutions and public bodies with responsibility for employment and a lack of clear targeted measures to address the many challenges facing migrants in accessing employment opportunities in Ireland. While employment integration features in many policies across various Departments, there is no national employment integration strategy for migrants and a lack of collaboration and coordination on this issue.

Meanwhile, experiences of discrimination while seeking employment and in the workplace continue to be reported and present a significant challenge to individuals, communities and the population as a whole.

4.3. Capacity Building & Training

Ireland's education system consists of primary, secondary and third-level education, the latter of which includes all further and higher education after secondary level school education. The Department of Education has overall responsibility for policy, funding and strategy in relation to the primary and secondary education system, and a new Department of Further and Higher Education has taken on responsibility for third level education since 2020.

The legal framework around access to education for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers is determined by a range of legal instruments in the area of education, immigrant and international protection⁵⁰.

The National Migrant Integration Strategy (NMIS) outlines twelve actions under the theme of education, including actions relating to schools, third level education and English language provision. A dedicated strategy focussing on education and integration issues was developed in 2010, the National Intercultural Education Strategy⁵¹, covering a five-year period, aiming to "support and improve the quality, relevance and inclusiveness of education for every learner". The strategy recognised that education providers play a leading role in migrant integration, but

⁵⁰ The following legislation relates to education access for people from a migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking background: International Protection Act 2015

<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/66/enacted/en/print.html>; Education (Admissions to Schools) Act 2018 <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/act/14/enacted/en/html>; Education Act 1998

<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1998/act/51/enacted/en/html>; S.I. No. 230/2018 European Communities

⁵¹ Intercultural Education Strategy 2010-2015 <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/75ade-intercultural-education-strategy/>

regrettably this dedicated strategy has not been updated. However, it does continue to be referred to in broader migrant integration policy and remains a source of guidance for the education sector. Other relevant policies that are focussed on migrant integration and education issues include a series of Guidelines developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)⁵², which are also now outdated and in need of revision.

Mainstream education, capacity building and training public bodies and Departments are responsible for incorporating migrant integration issues into their sector-specific plans.

The key education provider operating locally with a national statutory remit in education provision, the Education and Training Boards (ETBs), have published migrant-specific guidelines in relation to provision of English language skills, though there remains a significant gap in national Government policy in this area.

The National Skills Strategy 2025 published by the Department of Education focuses on skills development to strengthen the quality of the Irish workforce and to support economic and social growth⁵³. Migrant integration is not featured in the strategy and there are no specific actions relating to upskills migrants outlined in the Strategy.

With regard to access to education and provision of education services in practice, which has a practical implication for migrant integration at local level, pre-school (age 3 to 5 years), primary (age 5 to 12 years) and second-level (age 12 to 18 years) education is available to all children and young people aged 3 years to 18 years, regardless of circumstance, residency or background. There are no fees for education at this age in the public education system. Access to third level education for people from a migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking background is dependent on a number of factors including immigration status and length of time in Ireland.

For people seeking asylum in Ireland, access to further education is facilitated in line with permission to work. Vocational training that helps people to gain skills in relation to employment has been facilitated since 2018, following the transposition of the EU recast Receptions Conditions Directive⁵⁴. State funding, known as the State Support Scheme, may be available to help facilitate access to same if people have been living in Ireland for three years or more.

⁵² National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) English as an Additional Language in Irish Primary Schools (2006)

https://ncca.ie/media/1794/english_as_an_additional_language_in_irish_primary_schools_guidelines_for_teachers.pdf; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) Guidelines on Intercultural Education for Primary Schools: https://ncca.ie/media/1903/intercultural_education_in_the_primary_school_guidelines_for_schools.pdf; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), Guidelines on Intercultural Education in Post-Primary Schools (2006) https://ncca.ie/media/1976/intercultural_education_in_the_post-primary_school.pdf

⁵³ National Skills Strategy 2025 – Ireland’s Future, <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/69fd2-irelands-national-skills-strategy-2025-irelands-future/>

⁵⁴ The transposition of the EU recast Receptions Conditions Directive into Irish law improved access to vocational training for people with permission to seek employment. Article 11 (11) of the S.I. No. 230/2018 outlines the right to vocational training for people seeking asylum in Ireland: (11) An applicant who holds a permission shall be entitled to avail of vocational training:

(a) subject to subparagraph (b), in the like manner and to the like extent in all respects as an Irish citizen, and
 (b) in the case of vocational training relating to an employment contract, to the extent to which the training relates to an occupation in which the applicant may, by virtue of the permission, be employed or self-employed.

People with refugee status or other forms of permission to remain in Ireland are entitled to access further education and training on the same basis as Irish citizens. Restrictions apply with regard to people who have been living in Ireland for less than three years who may not be entitled to grants and financial support⁵⁵. These financial barriers often prevent people from accessing education in practice.

For people with refugee status or other permission to remain in Ireland who have been living in Ireland for three years or more, a range of higher and third level education options are available, including financial support and student grants. These residency criteria apply to all citizens, including Irish citizens.

Financial barriers to accessing university and college are significant for many. People who do not qualify for free education, referred to as “free fees”, may be required to pay “international fees”, which are significantly higher than Irish or EU fees, typically in the region of €10,000 to €20,000 per year and therefore largely inaccessible⁵⁶. Fees are determined by each university or college but generally speaking, international fees are not accessible for most who have spent time in the asylum process in Ireland, with limited access to employment and with limited income. There are seven universities in Ireland, all of which have now joined the University of Sanctuary Ireland initiative to provide scholarships to people seeking asylum in Ireland. The number of and conditions attached to these scholarship programmes vary across the seven universities, but this initiative has made positive impacts since it began in 2016⁵⁷.

The Department of Further and Higher Education introduced the Student Support Scheme in August 2020 to people undertaking third-level education who are in the asylum process and have been living in Ireland for three years or more. This is the main source of financial support for students enrolled in Post Leaving Cert (PLC), undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

A number of social welfare initiatives, under the remit of the Department of Social Protection, are available to help overcome the financial barriers. People who are unemployed and in receipt of social welfare payments are eligible to apply for the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA), including people with refugee status or other permission to remain in Ireland. The BTEA provides a weekly payment to help fund and facilitate access to full-time second or third level education.

The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) and the Part-time Education Option (PTEO) provides similar support to people seeking part-time education options. Other social welfare initiatives include the Training Support Grant (TSG), which funds short-term training to help fund skills training.

⁵⁵ See the Irish Refugee Council Education Booklet for more details on rights and entitlements, as well as course options. <https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=e3d97b69-63da-471b-aeaa-b30975bbe20e>

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ University of Sanctuary Ireland: <https://ireland.cityofsanctuary.org/universities-and-colleges-of-sanctuary>

The Department of Education delivers the following initiatives: Post Leaving Cert (PLC) courses; Back to Education Programme; Further Education and Training (FET) courses; Springboard – free higher education courses for people who are unemployed; Skills for Work, delivered locally by Education and Training Boards (ETBs).

English language classes are provided through local Education and Training Boards (ETBs), in schools and in accommodation centres for asylum seekers, depending on local needs. A number of civil society organisations also make English language classes available, often less formal language provision, one of the most prominent and extensive in terms of reach is Fáilte Isteach, which provides free conversational classes led by volunteers.

At local level, there are sixteen statutory Education and Training Boards (ETBs) across the country, providing adult and further education programmes, youth work initiatives, as well as operating primary and second level schools and further education colleges. SOLAS is responsible for coordinating an integrated further education and training strategy across the 16 ETBs. Eligibility for ETB programmes is dependent on the specific course and a person’s residency, immigration permission and employment rights, which can be a barrier to accessing education and training for some people, including people seeking asylum in Ireland without labour market access permission.

A number of the ETB courses relate to employment support including digital literacy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), CV preparation and interview skills. The Skills for Work programme provide training opportunities to people in the workplace who may require additional support and upskilling. The ETBs also provide English language courses to adult learners. This includes provision of English language classes to asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants from EU and non-EU countries. There is huge demand for English language provision and often waiting lists to access same.

There is no national framework for teaching and learning English as an additional language in Ireland. Local ETBs develop programmes and protocols in response to local needs, which allows for flexibility and responsive learning options. While initially, English language provision was geared towards people with a high-level of education working in professional roles, SOLAS identified the need to address the English language skills of people who were unemployed, working in low-skilled employment and with a lower level of education and published recommendation regarding same in 2018. A number of organisations have noted the need for tailored English language programmes according to people’s language skills, level of education and employment needs (Arnold et al. 2019).

The NMIS recognises English language skills as essential for integration but just three actions of the twelve listed in the area of education relate to same⁵⁸. These actions are the responsibility of the Department of Education and the Education and Training Boards (ETBs).

⁵⁸ Actions 32, 33, 37, NMIS



The ETBI state they are working to ensure coherence across the country in the programmes provided (Arnold et al., 2019). The lack of resources and the absence of a national strategy to address English language provision remain significant notable challenges (SOLAS, 2018; Gilmartin and Dagg, 2021).

Local migrant integration policy typically includes actions relating to education, capacity building and training, though local authorities do not play a role in education service delivery. In Limerick, the following objectives relate to capacity building and training⁵⁹:

- To maintain and develop formal language and educational opportunities available to migrants residing in Limerick city and county.
- To identify and provide informal language and learning opportunities to complement formal provision.
- To ensure first languages will be recognised and valued.
- To provide guidance to asylum seekers from the moment of arrival to maintain and enhance their skills and capacities in order to aid their long term integration prospects.
- To support migrants to engage in further education and training that will increase their quality of life and enhance their employability.
- To improve access to and support in further and third level education for asylum applicants and vulnerable migrants.
- To enable educators and support agencies to develop the skills and competencies required to meet the intercultural needs of migrant learners, adult and children.
- To assist migrants to get prior qualifications from countries of origin recognised in Ireland.

At local level, education, capacity building and training initiatives are typically delivered by local Education and Training Boards (ETBs), who are public bodies with a statutory education provision remit. Local community development companies and family resource centres, who are local organisations that receive state funding, also deliver a range of capacity building and training initiatives to migrants among other groups and individuals from the wider community, including through the SICAP initiative (outlined in 2.4). Migrant support and other civil society organisations also deliver capacity building and training initiatives, with project-specific funding provided by the State or private sources.

In Limerick, a representative of the local Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board is a member of the Limerick Integration Working Group (IWG) and helps to oversee local implementation of these actions, with support from other Limerick IWG members such as the local development company, civil society and community groups who also undertake education initiatives such as English classes, training, and information on rights and entitlements to education opportunities. There is little data available in relation to the scope and effectiveness of capacity building and training measures focussed on migrant integration in Ireland, in part due

⁵⁹ Theme 2, Language, Education and Employment, page xx, Limerick Integration Plan 2018-2022.
<https://doras.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Belonging-to-Limerick-Integration-Plan-2018-to-2022.pdf>



to the nature of service delivery at local level. Initiatives delivered under SICAP, by family resource centres and civil society organisations are not considered in the overall evaluation of the implementation of the NMIS but they contribute significantly to the integration outcomes of migrants in practice.

Similar to the system outlined above regarding employment integration, there are numerous actors involved in the coordination and implementation of integration policy in the area of education, capacity building and training in Ireland. The NMIS outlines a series of broad and high-level actions for implementation at local level but there is limited coordination and evaluation of the implementation of these actions in practice. Education is considered a key aspect of integration policy but there is no dedicated national policy for addressing same. This is noted as being particularly critical in the area of English language provision.

Almost 70% of the migrant population speak a language other than English (or Irish) at home (CSO, 2017). The Census outlines the self-reported ability of people to speak English, with 55% reporting that they speak English “very well”, though English language proficiency varies greatly by length of time living in Ireland, legal status and national origin (CSO, 2017). Afghan nationals for example had a comparably low rate of English language ability with 44% self-reporting to speak English “not well” or “not at all”⁶⁰.

Migrant children and young people represent an increasing proportion of school pupils and students in the Irish education system. Migrant students are generally perceived by teachers as highly motivated but English language proficiency is crucial in order to educational achievements and pathways to third level education (Volante et al. 2018). Reading scores are significantly lower for students who speak a language other than English in the home compared to Irish nationals, while second-generation students have lower scores than Irish nationals or first-generation students, which reveals a difference in academic achievement determined by language proficiency (Monitoring Report on Integration 2020). Ireland evaluates the effectiveness of its integration policy in terms of Zaragoza indicators, which in the area of education compares issues such as the rate of third-level qualifications among Irish nationals compared with non-Irish nationals, early school leaving, and mean reading and maths scores for school students.

In Ireland, migrants have a higher rate of third-level education (60%) compared with Irish nationals (53%) and a lower rate of early school leaving (3.7% compared with 4.3% for Irish nationals). Reading scores for students aged 15 years show similar scores for people from English-speaking backgrounds compared with Irish nationals, while the scores are lower for students from non-English speaking countries and backgrounds.

It is argued that this system of integration policy evaluation does not reveal an accurate analysis of integration policy and practice and that more emphasis should be placed on evaluating the effectiveness and appropriateness of service delivery at local level (McGinnity, 2021).

4.4. Social Cohesion

⁶⁰ Census profile 2017 <https://www.rte.ie/documents/news/census-2016-summary-results-part-1-full.pdf>

Social cohesion is understood as the absence of conflict and the presence of strong social bonds, defined by Maxwell as “building shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing disparities in wealth and income, and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges, and that they are members of the same community” (Maxwell, 1996). Social cohesion is more commonly expressed in Irish migrant integration policy in terms of anti-racism, community integration and interculturalism. Integration is recognised as a two-way process, with responsibilities and rights on both migrant and host communities. The NMIS outlines eight actions under the theme “Integration in the Community”, which includes actions for local authorities to develop local integration strategies, establish migrant forums, and funding for local communities to promote integration through intercultural events and initiatives.

A further six actions are focussed on anti-racism actions that seek to combat racism in public services, communities and legislate against hate crime. Ireland’s legal and policy framework specifically around anti-racism and hate crime is lacking, particularly since the economic crisis of 2008 and the significant funding cuts that followed. Ireland’s first National Action Plan Against Racism was published in 2005 and expired in 2008, when the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism was dismantled following a series of significant budget cuts. Civil society organisations have long called for the re-establishment of the NCCRI and for a new NAPAR that is compliant with the Durban declaration. Thirteen years later, the development of a new National Action Plan Against Racism was initiated and is currently in development, overseen by an independent Anti-Racism Committee⁶¹ under the remit of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), as part of the Programme for Government. The Irish Government is also currently in the process of developing legislation on hate crime and incitement to hatred, in line with the Programme for Government, which is at pre-legislative scrutiny stages.

Meanwhile, there has been a moderate increase in anti-immigrant sentiment in recent years. The rise of far-right extremism in Ireland has become an increasing concern, with the first public acknowledgment of same from the Garda (Police) Commissioner voicing concerns about the existence of far-right activity in Ireland similar to that which has spread across Europe. While Ireland has not seen the same level of far-right political activity compared with other EU countries, recent elections in 2018 and 2020 have seen the emergence of a small number of candidates stoking anti-immigrant sentiments supported by new political parties with far-right nationalist policies gaining support. While these candidates secure an insignificant number of votes and were unsuccessful in the elections, this increase in political activity and support remains a concern.

A recent report analysed public attitudes to migrants, diversity, and immigration over the period 2002 to 2014 using data from the European Social Survey and revealed links between public

⁶¹ More information on the development of Ireland’s new National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPAR) and the Anti-Racism Committee is available here: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7006f-approved-terms-of-reference-of-the-anti-racism-committee/>



attitudes to diversity and immigration with economic conditions and recovery in Ireland⁶². Positive perceptions of migrants increased between 2002 and 2006, before decreasing in 2008 when the economic crisis significantly affected Ireland. The most negative attitudes towards migration were found in 2010, with attitudes becoming more positive as the economy improved.

This research revealed that almost 60% of Irish-born people were willing to welcome migrants from similar ethnic backgrounds to Ireland, public attitudes and support towards migrants varied towards specific groups, with differences recorded for Muslim groups (40% supportive) and Roma (25% supportive), which represents a lower rate compared with other EU countries compared in the report (McGinnity et al. 2018). This finding is in line with international research that suggests a public perception of Muslims as a cultural threat and widespread prejudice towards Roma communities. No significant difference was found in terms of demographics relating to age, urban or rural, or political views of the people found to have negative attitudes towards migrants⁶³. Under half of adults born in Ireland believe some cultures to be superior to others, while 45% of people believe some races are born harder working than others. Both figures are above the European average measured in ten other States. Regular contact with people from different backgrounds is known to be associated with positive attitudes. In Ireland, research shows that almost 60% of Irish-born people have weekly contact with people from different ethnic backgrounds and 25% have daily contact.

However, a more recent report on attitudes towards refugees, immigrants, and national identity in Ireland by Social Change Initiative (2020), revealed more positive attitudes towards migrants, with reveals a strong feeling of solidarity with migrants, particularly with refugees seeking protection. 35% of people polled consider themselves to be “very open” to immigration and welcoming towards refugees and a further 44% that are open but have some concerns. Just 17% of people surveyed held negative views and attitudes towards immigration. People surveyed for this study described Ireland as “welcoming”, “open” and “tolerant”, which report authors noted as revealing a comfort with Irish national identity in relation to immigration. When asked what public policy issues were important in Ireland, just 9% named immigration as a concern.

While public attitudes to immigration and diversity do not necessarily reveal the extent of social cohesion in practice, they go some way to informing intercultural relations in Ireland. Initiatives to promote social cohesion at local level include intermural events, often implemented by local civil society and community groups with support from local authorities, broader community development initiatives implemented by local development companies, public awareness campaigns often implemented by migrant rights organisation, and initiatives taking place in the workplace, in schools and education institutions. At local level, migrant integration policy outlines actions for implementation in communities to foster a welcoming and inclusive environment for all. The Limerick integration plan commits to the following strategic objectives under the theme Cultural Awareness and Anti-Racism:

⁶² McGinnity et al. Attitudes to Diversity in Ireland (2018), ESRI Research Series. <https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2018/03/Attitudes-to-diversity-in-Ireland.pdf>

⁶³ Ibid.



- To raise awareness on the benefits of diversity and create an environment in Limerick where all residents, local and migrant, feel welcome and a sense of belonging.
- To campaign for inclusion of ethnic minorities in the economic, social, and cultural life of Limerick.
- To create intercultural spaces to facilitate connection and social interaction with migrant communities.
- To collate cultural projects in the region and to explore research opportunities in the area of culture and diversity.
- To increase cultural awareness among staff, parents and children in primary schools in Limerick
- To assist school and youth services in creating greater intercultural awareness and understanding among all students and combat racism experienced by migrant youth
- To enhance understanding of different faith and belief traditions and to promote interfaith dialogue
- To challenge racism in all forms where it occurs in Limerick.

Local implementation of these initiatives is shared across several Limerick IWG members, with initiatives such as public awareness campaigns, anti-racism youth work projects, intercultural and inter-faith initiatives implemented in the 4-year period to date. Examples of community intercultural events implemented by or with the local authority include Africa Day, an event celebrating African heritage, National Play Day, which facilitates play sessions and outings for children living in Direct Provision centres, and Limerick United Against Racism, an anti-racism campaign focussed on challenging prejudice and highlighting the benefits of diversity.

In practice, racism and discrimination remains a feature of life for many migrants in Ireland, with reports of racist incidents, hate speech and hate crime increasing in recent years. In 2019, the Irish Network Against Racism recorded 530 racist incidents, which increased to 700 incidents in 2020. The number of reported incidents dropped to 404 incidents in 2021, with a notable decrease in online hate speech reported but reports of assaults and public order offences remained worryingly high⁶⁴. The Irish Network Against Racism highlights four main areas of concern with regard to racism in Ireland: Direct provision (Ireland's system of accommodating asylum seekers); structural racism; reform of criminal justice system; lack of leadership to address racism. These issues, among others, were also raised by a coalition of civil society organisation in the shadow report on racial discrimination to UN CERD in 2019 as part of Ireland's review⁶⁵. The shadow CERD report noted examples of discrimination evident in housing, healthcare, employment and education, as well as examples of structural and institutional racism found in policies around immigration, child protection and citizenship. The absence of a dedicated legal and policy framework to address racism and hate crime in Ireland has long been called for by civil society organisations working in the area of anti-racism, particularly since the budget cuts following the 2008 economic crisis dismantled Ireland's new framework and public bodies for

⁶⁴ See <https://www.inar.ie> for annual report data on reported racist incidents

⁶⁵ Alternative Report to CERD <https://inar.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/INAR-ALTERNATIVE-REPORT-to-CERD-WEB-1.pdf>

addressing same. At the same time, we know from several research studies and public attitudes surveys that attitudes began to harden towards diversity and immigration in the years that followed. Despite these short comings in Ireland’s legal and policy framework since 2008, solidarity with migrants and refugees remains relatively strong and public opinion around refugee protection in particular has become more supportive since 2014, with political support for progressive policies now a part of the Programme for Government.

5. Main Challenges for Local & Regional Authorities

A key challenge for local authorities in terms of implementing integration policy and practice is the limited role and responsibility under the remit of local authorities in Ireland. The sole legislative power in Ireland is the national parliament, known as the Oireachtas, and local authorities have no role in legislating at local level. Local authorities are responsible for service delivery in what has been described as “infrastructure –type services”⁶⁶. These services include economic and community development, transport, housing, waste, environment and recreation services. The Local Government Reform Act 2014 strengthened the role of local government in the area of community engagement and participation. The provision of social housing and social housing support options is the main relevant area of service delivery under the remit of local authorities in relation to migrant integration (Gilmartin and Dagg, 2021).

Housing issues however are not considered in Irish migrant integration policy and there are no statutory targeted housing supports or policies concerning migrant integration in Ireland at national or local level. Housing in general remains a challenge for all local authorities, coming under increasing pressure in recent years and now widely described as a housing crisis across the country. The impact that housing and the housing crisis has on migrants, refugees and asylum seekers is significant with reports of migrants facing challenges in regard to affordability, security of tenure and discrimination (Gilmartin and Daag, 2021). Migrants are over-represented in the homeless population and much more likely to live in overcrowded conditions compared with Irish nationals, with rate of overcrowding of approximately 40% for people from Asian and African backgrounds compared to 8% for Irish nationals⁶⁷. In relation to community development, these services are mostly implemented by local development companies with state funding through the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP), under the management of Local Community Development Committees in each local authority.

Other services around healthcare, employment, training, and education do not come under the remit of local authorities and are delivered by local health offices, local Education and Training Boards, family resource centres, migrant support and civil society organisations. Local authorities play a role in overseeing the development of local integration strategies but implementation of actions and service delivery, particularly in relation to the four themes in focus in this project, is

⁶⁶ Turley et al. Austerity and Irish local government expenditure since the Great Recession (2018) <https://intapi.sciendo.com/pdf/10.2478/admin-2018-0030>

⁶⁷ McGinnity et al. Origin and Integration: Housing and family among migrants in the 2016 Census. https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/BKMNEXT422_0.pdf

largely the responsibility of local organisations that do not come under the responsibility of local authorities.

5.1. Role of Civil Society / Community in Local Policy

Local migrant integration policy is typically developed with civil society and community representatives, under the overall remit of local authorities. Civil society organisation often play a lead role in the development of local strategies, on behalf of local authorities or as part of an inter-agency group together with local authority representatives. Each local authority area will develop integration strategies differently but civil society and community participation is emphasised and central to the process. Implementation of local migrant integration policy is often undertaken by civil society and community groups, as well as statutory agencies and public bodies, coordinated by an inter-agency group at local level. In Limerick, the Integration Working Group (IWG) has responsibility for coordinating and implementing the local migrant integration strategy. The current strategy covers the period 2018-2022⁶⁸ and is the third local strategy for the county, the first and second of which were published in 2010 and 2013 respectively.

To exemplify the central role that civil society organisations play in local policy and practice, the Limerick IWG has been chaired by civil society organisations since its establishment in 2007 and the Limerick IWG works closely with the Community, Tourism and Culture Directorate of the local authority in Limerick. Membership of the Limerick IWG includes a range of statutory and non-statutory agencies, each having responsibility for implementing actions relevant to their work. Membership includes representatives of migrant communities; the local authority; An Garda Síochána (Irish police force); Department of Social Protection; Health Service Executive; local Education and Training Board; local Sports Partnership; Volunteer Centre; Youth Services family resource centres; Interfaith Network; third level education institutions; local development company; and migrant support organisations.

5.2. Main Debates in Public Policies about Migrant Access to Social Rights

In recent years, there have been limited debates in public policies regarding migrant access to social rights in Ireland in the areas of healthcare, employment, capacity building and training. Healthcare is available to all residents in Ireland, with few exceptions, and education is broadly available to children and young people aged 3 years to 18 years. Policies that have limited access to education and employment for people seeking in asylum have become less restrictive since 2015, with the publication of the McMahon report which identified a range of issues and needs regarding Ireland's reception system for asylum seekers. The McMahon report made 173 recommendations for reform, including recommendations to improve access to education and employment. Public and political support to improve access to education and employment has continued to grow since then, with increasing awareness of the challenges people seeking asylum in Ireland face.

⁶⁸ Belonging to Limerick 2018-2022. <https://doras.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Belonging-to-Limerick-Integration-Plan-2018-to-2022.pdf>

A recent report by the Social Change Initiative revealed that people in Ireland were concerned with public policy issues around healthcare, homelessness, housing, and crime. Just 9% of people mentioned immigration as a public policy issue of concern⁶⁹. However, a recent rise in far-right extremism in Ireland, albeit on much smaller scales than in other EU countries, has seen an increase in anti-immigrant sentiment which is often framed in terms of the strain on local public services. Given the ongoing housing crisis in Ireland, anti-immigrant sentiment is increasingly being framed in terms of housing supply with a recent example reported in the media regarding a group calling themselves “House the Irish First” that protested new social housing developments claiming that houses were being given to migrants, despite strong counter statements from the local authority housing director⁷⁰.

At policy level, there is little political opposition to the existing social rights granted to migrants in Ireland around healthcare, employment and education that has been publicly expressed or debated in recent years and no indication that social rights in these areas are to be restricted further. The current Programme for Government is taking a progressive approach to social rights of migrants in terms of policy development.

5.3. Main Ideological Changes Affecting Public Discourse & Migration Policy

Ireland’s policies around migrant integration, reception conditions for asylum seekers and anti-racism have become more progressive in recent years, in contrast with many EU countries that have hardened borders and made immigration and asylum processes more restrictive.

Ireland’s current Programme for Government⁷¹ contains a range of progressive measures that are relevant to migrant integration, including:

- Create new pathways for long-term undocumented people and their dependents to regularize their status within 18 months of the formation of the Government
- Publish a new National Action Plan Against Racism.
- Develop and implement a new Migrant Integration Strategy.
- Task every Local Authority/Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) with developing a County Integration Strategy to promote, through a participative process, the inclusion of minorities.
- Support the Community Sponsorship Ireland programme to support the integration of refugees.
- Committed to ending the Direct Provision system and will replace it with a new International Protection accommodation policy centred on a not-for-profit approach.
- Introduce Hate Crime legislation within twelve months of the formation of the Government.

⁶⁹ Social Change Initiative (2020)

⁷⁰ See media coverage of housing protest here: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/house-the-irish-first-group-halts-building-work-on-65-social-homes-in-west-dublin-1.4174252>

⁷¹ See details of Programme for Government here: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7e05d-programme-for-government-our-shared-future/>

Of note, the commitment to end Direct Provision and the new White Paper to End Direct Provision sets out a particularly progressive shift in integration policy specifically focussed on the needs of people seeking in asylum, including commitments to facilitate improved access to services, accommodation, employment, healthcare and training. The White Paper to End Direct Provision emphasises the importance of implementing integration supports from the earliest possible stage in the asylum process after arrival in Ireland. This is in stark contrast to previous policies that only considered the integration needs of people seeking asylum in Ireland after they had received positive decisions on their asylum applications, which in some instances could be several years after arriving in Ireland with only limited access to employment, education and training, and broader community integration support.

The shift in public policy around the integration needs of people seeking asylum came after many years of advocacy by migrant rights organisations. From 2014, a notable shift in public opinion took hold. The Irish government acknowledged the challenges and failures of the restrictive asylum policies under the system of Direct Provision in July 2014 and committed to reviewing and reforming the system in operation. This led to the publication of the McMahon report, which outlined 173 recommendations for attention to address the deficiencies in the system and needs of people seeking asylum⁷². Following the McMahon report, a series of government and non-governmental reports were produced in support of ending the system of Direct Provision for asylum seekers and by 2020, a government appointed advisory group published a strong report advocating for the abolition of the Direct Provision system to be replaced by a new more humane reception system. The following year in February 2021, the government published its White Paper outlining plans to end the Direct provision and marked the first government policy to abolish the system. This white paper is broadly supported by migrant rights organisations in Ireland.

Public and political opinion around the rights and needs of people seeking asylum have continued to develop positively with an increasing acknowledgment that the dignity and human rights of people seeking asylum were not being respected and needed to be further protected. A report on public attitudes to migrants and refugees, published in 2018, revealed strong support for migrant and refugee solidarity, with 74% of surveyed participants stating that no child should grow up in Ireland undocumented and 70% agreeing with the statement “If I were from another country and fleeing terrible circumstances, I would want Ireland to offer me protection”. The introduction of the regularisation scheme for undocumented migrants and the plans to end the restrictive system of direct provision for asylum seekers, as outlined in the Programme for Government, broadly reflect public opinion revealed in this report. At the same time, there has been a noted increase in far-right activity in Ireland, which remains small but has increased in the past six years. For the first time, far-right candidates supported by new far-right political parties stood in elections in 2018 and 2020, though with very little support and an insignificant

⁷² Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers (2015): <https://justice.ie/en/JELR/Report%20to%20Government%20on%20Improvements%20to%20the%20Protection%20Process,%20including%20Direct%20Provision%20and%20Supports%20to%20Asylum%20Seekers.pdf/Files/Report%20to%20Government%20on%20Improvements%20to%20the%20Protection%20Process,%20including%20Direct%20Provision%20and%20Supports%20to%20Asylum%20Seekers.pdf>



proportion of votes secured. Still, this marks a notable change in ideology and public discourse, which could increase over time.

5.4. Public Policy Tools to Fight Discrimination

There is no dedicated law regarding migrant integration specifically. Immigration, citizenship and asylum law outlines the legal rights and entitlements for migrants in Ireland. Migrant integration is promoted and protected under equality legislation, namely the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2018⁷³, the Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2015⁷⁴, and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014⁷⁵. Equality legislation promotes equality and prohibits discrimination on nine grounds⁷⁶ in relation to accessing goods and services, employment, and obliges public sector bodies to assess, plan for and address equality and human rights issues. This is the main legal framework relating to migrant integration in Ireland. Equality legislation in Ireland is applicable to all sectors but sector-specific legislation and policies further support the promotion of equality and migrant integration. These sector-specific laws and policies are outlined thematically below. The effectiveness of equality legislation, including the Equal Status Acts and Employment Equality Acts, is currently under review by the Irish Government, with a public consultation process having been recently undertaken in 2021 and early 2022.

The recommendations for changes to Equality legislation will be presented later in 2022 as part of the existing Programme for Government⁷⁷.

The Equal Status Acts (2000 to 2018)

The Equal Status Acts aim to promote equality and to prohibit discrimination, harassment, and victimisation on certain grounds⁷⁸. The Equal Status Acts allow for positive action and apply to people buying and selling goods, obtaining or providing accommodation and using or providing services, including education⁷⁹. Services considered under the Equal Status Acts include public services, such as healthcare, education and employment support services. Claims of discrimination by people buying goods or using services, made against people selling goods or providing services, are heard by the Workplace Relations Commission, formerly known as the Equality Tribunal. Both direct and indirect forms of discrimination are prohibited by the Equal Status Acts, as well as discrimination by association and discriminatory advertising.

One notable exemption from the Equal Status Acts are claims of discrimination that occur on or at the entrance to a licensed premise, including pubs or restaurants that hold a licence to sell alcohol. These claims are considered under the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2003⁸⁰ and heard in the District Courts, as opposed to the Workplace Relations Commission.

⁷³ Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2018, <https://revisedacts.lawreform.ie/eli/2000/act/8/revised/en/html>

⁷⁴ Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2011, <https://revisedacts.lawreform.ie/eli/1998/act/21/revised/en/html>

⁷⁵ Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014, <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2014/act/25/enacted/en/html>

⁷⁶ The nine grounds that are protected under equality legislation are: age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, civil status, family status, membership of the Traveller community, disability.

⁷⁷ Programme for Government – Our Shared Future, <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7e05d-programme-for-government-our-shared-future/>

⁷⁸ Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2018.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Intoxicating Liquor Act 2003, <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2003/act/31/enacted/en/html>

The District Courts are organised on a regional basis with a local or limited jurisdiction. There are concerns that claims of discrimination occurring at or on licensed premises are not being adequately addressed by the District Courts, with calls by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission for these claims to be heard by the Workplace Rights Commission⁸¹.

The Employment Equality Acts (1998 to 2015)

The Employment Equality Acts, similar to the Equal Status Acts, aim to promote equality and to prohibit discrimination, harassment and victimisation on certain grounds. The Employment Equality Acts apply to full and part time employees working in public and private sectors, recruitment agencies, trade unions and professional bodies. Employment is considered in broad terms and the Employment Equality Acts cover vocational training, job advertising, equal pay, conditions of employment, dismissals, and promotions⁸².

Similar to the Equal Status Acts, direct and indirect forms of discrimination are prohibited, as well as discrimination by association and discriminatory advertising. Employers are permitted to adopt positive actions, such as policies and practices to prevent disadvantage that may be linked to the nine grounds of discrimination.

Claims of discrimination in relation to employment and the Employment Equality Acts are heard by the Workplace Relations Commission. Claims of gender discrimination may also be heard by the Circuit Court.

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 contains a provision known as the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (Public Sector Duty), which obliges public services to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect the human rights of public sector staff and service-users. This is the primary tool to fight discrimination in public services and places a positive duty and legal obligation on all public sector bodies to proactively address direct and indirect discrimination⁸³.

Under this provision, public sector bodies are required to undertake a publically available equality and human rights assessment of relevance to its functions and purpose. Furthermore, the actions, policies and plans to address the issues raised in these assessments are to be detailed in public sector strategic or corporate plans, with developments and achievements reported on annually and made publicly available⁸⁴.

⁸¹ Report of a review of section 19 of the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2003 carried out pursuant to section 30 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 (2022), <https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2022/02/Review-of-the-Intoxicating-Liquor-Act-pursuant-to-section-30-of-the-IHREC-Act-Final.pdf>

⁸² Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2015

⁸³ Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) Act 2014, <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2014/act/25/enacted/en/print#sec42>

⁸⁴ Ibid.

6. Main Approach to Migrant Integration

Employment and education issues are highlighted in the literature analysis as priority concerns regarding migrant integration challenges in Ireland. These themes are equally acknowledged in the national migrant integration strategy, which outlines over twenty actions out of a total 76 actions to address same. Employment actions outlined in the NMIS are closely related to capacity building, training, and education initiatives and this is mirrored in practice with employment integration projects often focussed on capacity building initiatives, rather than employment opportunities. These themes are closely connected in terms of policy and practice, with many capacity building and training initiatives focussed on employment activation and support.

Healthcare issues do not feature prominently in the NMIS but are considered in detail in a separate dedicated policy around intercultural health. This is the most thorough sector-specific policy addressing migrant integration. A dedicated National Social Inclusion Office is focussed on identifying and addressing the needs of migrants, and other marginalised groups, with regional coordinators employed by regional community health offices located across the country. While concerning barriers to healthcare services for migrants remain, and migrants continue to experience poor outcomes in some areas, there is a priority focus on healthcare issues in terms of migrant integration policy and practice, under the remit of the Health Service Executive.

Social cohesion has faced the least attention in Ireland in recent years from a policy perspective, with no dedicated anti-racism action plan since 2008 and no hate crime legislation in place. In practice, community development initiatives focussed on social inclusion are well funded and available in all local authority areas. Community integration funding is made available to community groups through an annual call for proposals, with grants of up to €5,000 and a total of over €500,000. A key criteria of the fund is that both migrant and host communities participate in the activity proposed. The aim of this fund is specifically to foster intercultural relations and inclusive communities. There is limited research available that evaluated the effectiveness of these initiatives on social cohesion in Ireland and it would appear to be less of a priority focus in general in Ireland, compared with employment and education initiatives.

7. Governance Approaches, Administrative Levels & Actors

Integration efforts and actions are governed using varying approaches, depending on the responsible institution, funding requirements and implementing body. In general, a partnership approach is taken by Government Departments entering into contracted and service-level agreements with local civil society organisations and local community development companies to undertake integration support initiatives, but some activities are implemented with less formal arrangements or private funding. There is typically a strategic focus determined by Government Departments or public bodies, with scope for the service provider to propose and implement an initiative, with project and funding reporting requirements rather than direct management.

Civil society organisations play an important role in implementing migrant integration initiatives nationally and locally. These initiatives are directly funded by Government Departments in

response to specific calls for proposals or funding programmes, while philanthropic funding is also available for migrant integration projects in Ireland through philanthropic organisations working in the field of social inclusion and community development. In some instances, partnership or service-level agreements may be established with Government Departments and public services, including in the area of health and social inclusion.

At local level, Local Development Companies receive funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development via the Local Community Development Committee to deliver the SICAP programme. Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers are considered a target group in the SICAP programme. The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018 – 2023 provides funding to tackle poverty and social exclusion through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies⁸⁵. SICAP's stated aims are to address high and persistent levels of deprivation through targeted and innovative, locally led approaches⁸⁶. It targets and supports those who are disadvantaged in Irish society and less likely to use mainstream services, including migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.

SICAP is implemented by Local Development Companies and is funded by the Government through the Department of Rural and Community Development, and it also receives funding from the European Social Fund. It is informed by national and local policies, including local authority policies such as the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). The LECP is developed at local level, which sets out how Local Authorities support economic and community development in their areas with a key focus on sustainability, consultation and engagement with local communities and businesses.

8. Main Tendencies in Public Policies Relating to the Integration Strategy

During the last five years, Ireland has improved efforts to develop and implement integration policy and practice. This followed a period of inactivity in this area, which can be attributed in part at least to the economic downturn since 2008 when significant cuts were made to statutory bodies with responsibility for migrant integration and anti-racism, community development and civil society organisation.

In 2015, Ireland developed a new integration programme for people who arrived in Ireland under the refugee resettlement programme. This programme took an interagency approach with local authorities, statutory and non-statutory bodies, civil society and local community development organisations playing a role in integration support. Language and orientation programmes were provided, as well as a dedicated resettlement support worker and bilingual intercultural worker assigned to each resettlement community. The publication of the McMahon report, in June

⁸⁵ SICAP programme requirements 2018-2022: <https://www.pobal.ie/app/uploads/2018/05/SICAP-Programme-Requirements-2018-2022-V1-1.pdf>

⁸⁶ Ibid.

2015, which outlined key issues and a roadmap for addressing same with regard to the reception and integration of people seeking asylum in Ireland was also a significant change in Irish policy. This development and the recommendations outlined in this report have continued to inform Government policy and practice around integration and support to people seeking asylum, eventually leading to the White Paper to end Direct Provision published in 2021.

In 2017, the publication of the National Migrant Integration Strategy 2017-2020 reaffirmed Ireland's commitment to migrant integration and marked the first significant effort to coordinate the mainstreaming of integration policy since 2008. This strategy was extended to cover 2021 but a new strategy for 2022 has not yet been developed. Since 2017, there has been increasing acceptance that people seeking asylum in Ireland require increased integration supports and improved living conditions. In 2020, the publication of the Advisory Group report (Day, 2020) strengthened the calls for improved conditions. That same year, the new Programme for Government was published committing the government to end the current and much criticised system for accommodating asylum seekers, known as Direct Provision, and to develop and implement a white paper to end the system and replace it with a human rights compliant system that aims to prioritise the effective integration of people seeking asylum after arrival in Ireland. Following the publication of the White Paper to end Direct Provision, an implementation committee was established in 2021 to oversee the transition from Direct Provision to the new model of accommodating and integration people seeking asylum. The Government has committed to implementing the new system by end of 2024.

As part of the new Programme for Government, published in 2020, the Government also committed to the development of a new National Action Plan on Anti-Racism (NAPAR). This NAPAR is currently in development and is due to be published in 2022. Hate crime legislation is also currently in development, due to be finalised and adopted in 2022.

While progress has been slow over the past 15 years, recent developments in the past 5 years have been positive, from a policy development perspective, overall.

9. Barriers to Accessing Services

A range of barriers to accessing services have been identified by various studies over the past two decades in Ireland. Many of these barriers remain, despite renewed policies and commitments to improve access.

- **Language barriers** remain a significant challenge for migrants regarding accessing services in Ireland. A lack of coordinated approach to English language provision and limited resources for same remain an issue, while access to translated information materials around available services, rights and entitlements to services and lack of interpreter services are frequently raised in research studies.
- **Lack of information** on services and rights and entitlements to accessing services is a barrier in itself, regardless of language skills and proficiency in English. Information is often difficult to find and receive, which is an issue raised particularly in the context of healthcare but also in other areas like employment support, schools, capacity building and training opportunities.

- **Limited social networks among migrants**, particularly newly arrived migrants and people seeking asylum, act as a barrier to accessing services. Information is often shared by word of mouth and people with limited social networks are disadvantaged in this regard. Social networks play a role in recruitment whereby informal recruitment practices can disadvantage people from a migrant background with limited connections.
- **Trust in public services** has been raised an issue in some research studies and is particular apparent in regard to healthcare services, including around mental healthcare and Covid-19 vaccines⁸⁷. Trust in services is also impacted by previous experiences of discrimination and prejudice in relation to interactions with public services.
- **Discrimination and prejudice** acts as a barrier to accessing services, which has been reported in the area of healthcare as well as employment and education. Negative attitudes of staff working in public services and experiences of racism when accessing services have been widely reported in the area of social protection⁸⁸.
- **Administrative barriers** such as difficulty opening a bank account or obtaining a driver licence, the application process for medical cards, restrictions imposed by work permits, are all noted as challenges in an Irish context⁸⁹.
- **Limited availability of services and lack of resources** are frequently noted as barriers to accessing services in practice. While one might have a right to healthcare, long waiting lists are barriers to utilising the services, particularly in relation to specialist services.
- **Isolation** experienced while living in communal accommodation centres, sometimes in rural locations with limited transport options, results in physical and social isolation, thus negatively impacting on access to services⁹⁰.

10. Examples of Relevant Actions

10.1. Employment for People from Immigrant Communities

Employment for People from Immigrant Communities (EPIC) is a programme run by Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI), based in Dublin with some national reach through online training provision. EPIC offers a free employment programme that aims to integrate people in Irish society by providing training and capacity building around interview preparation, CV and Cover Letter writing, career guidance, information on rights and entitlements to other employment supports, work placement opportunities and ongoing mentoring. Each participant develops a career plan with the carer guidance counsellor, who identifies employment and education opportunities.

⁸⁷ The Impacts of Covid-19 on Ethnic Minority and Migrant Groups in Ireland (2021), National Economic and Social Council. http://files.nesc.ie/nesc_research_series/research_series_paper_18_Covid19Migrants.pdf

⁸⁸ Person or Number? Issues faced by immigrants accessing social protection: <https://nascireland.org/sites/default/files/Person%20or%20Number%20report.pdf>

⁸⁹ See for example Doras' report "Getting Right to Work" (2020) and MIPEX health strand country report for Ireland ⁹⁰ Experiences of People Living in Mount Trenchard Accommodation Centre (2019), Doras. <http://doras.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Report.-Experiences-of-Living-in-Direct-Provision.-Mount-Trenchard-3.pdf>

EPIC's six-week programme is run several times a year, with ongoing individualised support to participants. It works with businesses to provide specialised supports to jobseekers. EPIC is integrated into the business community, which allows participants to learn about and engage with businesses that participate. The EPIC programme has worked with over 3,500 people from over 100 nationalities, with 68% reportedly having transitioned into paid employment, further training or volunteer placements. EPIC is funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

10.2. Intercultural Health Pilot Project

The HSE South East regional community health office (CHO) worked in partnership with the Integration and Support Unit (ISU), a local NGO working with migrants in Waterford, to develop and deliver an intercultural health project to develop a model of intercultural healthcare to address unmet needs and barriers to healthcare services. The project was designed to build on the intercultural skills, knowledge and expertise of service-users and service providers.

The project had the following stated aims:

1. To improve the health and wellbeing of marginalised refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants, especially those living in the DPCs in the Southeast.
2. To provide a training course for up to 10 non-Irish nationals in the provision of a peer led community-based health service as CKWs and Mentors.
3. To identify inequalities that may exist in healthcare provision for those living in DPCs through research and development to enhance outcomes.
4. To act as a support between these health service users and health service providers to provide access to information, medical cards, GP registration and other primary services.
5. To monitor, evaluate and develop best practice guidelines for this model to be transferable to other areas and adapted to other groups, for example, LGBTI or Roma.

The project centred around providing training to and recruiting ten community knowledge workers (CKWs) to become peer-support and leaders in their communities. The CKW worked to make information on mental health, sexual health, exploitation and human trafficking, and broader health information accessible and understood. As part of the project, intercultural awareness training was developed and delivered to healthcare staff working in the region, with 129 participants. Train the trainer training to 22 people was also delivered, including the CKWs, with a long-term view of delivering further training to healthcare staff, thus aiming to improve attitudes, outcomes, and experiences. Research was undertaken to increase understanding of the specific needs of asylum seekers living in five direct provision centres in the region. The findings from this research was used to inform and further develop the project and service delivery more broadly.

The CKWs now work to provide information, advocacy support and training. A project evaluation is available here: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/primarycare/socialinclusion/intercultural-health/final-ich-pilot-project-report.pdf>

10.3. Embracing Diversity, Nurturing Integration, Learning for Life (EDNIP)

This research and intervention project was led by a teacher training college in Limerick, involving five primary schools, aims to promote integration, life-long learning and capacity building. The project offers a range of programmes for the school community, including for teachers, parents and children. The project steering committee includes representatives from the local authority, as well as other relevant statutory and non-statutory agencies active in migrant integration in Limerick. The model of intervention included in-school activities and programmes for children and parents, out of school time activities for families, professional development for school staff, and the development and purchase of a wide range of resources including: English as an Additional Language (EAL), dual language, intercultural and interfaith resources.

Activities provided for children include artist in residence programmes, intercultural events, walking tours and in-class programmes. Parents availed of English classes in schools, family fun days and coffee mornings, as well as parent and toddler groups on site in schools. After school trips and music days' trips to the seaside were offered to families, while school staff were offered class resources, training and workshops on relevant integration and education issues. The project report found that the EDNIP project helped to create a focus on migrant integration, support teaching and learning, positively impact school ethos, and promoted relationships between parents and schools. In particular, the project worked to nurture a sense of belonging for children and parents from a migrant background, who were given opportunities to meet other families and integrate into the wider school community through social events and day trips during the holidays. While this project takes place in and with the school community, the focus is primarily on improving social cohesion and community integration, as well as capacity building and education. Between 2017 and 2019, the project facilitated over 11,000 opportunities, which were availed of by students, parents, and teachers.

A project report is available here:

<https://www.mic.ul.ie/sites/default/files/uploads/140/EDNIP%202020%20Full%20Report.pdf>

10.4. Migrant Teacher Project

The lack of teachers from diverse backgrounds working in Irish schools has been highlighted as a challenge from the perspective of barriers in employment and higher education, as well as from an intercultural perspective. The Migrant Teacher Project aims to increase the participation of migrants into the Irish education sector through the provision of a Bridging Programme, that provides information, advice, training, and school experience to migrant teachers who gained teaching qualifications outside of Ireland, to help them seek employment in Irish primary and post-primary schools. The project seeks to overcome issues associated with recognition of qualifications and registration with the Teaching Council of Ireland through direct support with the registration process and employment seeking activities. The project is in high demand, with 140 applications received for 40 available places. The project reports a 20% success rate in terms of participants taking on teaching roles in Irish schools following the programme. The project is funded by the AMIF 2014-2020 programme, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the Department of Education.



More information on the project is available here:

https://www.mie.ie/en/research/research_projects/migrant_teacher_project/

10.5. Participatory and Arts-Based Methods Involving Migrants in Health Research (PART-IM)

This collaborative project brings arts-based and participatory schools from medicine, nursing, midwifery, and the performing arts together a migrant NGO to increase understanding of the role of arts-based methods as participatory strategies for involving migrants in health research. The project seeks to develop stronger links between arts, health, and migrant research and to develop training opportunities for health workers, migrants and researchers, with a view to building skill, knowledge, resources, and confidence in the application of this approach.

More information on the project is available here: <https://www.ul.ie/hri/participatory-and-arts-based-methods-involving-migrants-health-research-part-im>

10.6. Universities of Sanctuary Ireland

University of Sanctuary Ireland is an Irish initiative to foster and promote a welcoming and inclusive environment for people seeking asylum in Ireland through universities, colleges, and other educational institutions. The initiative encourages and celebrates good practice of universities, colleges and other educational institutions welcoming refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants into their communities and fostering a culture of welcome and inclusion. Practicing institutions receive an award and designation as a University of Sanctuary after they demonstrate strategies, actions, and plans to fulfil these aims. Seven universities have received the designation and the initiative, with others working towards the award. The most significant action undertaken by universities, as part of this initiative, is providing a scholarship programme for a set number of people with refugee status or similar protection permission, or who are in the asylum process.

More information on this initiative is available here: <https://ireland.cityofsanctuary.org/universities-and-colleges-of-sanctuary>

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