

PQ Digest | 23.04.18 – 27.04.18

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24th April 2018

Refugee Resettlement Programme

273. Deputy Niall Collins asked the **Minister for Justice and Equality** if he will report in tabular form on the commitments made on refugees; the timeline for accommodating same; the number of refugees who have arrived here to date in 2018 under the resettlement and relocation mechanisms; the commitments made to accept unaccompanied minors here; the number of unaccompanied minors who have been accommodated to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17594/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): The Government established the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) in September 2015 as part of the State's humanitarian response to the EU migration crisis and agreed to accept up to 4,000 asylum seekers and refugees into Ireland under EU relocation and Resettlement programmes. Ireland voluntarily opted into the two EU Council Decisions on Relocation (2015/1523) and (2015/1601), which provided for the EU wide relocation of 160,000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece.

By the end of the two-year EU Relocation Programme in September 2017, across the Union, a total of 37,000 asylum seekers were eligible and registered for relocation in Italy and Greece, of which 78% (approximately 29,000) had been relocated to other EU Member States including Ireland. This is significantly lower than the 160,000 expected to be made available under the programme for relocation and resettlement.

Notwithstanding this, Ireland has remained committed to the target of 4,000 refugees and asylum-seekers and has taken its own steps to meet those commitments. The arrival of Ireland's relocation persons was completed in March 2018 with 1,022 people having arrived from Greece and work continues to house such persons in communities. 267 people have arrived under relocation in 2018.

Under Resettlement, Ireland pledged to admit 520 people under resettlement by 2017. We surpassed that figure in 2016 and this enabled the Government to further increase its commitment under the programme. A total of 1,040 persons under the European Commission's July 2015 Resettlement scheme will have been admitted by the end of this year, which is a doubling of the original commitment of 520.

792 people have already arrived and the remaining refugees are due to arrive in the coming months. The European Commission recognises Ireland as being one of only seven EU Member States to have fulfilled their resettlement pledges from the July 2015 Agreement.

In a further gesture of humanitarian assistance towards the most vulnerable caught up in the migration crisis and following a debate in the Dáil, the Government also committed to taking up to 200 unaccompanied minors (UAMs) from France who were previously resident in the migrant camp at Calais. Unlike any other Member State, Ireland also offered these young people programme refugee status.

Following 13 missions to France, a total of 41 young people ultimately expressed an interest and were assessed as suitable to come to Ireland under the programme. They have all arrived in Ireland and this programme has been completed. These young people were taken in under the care of Tusla who have statutory responsibility for minors. The IRPP has also accepted 6 unaccompanied minors from Greece under the Relocation Programme. Further initiatives to respond to the needs of unaccompanied minors are under consideration at present.

To address the remaining balance of approximately 1,800 people under the IRPP, additional resettlement pledges have been made to take a further 945 refugees from Lebanon between 2018 (345) and 2019 (600). A new Family Reunification Humanitarian Admission Programme (FRHAP) is being established and will be open for applications shortly. This has a capacity to welcome up to 530 people by the end of 2019.

The Government is also keeping under review its options to further respond to our humanitarian obligation and to meet the target of 4,000.

A breakdown of the number of unaccompanied minors under the Calais Special Project and Greece is outlined in the following tables.

Calais Special Project

Year	Number
2017	30
2018	11
Total	41

IRPP from Greece

Year	Number
2016	4
2017	2
Total	6

Migrant Integration

277. Deputy John Lahart asked the **Minister for Justice and Equality** if his attention has been drawn to the closure of a centre (details supplied) as a result of his Department withdrawing funding; if his attention has been further drawn to the benefit this centre brings to the community; the measures he is taking to prevent the closure of the centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17659/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): The Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration (OPMI), an Office of my Department, allocates public funding for

migrant integration projects on the basis of competitive selection processes carried out in a fair, open and transparent way. This gives a wide range of community and voluntary organisations the opportunity to bid for government funding for projects to support the integration of migrants in our communities.

South Dublin County Partnership received funding from OPMI via South Dublin County Council between 2008 and 2016 under a National Integration Funding Programme that concluded in 2016. In 2017, a new 3 year National Integration Funding Programme was initiated. Grant allocation under this programme was by way of open competitive calls for proposals. All organisations wishing to be considered for funding – including those who had received funding under the previous programme - were required to make new applications. All eligible applications received were assessed by OPMI staff against the published selection criteria. The funding recommendations were reviewed by an assessment committee that included external representatives. In all, 15 projects were selected to receive funding from a total of 73 eligible applications.

An application was received from South Dublin County Partnership which included a request for funding to contribute to the cost of running the centre referred to by the Deputy. Regrettably, this application was unsuccessful in what was a highly competitive process.

My officials advise that at a subsequent meeting held with the Office for Promotion of Migrant Integration in November last year, representatives from South Dublin County Partnership outlined their concerns for the future of the centre in Clondalkin. Officials of my Department proposed a number of alternative options to secure funding. They invited the representatives of South Dublin County Partnership to consider these options further and to submit proposals. However, no such proposals have been forthcoming to date. These options remain open to the organisation and my officials remain available to discuss those options further with South Dublin County Partnership should they so wish. The National Funding to Promote the Integration of Immigrants is one of a number of funding programmes, administered by or on behalf of my Department to support migrant integration. We also provide funding from the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund and the Communities Integration Fund. South County Dublin Partnership is in receipt of integration project funding under both these funds. In 2017 the Partnership was awarded a grant of €150,000 over three years under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

The Migrant Integration Strategy, which was published in February 2017, makes provision for the continuation of funding through OPMI for integration related projects at community level up to and including 2020. Future "Calls for Proposals" under all integration funding programmes will be advertised on my Department's website, the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration and the EU Funds Unit of the Department. South Dublin County Partnership is entitled to apply as appropriate.

25th April 2018

Citizenship Applications

112. Deputy Jack Chambers asked the **Minister for Justice and Equality** the number of applications for citizenship being processed by his Department; the number of active applications being processed for more than one, two, three and five years, respectively; the average waiting time per application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18221/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the number of applications for naturalisation currently on hands, by year of application for each of the years 2015 - 2018 inclusive and 2014 and earlier is as follows:

Year of Application	2014 and earlier	2015	2016	2017	2018 to date	Total
Applications currently on hand	340	330	1,700	7,330	2,770	12,470

It should be noted that statistics of the cases on hands will always include a cohort of cases where a decision has been made and the applicant has been notified of same, but where the applicant has yet to swear their oath of fidelity to the nation and loyalty to the State, as required under the Act, and be granted their certificate of naturalisation at a citizenship ceremony arranged for the purpose. In this context in excess of 3,000 of the cases on hands have already received their decision and my Department is currently issuing invitations to these individuals to attend a citizenship ceremony on 21 May next to make their declaration before a judge and to be granted their certificate of naturalisation.

It is recognised that all applicants for citizenship would wish to have a decision on their application without delay. While the Citizenship Division endeavours that most straightforward cases are processed to a decision within six months, this has to be seen in the context of the work involved in dealing with volumes of applications, some of which can be very complex in nature, and the need to ensure that each applicant fulfils the statutory conditions for naturalisation. The nature of the naturalisation process is such that, for a broad range of reasons, some cases can take longer than others to process. In some

instances, completing the necessary checks may take a considerable period of time. As outlined, even where a decision may be made, the certificate cannot be issued until the applicant attends a citizenship ceremony arranged for the purpose of swearing the oath of allegiance before a judge. In the circumstances it is not possible to give any meaningful average processing time per application

Processing timescales can often be impacted due to further documentation being required from the applicant, or payment of the required certificate fee is awaited, or the applicant has not been engaging with the office. In some instances delays can arise at the final stage of the naturalisation process, for example, where additional information comes to light which requires to be considered. In other instances the applicant themselves may request that a hold be put on their application, for example, where they may have returned to their country of origin for a prolonged period, to facilitate them in making arrangements to return to reside in the State, or where they have difficulty in obtaining satisfactory evidence of their identity or nationality.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements, not only within the State but also at European Union as well as international level. It is therefore important that appropriate procedures are in place to ensure that the integrity of the regime for granting Irish citizenship through the naturalisation process is held in high regard both at home and internationally.

INIS devotes a considerable amount of its overall resources to the processing of these cases. It also operates a dedicated phone helpline and email helpdesk available for all applicants interested in the progress of their application, details of which are available on the INIS website at www.inis.gov.ie.

Work Permits Data

114. Deputy Niall Collins asked the **Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation** her views on issues raised in correspondence (details supplied) regarding employment permits and non-EEA workers. [18113/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The employment of all non-EEA nationals in the State is governed by the Employment Permits Acts 2003 – 2014. Under this legislation in order to work in the State all non-EEA nationals require a valid employment permit or relevant immigration permission from the Minister for Justice and Equality which allows them to reside and work in the State without the requirement for an employment permit.

Ireland operates a managed employment permits system which maximises the benefits of economic migration while minimising the risk of disrupting the domestic labour market. In order to ensure that the system is responsive to the changes in economic circumstances and labour market conditions, the Highly

Skilled Eligible Occupations List (HSEOL) and the Ineligible Categories of Employment List (ICEL) for employment permit purposes are reviewed on a twice yearly basis.

Following a review of the Highly Skilled and Ineligible lists of Employment earlier this year certain chef grades were removed from the ineligible occupation list. This means that if an employer is unsuccessful in filling a vacancy either domestically or from across the European Economic Area (EEA) it can be filled by a suitably qualified non- EEA national.

The review was evidence based on independent labour market analysis carried out by the relevant state agency. The removal of certain chef grades from the ineligible lists will ensure that there is a mechanism to address the identified shortage of qualified chefs in the short-term. A quota of 610 permits has been applied to ensure that in the longer term the demand for chefs is met from a steady supply in the Irish labour market and to that end work is underway to increase the supply of chefs through training initiatives such as the development of a new Commis Chef Apprenticeship and a Chef de Partie Apprenticeship.

It is also imperative that the employment permits system remains correctly oriented to meet the State's emerging labour market needs, be they labour or skills shortages. Consequently, my Department is undertaking a review of our economic migration policy. An Inter Departmental Group to steer the review has been established with a report expected by the end of June 2018.

In order to safeguard the employment opportunities of Irish/EEA nationals, significant restrictions exist on the granting of employment permits. The Workplace Relations Commission are authorised to carry out inspections, examinations or investigations for the purpose of monitoring and enforcing compliance with employment legislation. In respect of the alleged abuses of the Employment Permits Acts my officials will make contact with the above named person with a view to seeking more information in order to investigate the matters raised.

Any queries relating to Immigration permissions and visas are a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Justice and Equality, and should be directed to that Department. If the above named person has any specific information relating to any criminal offence that person can contact the confidential Gardaí free phone number on 1800 25 00 25.