

# PQ Digest | 18.06.18 – 22.06.18

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Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2018

## Emigration Data

101. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Taoiseach the current rates of emigration. [26687/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Statistics on emigration are included in the CSO's annual Population and Migration Estimates release. The principal source of information for the estimation of annual migration flows, incorporating both emigration and immigration, is the Labour Force Survey (LFS), formally the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS). The latest release was published in August 2017 and shows that an estimated 64,800 left Ireland in the year to April 2017. In the previous year to April 2016 there were 66,200 outward migrants.

## Immigration Data

102. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Taoiseach the current rates of immigration. [26688/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Statistics on immigration are included in the CSO's annual Population and Migration Estimates release. The principal source of information for the estimation of annual migration flows, incorporating both emigration and immigration, is the Labour Force Survey (LFS), formally the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS). The latest release was published in August 2017 and shows that an estimated 84,600 persons migrated to Ireland in the year from April 2016 to April 2017. In the previous year to April 2016 there were 82,300 inward migrants.

## Passport Services

124. Deputy Brendan Howlin asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the amount of calls received by the passport office in Cork and Dublin compared to the amount of calls answered by the passport office in Cork and Dublin in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26684/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Passport Service has a dedicated Communication Unit to respond to queries from passport applicants. This Communication Unit handles all queries for Passport Offices in Dublin, Cork and London. This Unit can be contacted by telephone, email or by web chat. I recognize that there are individuals with pressing needs who face difficulties in contacting the Passport Service. This results in multiple attempts by the same callers to reach us by phone, email and webchat. I would like to reassure you that the Passport Service is making every effort to respond to as many customer queries as possible. In the week of 11 June the Passport Service's Communications Unit dealt with over 9,500 queries. This included 2,300 cases via the phone. In addition, over 1,500 cases were dealt with via webchat, over 3400 via email and approximately 2,300 in person at our counters in our Dublin and Cork offices.

In recent weeks, the Passport Service has allocated additional resources to the existing Communications Unit to respond to customer queries on phones, email and webchat. Measures taken include the temporary redeployment of existing Passport Service staff and the assignment of temporary clerical officers to the communications unit. For example in recent weeks, over 25 experienced staff from various sections of the Department have joined the existing Communications Team.

I would urge all applicants to consult the website at [www.dfa.ie/passport](http://www.dfa.ie/passport) for guidance in relation to their query before attempting to contact the Customer Service team. Information for all categories of applicants is available on the website, as well as our application tracking service which will show the latest updates on the application process.

*Question Nos. 125 to 127, inclusive, answered with Question No. 112.*

## Human Rights

130. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the **Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade** the status of efforts to address the plight of the Rohingya; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26929/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Since the most recent escalation of violence in Rakhine State, Myanmar, in August 2017, approximately 700,000 members of the Rohingya community have fled across the border to Bangladesh where they now reside in precarious conditions in refugee camps. Conditions are likely to deteriorate over the coming months as the monsoon season progresses. The exodus of refugees has been accompanied by credible claims of serious human rights violations by the Myanmar Security Forces. These include reports of widespread killing of civilians, sexual and gender based violence, arbitrary arrests, and the burning of Rohingya villages. Efforts by the international community to address this crisis have focused on responding to the humanitarian crisis, promoting a political solution and pressing for accountability for crimes and other violations of human rights abuses that have occurred. Most recently, on 6 June, a Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed between Myanmar and UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and UNDP, the UN Development Programme, to establish a framework for cooperation between the parties aimed at creating conducive conditions for the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable repatriation of these refugees from Bangladesh to their places of origin. The MoU also aims to help create improved and resilient livelihoods for all communities living in Rakhine State.

Ireland continues to actively engage with our international partners in these efforts through bilateral contacts in Myanmar and via participation in the EU and UN responses. Ireland will be active on this issue at the upcoming 38th Session of the Human Rights Council.

Ireland has consistently called for an independent and impartial investigation into the serious and credible allegations of human rights violations by the Myanmar security forces. In that regard, we have strongly supported the extension of the mandates of the UN Fact Finding

Mission and UN Special Rapporteur to Myanmar Yanghee Lee, and have asked the Government of Myanmar to cooperate with them and allow them access to the country. Their work in investigating and recording victim testimony and gathering other evidence, so that it can be preserved for further criminal proceedings, is crucial to ensuring full accountability.

Ireland has also actively engaged in the formation of the EU's position including in the most recent EU Foreign Affairs Council's Council Conclusions on Myanmar, which were adopted on 26 February last. These conclusions condemn the human rights violations in Myanmar, support the mandates of the Fact Finding Mission and Special Rapporteur and provide for targeted restrictive measures against senior military officers of the Myanmar armed forces responsible for these acts. These sanctions are now being put in place.

While these efforts are aimed at achieving a political solution to the crisis, there is also a critical need for a coherent humanitarian response to the extremely difficult conditions faced by the huge numbers of displaced members of the Rohingya community now mainly in Bangladesh. To this end, Ireland has actively supported the international humanitarian response to the refugee crisis and we provided direct funding of €1 million in 2017 with an additional €1 million allocated for 2018. Our support has focused on food, shelter, water and sanitation. Through the Irish Aid Rapid Response facility, we have provided 37 tonnes of hygiene, sanitation and shelter kits and deployed experts in water and sanitation and humanitarian coordination on the ground. In addition, as the 6th largest donor to the UN-administered Central Emergency Response Fund, Ireland's estimated contribution through UN pooled funding amounted to a further €1 million to deliver life-saving support.

My Department will continue to liaise closely with EU and other international partners to press for progress in resolving this crisis including through our Embassy in Thailand who are closely monitoring the situation.

## Visa Data

229. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the **Minister for Justice and Equality** the average wait times for visa applications with the INIS; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26209/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that decisions regarding the grant or refusal of visas are made in a number of INIS Visa Offices overseas, the INIS Visa Office in Dublin, and at Embassies of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade which process certain visa applications under delegated sanction from my Department.

The processing times for visa decisions are published on the Visa pages of each Visa Office and Embassy website. The following table sets out the current processing dates (as of 13 June, 2018) up to which applications received in the Dublin Visa Office have been processed.

Purpose of Visa Applications	Current Processing Date in the Dublin Visa Office
Visit	02 May
Business	16 May
Conference/Event	16 May
Join Family (under national legislation)	02 February
Join Family (EU Free Movement)	See note below
Study	18 April
Employment	16 May
Other*	16 May

\*Includes training; exam; conference/event; performance/tournament; and sundry applications.

It should be noted that target times for visa processing are established as a business target reflecting the detailed and often complex assessment required to be carried out in relation to applications, and do not constitute a legal obligation.

The processing time in each location is determined by a number of factors such as the volumes and complexity of applications, individual circumstances, peak application periods, seasonal factors, and the resources available. While every effort is made to process applications as quickly as possible, processing times inevitably vary as a result.

In relation to applications under the Free Movement Directive (2004/38/EC), there had been an exponential increase from the second quarter of 2015 in the number of such applications. That gave rise to a caseload of around 10,500 applications which had to be assessed very carefully to ensure that any fraudulent applications or potential abuses of the Directive are detected and dealt with appropriately. Considerable progress is being made in processing these applications. However, as legal proceedings in relation to a number of similar such applications are currently before the courts, the Deputy will appreciate that I am

limited in what I can say on the matter.

The central concern, as with all visa services worldwide, in deciding on visa applications is to strike an appropriate balance between protecting the country's vital national interests by maintaining an effective immigration regime while at the same time facilitating travel for those who meet the criteria. Each visa application is therefore decided on its own merits taking all factors into account.

## Direct Provision Data

235. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the **Minister for Justice and Equality** the way in which single adults residing in direct provision are sharing rooms; the number that have been sharing rooms for over 12 and 24 months, respectively; the range of beds per room in shared rooms, that is, the highest number of beds to the lowest number of beds; and the average number of beds per room in shared rooms across the direct provision portfolio. [26271/18]

### **Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):**

Accommodation centres under contract to the Department have a limited number of rooms for single adults and most single adults share rooms. The capacity of each room is entirely dependent on the size of the room as per building regulations. The number of persons actually allocated to the room will depend on that capacity. Currently, the numbers allocated to individual rooms vary and in a very small number of cases it could be up to six persons.

Statistics are not collated on the basis of room sharing and there are no available statistics to illustrate how long such persons have been sharing rooms.

## Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2018

### Human Rights

101. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the **Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade** the Government's position on the new policy of the United States Government in respect of the removal of undocumented children from their parents; if his attention has been drawn to reports of the conditions of the detention centres in which these children are being held; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27107/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Irish people have been rightly appalled by the images which have recently emerged of immigrant children being separated from their parents at the southern US border and held in detention by the US authorities. I have no desire to become involved in a US domestic debate about immigration. Clearly, every state has the right, indeed the duty, to police its own borders and to enforce its immigration laws. This duty should, however, be discharged in the case of all countries in line with their international obligations and with respect for the human rights of all involved, especially children.

Ireland, as a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is of the view that in all actions that involve children, the best interests of the child should have primary consideration.

I therefore urge the US government to immediately reverse this policy of separation.

(See also: <https://soundcloud.com/democracynow/democracy-now-june-25-2018>)

## Citizenship Status

128. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the **Minister for Justice and Equality** the definition of an Irish citizen. [27026/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Under the provisions of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, an Irish citizen is defined as a citizen of Ireland. Entitlement to Irish citizenship is governed by the above-mentioned Act. The Act provides that subject to Section 6A every person born in the island of Ireland is entitled to be an Irish citizen. The Act also provides that if either of a child's parents was, at the time of that child's birth, an Irish citizen, that child is an Irish citizen irrespective of the place of birth.

Section 6A of the Act provides that a child born in the island of Ireland on or after 1 January 2005 has an entitlement to Irish citizenship if, at the time of the birth of the child, one of his or her parents had, during the period of 4 years immediately preceding the person's birth, been resident in the island of Ireland for a period of not less than 3 years or periods the aggregate of which is not less than 3 years. Periods of unlawful residence, periods of residence which were for the sole purpose of having an application for refugee status determined or periods of residence where permission was granted for the purposes of study are excluded under the Act from the determination of periods of reckonable residence.

Where a child born in the State did not at birth have an entitlement to Irish citizenship, the parent or guardian or person who is in loco parentis to the child may lodge an application for naturalisation on behalf of the child if and when the conditions for naturalisation are satisfied, including a requirement to have 5 years residence in the State. Detailed information on citizenship and the naturalisation process, including the relevant application forms, is available on the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) website at [www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie).

## Immigration Policy

133. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the **Minister for Justice and Equality** his plans to change the conditions applying to a stamp 0 visa for persons that wish to retire and live here, particularly from the United States of America, in order that the thresholds of income and savings would be reduced to a realistic level in view of the statement issued by him in autumn 2017 in relation to the matter. [27051/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** A review of the policy to grant an immigration permission to qualifying Non-EEA Retirees who wish to retire to Ireland has recently been completed, and a revised scheme for non-EEA retirees is currently undergoing interdepartmental consultations. I hope to launch the revised non-EEA retirees scheme in the coming months. The full details of the scheme will be made available at that time.

**Thursday 21st June 2018**

### Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

91. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the **Minister for Education and Skills** the estimated cost of exempting refugees and asylum seekers from the three year residency requirement to avail of SUSI grants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27188/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** To be eligible for a grant, a "student", as defined in Section 14 of the Student Support Act 2011, must demonstrate that he/she has been resident in the State for at least 3 years out of the 5 year period ending on the day before the start of his/her approved course of study.

It is possible for students, who did not meet the residency requirement at the commencement of their studies, to have their eligibility reviewed if they meet the residency requirement during the course of their studies.

It is not possible to cost a proposal to exempt refugees and asylum seekers from the residency requirement of three out of five years. Reducing the residency requirement will attract additional students, who currently don't apply to SUSI. As such, it is difficult to predict what the impact of such a change would be.

(See also: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/republic-ireland/content-protection/employment-and-education/access-education>)

### Refugee Resettlement Programme

114. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the **Minister for Justice and Equality** the model for resettlement being delivered by the Irish Refugee Protection Programme in the various counties in which it is operational in terms of the number of persons included in a programme; the staffing in terms of refugee resettlement workers and intercultural workers on a programme; and the length of time the programme is in place. [27290/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** As the Deputy will be aware, the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration (OPMI) is the primary entity within my Department responsible for resettling refugees. It has overseen the humanitarian resettlement programmes run by Ireland since they were established in 2000. The Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) was subsequently established in September 2015 and is now part of the OPMI. The model for resettlement being used by the

IRPP is identical to the model used by the OPMI in resettlements prior to the establishment of the IRPP. This has three broad phases:

1. Overseas selection missions in collaboration with the UNHCR.
2. Placement of refugees in Emergency Response and Orientation Centres (EROCs) for the purposes of acclimatisation, orientation, etc.
3. Settlement in communities in local authority areas, coordinated by an inter-agency working group chaired by the relevant local authority, with refugees supported by an "implementing partner" procured by the local authority. The funding for the implementing partner is provided by the IRPP and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), both under the auspices of my Department. Local Authorities play a critical role in ensuring the success of each resettlement through the procuring of a suitable implementing partner with expertise in community integration and relevant supports.

The implementation of the resettlement programme requires a high level of coordination among service delivery agencies at both national and local level. Service provision is mainstreamed and all the main statutory service providers such as Government departments, the HSE, Tusla and Local Authorities are represented on the national Taskforce which oversees delivery of the programme. The programme is coordinated overall by the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) but service provision remains the responsibility of the relevant statutory entity.

Once resettled, the implementing partner provides appropriate services for a period of twelve to eighteen months to assist with integration. The standard model is now focused on an eighteen-month period.

The following tables show the position in the counties in which resettlement programmes are underway. As the Deputy will appreciate, the numbers reflect the fact that the programme is a work in progress, with further resettlements planned and personnel yet to be recruited. Some counties will be resettling further refugees as their overall allocation is higher than their initial allocation.

Persons Included in the Resettlement Programme:

County	Initial Agreed Allocation	Persons Resettled
Galway	90	94
Mayo	100	134
Cork	120	116

Clare	100	89
Limerick	100	84
Kerry	120	97
Leitrim	50	60
Longford	60	0
Carlow	80	16
Roscommon	90	5
Sligo	99	73
Westmeath	140	59
Kilkenny	140	49
Donegal	150	77
Wexford	210	196
Meath	160	33
Monaghan	90	55
Waterford	100	93

Staffing Levels:

County	Resettlement Workers: Agreed Number	Resettlement Workers Employed	Intercultural Support Workers: Agreed Number	Intercultural Support Workers: Employed
Galway	2	2	1	1
Mayo	1	1	0.5	0.5
Cork	1	1	0	0
Clare	2	2	1	1
Limerick	1	2	0	0
Kerry	1	1	1	1
Leitrim	1	2	0	0
Longford	1	0	1	0
Carlow	1	1	1	1
Roscommon	1	1	1	0
Sligo	1	1	1	1
Westmeath	1	1	0.5	0.5

Kilkenny	1	1	1	1
Donegal	2	2	1	1
Wexford	1	2	1	2
Meath	1	1	1	1
Monaghan	1	1	1	1
Waterford	1	1	1	1

## Refugee Resettlement Programme

115. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the **Minister for Justice and Equality** if an evaluation of the Irish Refugee protection programme on the ground has been undertaken in the counties in which resettlement has taken place or is taking place; if not, if there are plans to do so; and if so, the way in which the work is procured. [27291/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice (Deputy David Stanton):** As the Deputy is aware, the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) commenced in September 2015 with the first significant tranche of protection applicants only arriving in Ireland under in June 2016, due largely to delays in the establishment of hotspots and related arrangements overseas by the beneficiary States. Large scale resettlements in counties therefore only began in March 2017. It is too early to undertake an evaluation of the current resettlement programme as the resettlement process has not been underway for sufficiently long and the Programme remains in a heavily operational phase.

The IRPP constantly re-evaluates its operations and fine-tunes elements of the Programme as required. The Deputy should be aware that a provisional analysis of previous resettlements, prior to the establishment of the IRPP, is now underway. These resettlements employed the same model as currently used by the IRPP. This evaluation is in the early stages and is being undertaken on a contract basis.

Once this process has been concluded, which should be by the end of 2018, a determination will be made on future steps including the scope of any further evaluation process and how this might best be undertaken.

