

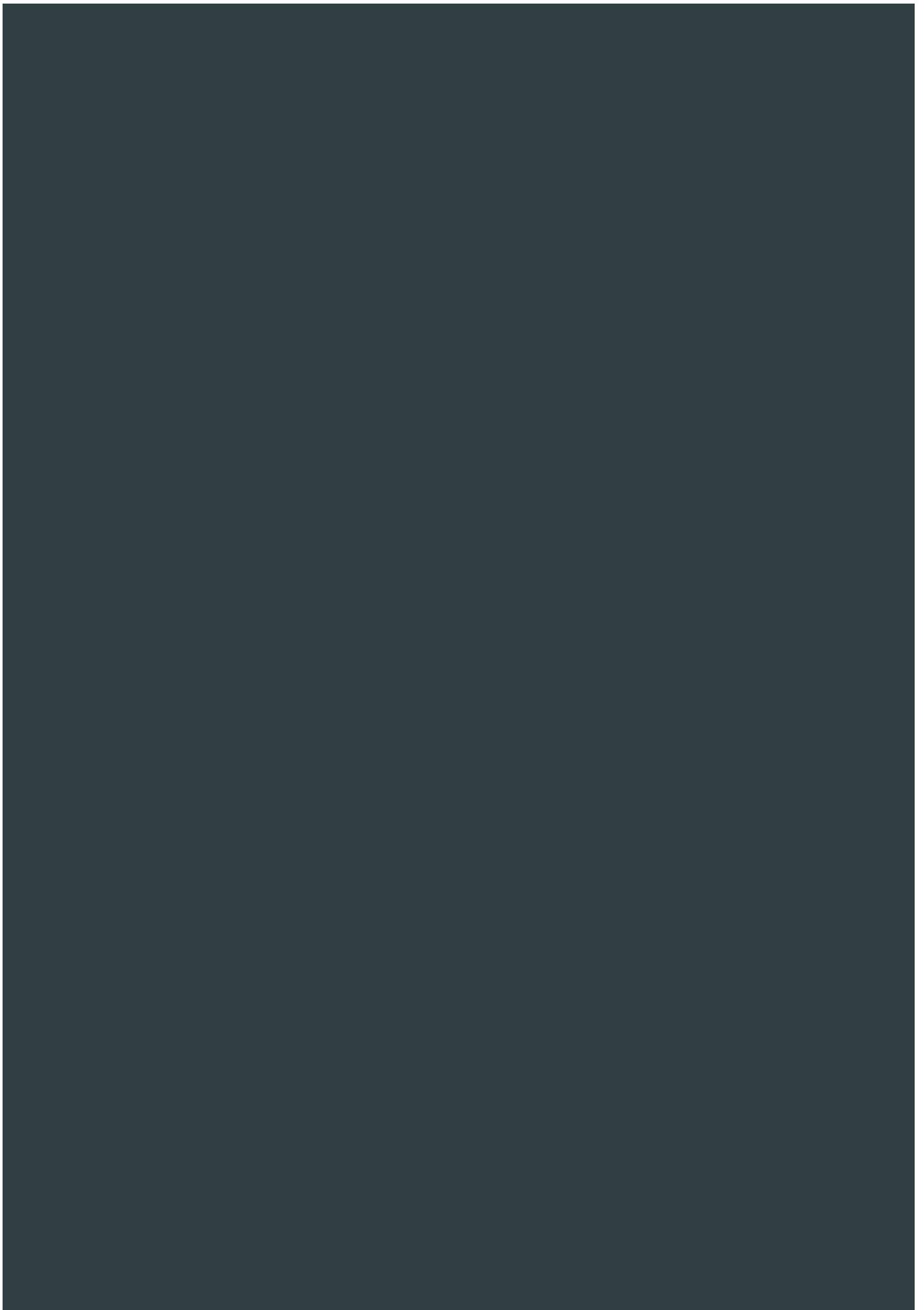


An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt  
Department of Justice

# Immigration in Ireland

Annual Review 2019





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# **CHAPTER 1:**

## **Our mission and objectives**

## Introduction

The mission of the Department of Justice and Equality is to “work together to advance community and national security, promote justice and equality and safeguard human rights.”

One of the Department’s core objectives is to deliver “a fair and balanced immigration and protection regime.” The strategic objectives and priority actions contained within its Strategy Statement 2016 – 2019 express how this objective will be met.

### Our strategic objectives

Strategic objectives	Priority actions
<b>To ensure a streamlined and effective international protection regime, including improvements to the Direct Provision system</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the Single Application system in accordance with the International Protection Act 2015</li> <li>• Improvements to the Direct Provision system particularly for families</li> </ul>
<b>To support the relocation and resettlement of programme refugees and relocated asylum seekers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage the resettlement and relocation strands of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme so as to fulfil the Government’s commitment towards programme refugees and relocated asylum seekers</li> <li>• Co-ordinate the resettlement in Ireland of Programme refugees and relocated asylum seekers who have received a grant of international protection</li> </ul>
<b>To enhance immigration controls at the State’s borders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce a number of technology solutions to enhance border security, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• automated checking of passenger information</li> <li>• electronic gates at ports of entry</li> <li>• further civilianisation of frontline immigration controls</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<p><b>To ensure responsive policies in respect of non-EEA nationals resident in the State and effective implementation of these policies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular policy reviews of immigration including for students, retirees, workers, and so on, to respond to changing requirements and demands</li> <li>• Effective processes for registration of non-EEA nationals</li> <li>• Effective dealing with applicants for a wide range of immigration services and citizenship</li> </ul>
<p><b>To provide a balanced visa regime to enable legitimate visitors, tourists and long term applicants to come here whilst ensuring relevant controls are maintained</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued enforcement of immigration laws including addressing immigration abuses</li> </ul>
<p><b>To continue to effectively operate the Common Travel Area</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work with UK colleagues on enhancing and securing the Common Travel Area (CTA)</li> <li>• Ensure Ireland's position is reflected at EU level on immigration matters</li> <li>• Consider and address implications of Brexit on all aspects of immigration including the CTA</li> </ul>

Specialist terms above are explained in the [glossary](#) on page 36

## 2019 in summary

### Transformation process

During 2019, the Department of Justice and Equality went through a transformation process. As part of this, the Department was divided into two pillars – Criminal Justice and Civil Justice and Equality. Immigration policy and legislation were positioned under the Civil Justice pillar.

The Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) was restructured as the Department's Immigration Service Delivery (ISD). ISD services include visas; border management; determination of immigration permissions for non-EEA nationals in the State; registration of residence permissions; EU Treaty Rights; citizenship applications and repatriation.

The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) was restructured into two units under ISD – International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS) and International Protection Procurement Services (IPPS). The Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration (OPMI) was also positioned under the civil justice pillar.

### Improving Our Services

A Service Improvement Plan is being implemented from 2018-2020 to modernise our operations and to better meet customer needs. It outlines a range of strategic priorities for changes in ISD, which in 2019 included:

- introducing a new appointment system and queue management system for the Registration and Re-entry visa office,
- reviewing our process operating model from an end to-end immigration lifecycle perspective, and
- assessing our organisational culture.

### New immigration schemes

- In March, a new pre-clearance arrangement was announced for spouses and partners of Critical Skills Employment Permit Holders enabling them to access the Irish labour market without the need to obtain an employment permit.
- In June, a new five-year multi-entry visa option for Chinese tourists coming to Ireland was announced to coincide with the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Ireland and China.

- An online immigration registration renewal system for third level non-EEA national students resident in the Dublin area was announced in July.
- New immigration arrangements for trainee accountants were announced in July. The arrangements clarify the position regarding the time allowed for trainee accountants to complete their qualifications, academic and professional progress, the rules for changing courses and work placements.
- In August, a new pre-clearance process was launched to make it easier for Irish emigrants to return home with their non-EEA de facto partners.

## Migration to Ireland

In 2019, the number of people from non-EU countries legally living here increased by almost 19% compared to 2018. In 2018 there were **142,924** people in this category and in 2019 there were **169,733 people**.

There has also been a significant increase in visa applications over the past number of years. In 2019, there were **over 155,700 visa applications**, an increase of 11% on 2018.

## Citizenship

In 2019, **5,789 people** became Irish citizens at two citizenship ceremonies held in Killarney and one held in Waterford. British nationals continued to make applications for Irish citizenship in the wake of the Brexit referendum and were the second highest nationality represented at the three ceremonies.

Since 2011, over **130,000 people from over 180 countries** have received their certificates of naturalisation at citizenship ceremonies.

## Common Travel Area

The Department's Immigration Services Delivery (ISD) has been actively involved with other Government Departments in contingency planning to make sure that we are prepared for all outcomes arising from the UK's withdrawal from the EU. Throughout 2019, ISD posted information notices relating to non-EEA national family members of British citizens residing in Ireland in light of the evolving situation regarding Brexit. The Department aimed to identify the most beneficial immigration arrangement possible for this group of people in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

## International Protection

During 2019, a total of **4,781** applications for international protection status were submitted to the International Protection Office (IPO). This was an increase of 30% on the number of applications for refugee status submitted to the IPO in 2018.

In August 2019, the National Standards for accommodation offered to people in the international protection process were published. The agreed Standards will come into force in January 2021.

An expert group on the Provision of Support, including Accommodation, to Persons in the International Protection Process, was set up in December. The group is chaired by Dr Catherine Day, former Secretary General of the European Commission and its report, due by the end of 2020, will outline recommendations for a new, permanent system to replace Direct Provision and proposals to improve the international protection system.

A new phase of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) was announced which will see Ireland welcome up to **2,900 refugees** through a combination of resettlement and community sponsorship between 2020 and 2023.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

# **A fair and balanced immigration system**

## Residence: Living in Ireland for work, study or family reasons

At the end of 2019, 169,733 non-EEA nationals had permission to live in Ireland. At the end of 2018, there were just under 143,000 (see Figure 1). These registrations can be valid for between eight months and five years.

In 2019, ISD and An Garda Síochána issued over 160,000 new or renewed registrations of permission to remain in the State.

All non-EEA nationals living in the State for longer than 90 days must register with ISD or An Garda Síochána, depending on where they live.

**Figure 1: Valid permissions by year**

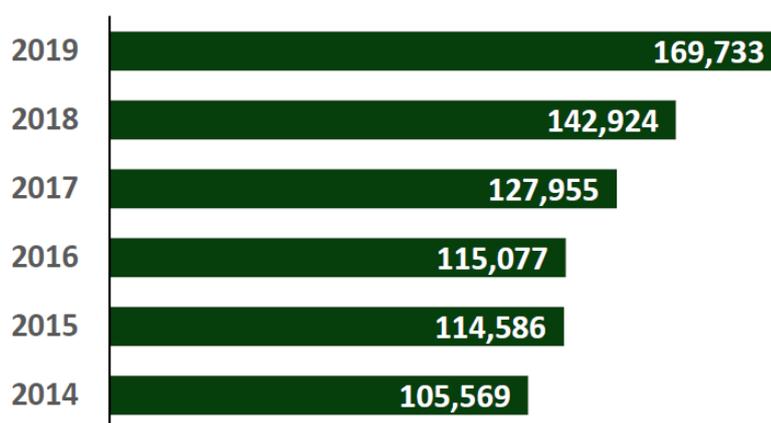


Figure 1: Valid permissions by year

### Applications for permission to live in the State

Certain types of applications to live in the State are more complex and require detailed consideration before a permission is granted. When permission is granted, the applicant then registers in the normal way. ISD's Residence Division received over 9,518 of these applications in 2019.

## Registered nationalities

Figure 2 shows the current top 10 registered nationalities, which account for over 60% of all people registered.

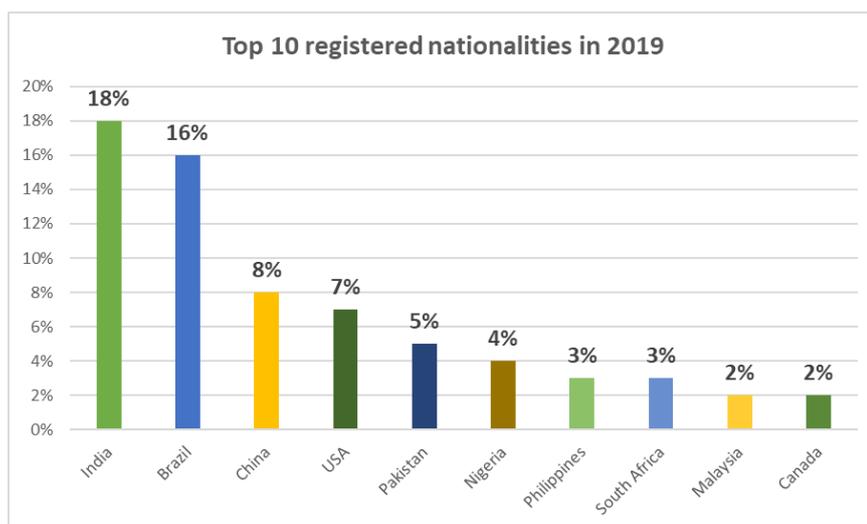


Figure 2: Top 10 registered nationalities in 2019

Most people with permission to remain in the State are working or studying.

<b>Long Term Residency Applications 2019 (January to December) broken down by Nationality, Gender and Age Group</b>						
		Female		Male		
		Age at application				
Nationality	Total	0-17	18+	0-17	18+	
China (Including Hong Kong)	37	1	17	0	19	
Pakistan	25	0	2	0	23	
India	25	0	6	0	19	
Brazil	11	0	3	0	8	
Sudan	6	0	1	0	5	
Malaysia	6	0	4	0	2	
United States Of America	5	0	4	0	1	
Nigeria	5	0	0	0	5	
South Africa	4	0	2	0	2	
Japan	4	0	3	0	1	
Other	32	0	14	0	18	
<b>Total</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>103</b>	

Table 1: Long term residency applications

## Visas: Visiting Ireland for short or long stays

### Visas

Visa applications increased again in 2019 which is in keeping with the trend of recent years. We received 155,761 applications in 2019, an increase of almost 11% on 2018 and a cumulative increase of 53% compared to 2013.

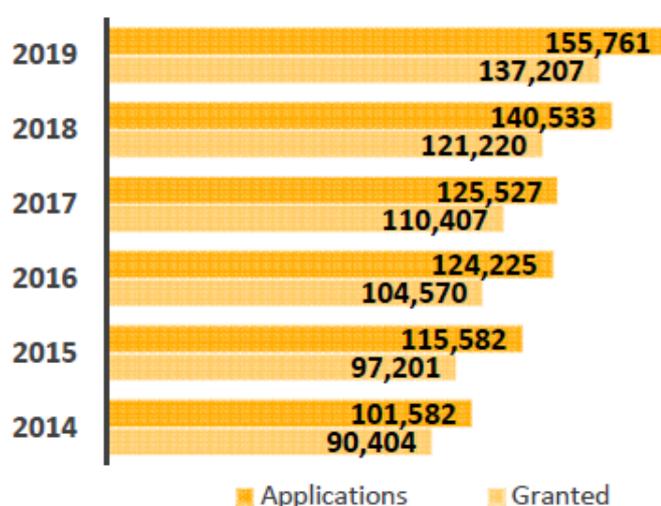


Figure 3: Visa applications by year

The approval rate for entry visa applications was 89%. Of the 137,207 visas that were granted, 108,595 were 'C' short stay and 28,612 were 'D' long stay.

The top 5 nationalities applying for visas in 2019 were: India (36,271); China (23,502); Russian Federation (18,501); Nigeria (8,371) and Turkey (6,281).

### Abolition of re-entry visa system

Ireland abolished its re-entry visa system in 2019. This system required third country nationals from visa-required countries who were legally resident in Ireland and had registered their residence with the immigration authorities to apply for a re-entry visa to travel to and from Ireland.

However, from 13 May, holders of an Irish Residence Permit (IRP) card or the former Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) card no longer had to hold a visa.

The new system did not remove the requirement for visa required nationals to apply for a visa in advance of their first entry to Ireland.

Visa required nationals who do not hold an IRP/GNIB card will continue to require a valid visa, which must be applied for from outside the State.

Also, as non-EEA nationals aged under 16 are not currently issued with an IRP card, they will continue to require a visa to ensure they can re-enter the State without difficulty. However, their parents or guardians in Ireland can apply for a visa for them and there won't be any charge for the visa.

### **New tourist visa for Chinese nationals**

A new five-year multi-entry tourist visa option for Chinese nationals was announced in June to coincide with the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Ireland and China. Previously one-year, two-year or three-year tourist visa options were available. The 5-year multi-entry option was already available to business visitors.

The new five-year multi-entry tourist visa option, which came into effect from July, will be available where the applicant has a proven reliable travel history. This will be demonstrated by a visa previously granted by Ireland, the United Kingdom, the Schengen States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand or the USA and compliance with the terms of those visas.

It is expected that the new visa will help grow Ireland's tourism links with China in the coming years.

### **EU Treaty Rights visas**

EU Treaty Rights gives EU citizens and their families the freedom to freely move and reside within EU member states. This means that if a non-Irish EU citizen is living and working in Ireland, they can have their non-EEA family members join them. These family members would apply for an EU Treaty Rights visa.

In 2019, there were 5,924 applications for EU Treaty Rights visas. Most of these visa applications came from Brazil (1,726), South Africa (786), Pakistan (565), India (251) and USA (216).

Of the applications received, 5,361 were granted.

### **Atypical Workers Scheme**

During 2019, a total of 3,347 applications were approved under the Atypical Working Scheme (AWS) which provides for short term employment contracts of up to 90 days in the State. Applications for the AWS are granted in line with the criteria for general and critical skills employment permits.

Most of the permissions granted were for the medical sector such as non-EEA national nurses and non-EEA national locum doctors. Permissions in this sector can exceed the normal 90 day duration.

Additionally, a significant number of permissions were granted to engineers and computer skills specialists.

In November, amendments were announced to the AWS regarding locum doctors working in the primary care sector.

The amendments make it possible for doctors to take up consecutive contracts and also to leave the State during their time working here.

### **Immigrant Investor Programme**

The Immigrant Investor Programme (IIP) is a residency programme open to non-EEA nationals who commit to an approved investment in Ireland. A total of 396 applications were received under the IIP in 2019. Some 294 applications (which may include some made in previous years) were approved in 2019 with a total investment value of over €250 million.

An external review of the IIP was commenced during 2019 and the findings will be finalised in 2020.

### **Start-up Entrepreneur Programme**

The Start-up Entrepreneur Programme was introduced in 2012 to allow innovative entrepreneurs to apply for permission to establish their business and reside in Ireland on a full time basis. In 2019, a total of 26 applications were received and 10 were approved.

## Citizenship: Welcoming Ireland's newest citizens

Since 2011, over 130,000 people from over 180 countries have received their certificates of naturalisation at citizenship ceremonies.

In 2019, 5,789 people became Irish citizens at two citizenship ceremonies held in Killarney and one in Waterford. British nationals continued to make applications for Irish citizenship in the wake of the Brexit referendum and were the second highest nationality represented at the three ceremonies.

**The top 10 nationalities of people naturalised in 2019 are:**

Nationality	Total
Poland	925
United Kingdom	665
Romania	552
India	515
Nigeria	304
Latvia	221
Philippines	191
Brazil	188
China (Including Hong Kong)	162
United States Of America	154

**Table 2: Top 10 nationalities of people naturalised in 2019**

<b>Citizenship Applications 2019 (January to December) broken down by Nationality, Gender and Age Group</b>					
		Female		Male	
		Age at application			
Nationality	Total	0-17	18+	0-17	18+
United Kingdom	1744	24	846	20	854
Poland	1144	83	499	98	464
Romania	953	80	381	78	414
India	939	105	248	85	501
Nigeria	734	70	289	69	306
Pakistan	678	55	207	41	375
Brazil	433	21	217	18	177
China (Including Hong Kong)	339	30	143	40	126
Philippines	305	21	168	29	87
Syrian Arab Republic	286	10	125	7	144
United States Of America	272	12	147	24	89
Latvia	270	11	149	15	95
South Africa	223	12	97	14	100
Ukraine	157	10	69	13	65
Bangladesh	153	9	43	6	95
Hungary	152	7	74	7	64
Lithuania	145	11	65	20	49
Russian Federation	137	7	80	4	46
Egypt	115	10	30	5	70
Congo, The Democratic Republic Of The	111	5	51	6	49
Other	2990	152	1324	148	1366
<b>Total</b>	<b>12280</b>	<b>745</b>	<b>5252</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>5536</b>

Table 3: Citizenship applications in 2019

## **Legal challenge to continuous residence**

A High Court case, which was subsequently successfully appealed to the Court of Appeal, resulted in significant delays in holding citizenship ceremonies in 2019.

In July, a decision in the High Court changed the interpretation of the legal provision regarding “continuous residence” for the purpose of citizenship applications, and ceremonies were paused.

The Jones judgment was subsequently appealed and was heard at the Court of Appeal on 8 October 2019. On 14 November 2019, the Court of Appeal delivered its judgment in which it held that the High Court erred in law in stating that naturalisation applicants must have unbroken residence in the year prior to their application, which the Court of Appeal stated was ‘unworkable, overly literal, unduly rigid and gives rise to an absurdity’. The Court of Appeal stated that continuous residence does not require uninterrupted presence in the State nor impose a complete prohibition on travel outside of the State.

Once the matter was clarified the Department moved immediately to reinstate citizenship ceremonies.

## **Chapter 3:**

# **Enhanced immigration and border controls**

## Enhancing border security

eGates were first opened in Dublin Airport in December 2017. They provide highly secure automated passport validation and security checks on passengers by using advanced facial recognition technology and integrating with national and international watch lists.

In June 2019, new eGates for passport control in Dublin Airport were officially opened. The new eGates feature flatbed scanners which means that the Passport Card can be used in them for the first time.

There are currently 10 eGates in each of Terminal 1 and Terminal 2 arrivals with an additional five eGates in the new Transfers Facility. The eGates give passport holders from the EU/EEA and Switzerland who are over 18 years old a "self-service" type channel to clear immigration control. The eGates at the Transfer Area also facilitate US, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand and Japanese citizens (in addition to EU and EEA citizens), if not transferring to the UK.

In order to offer the best option possible to all people travelling through the airport, manned booths will continue to be provided for those who do not wish to use the eGates.

## People removed from the State during 2019

In 2019, 8,078 people were deported or otherwise removed from the State (see figure 4). Of these, more than 90% (7,454 people) were refused entry into the State, and were returned to the country they had travelled from.

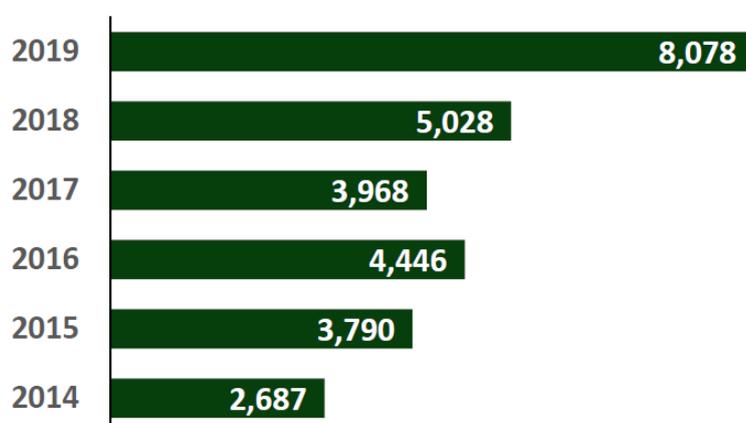


Figure 4: Removals / deportations in 2019

In 2019, 298 people who were either living illegally in Ireland or who had applied unsuccessfully for international protection were deported from the State. A total of 65 EU nationals were also returned to their home countries following EU Removal Orders. An EU Removal Order allows for the removal of an EU national to their home country if their conduct in the State represents a serious threat to society.

A further two applicants for international protection were transferred, under the Dublin Regulation, to the EU country in which they had first made an application for international protection. The Dublin Regulation establishes the Member State responsible for examining the asylum application.

### **Voluntary returns**

A total of 261 people chose to return home voluntarily in 2019. Of this number, 111 were helped by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The IOM, funded by the Department of Justice and Equality, offers voluntary assisted return and reintegration programmes for asylum seekers, rejected asylum seekers and other illegally present migrants in vulnerable situations.

### **Tackling illegal immigration**

Protecting the integrity of our borders requires constant vigilance on behalf of all the appropriate authorities and all modern States, including Ireland, need to enforce immigration laws. This means that some people who travel to Ireland will not qualify for immigration permissions.

It also means there is a need to robustly investigate immigration abuses, including through Operation Vantage.

Set up by the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) in 2015, Operation Vantage investigates illegal immigration, including marriages of convenience. ISD works very closely with GNIB and other agencies as part of Operation Vantage, and this inter-agency operation has been very successful.

As part of Operation Vantage, the EU Treaty Rights Investigations Unit investigates applications for residence permissions by non-EEA family members of EU citizens where immigration abuse, including marriages of convenience, is suspected.

We reviewed nearly 3,578 applications for residence cards since the operation began.

In 2019, we initiated investigations in 899 cases.

In 2019, the EU Treaty Rights Investigations Unit issued 868 decisions (some of these decisions relate to investigations initiated before 2019). In 2019, we revoked 701 residence permissions that had been granted under EU Treaty Rights.

In 2019, deportation orders were made in over 140 cases where a marriage of convenience finding had been made.

In addition, the EU Treaty Rights Investigation Unit responded to over 8,000 queries in 2019 from many Government departments and State agencies. These included the:

- Garda National Immigration Bureau,
- Civil Registration Service,
- Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection,
- Passport Office, and
- Border Management Unit and Embassies.

In March 2019, a multi-agency day of action targeted abuses of immigration legislation and processes around public service licence vehicles (PSV). The operation was led by GNIB and supported by members attached to Special Crime Operations, Roads Policing, DMR West Traffic Corps, the Carriage Office, the Garda Analyst Service, ISD and the Department of Social Protection and the National Transport Authority.

### **Co-operation with Frontex**

In December, Ireland led a Frontex Joint Return Operation in co-operation with Belgium and Iceland. As the Frontex Regulation (2019/1896) constitutes a development of the Schengen acquis in which Ireland does not participate, Ireland is not bound by the Regulation. However, in accordance with Article 70, Frontex may facilitate operational co-operation with Ireland and the United Kingdom in specific Frontex activities.

A total of 23 people were deported from Ireland as part of this operation.

## Planning for Brexit

### Protecting the Common Travel Area (CTA)

Under the CTA, Irish and British citizens move freely and reside in either jurisdiction and enjoy associated rights and entitlements including access to employment, healthcare, education, social benefits, and the right to vote in certain elections.

In May 2019, the Government of Ireland and the UK Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding, reaffirming their commitment to maintaining the CTA in all circumstances. The CTA pre-dates Irish and UK membership of the EU and is not dependent on it.

Neither Irish citizens in the UK nor British citizens in Ireland are required to take any action to protect their status and rights associated with the CTA. Both Governments are committed to undertake all the work necessary, including through legislative provision, to ensure that the agreed CTA rights and privileges are protected.

### Contingency planning

ISD has been actively involved with other Government Departments in contingency planning to make sure that we are prepared for all outcomes arising from the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

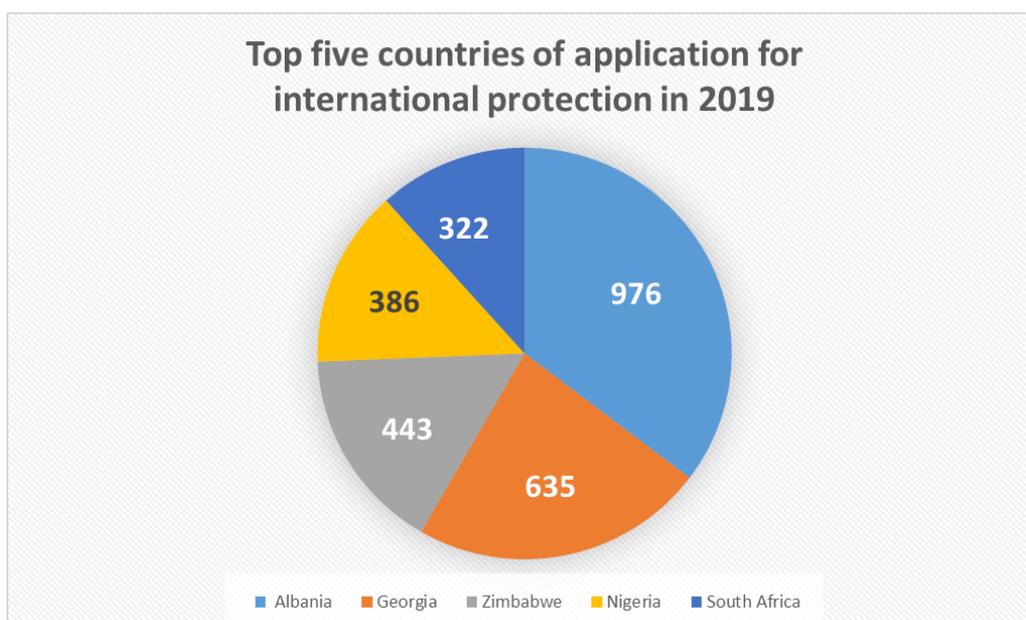
Throughout 2019, ISD posted information notices relating to non-EEA national family members of British citizens residing in Ireland in light of the evolving situation regarding Brexit. The Department aimed to identify the most beneficial immigration arrangement possible for this group of people in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

## **Chapter 4:**

# **A streamlined and effective international protection system**

## Applications for International Protection

The International Protection Office (IPO) received 4,781 applications for international protection in 2019. This is an increase of 30% on applications received in 2018. Figure 5 shows the top five countries of application for 2019.



**Figure 5: Top five countries of application for international protection in 2019**

### International protection and the right to work

Access to the labour market has had a very positive impact for international protection applicants and employers since its introduction in June 2018. Giving eligible applicants the opportunity to work helps them to integrate into Irish society while providing for themselves and their families outside of the State's directly provided services and supports. It also helps people to plan and prepare for their future if they receive a positive decision on their application for international protection.

Over 2,600 applications for access to the labour market were received in 2019 and 1,767 were granted.

Eligible applicants have access to self-employment as well as all sectors of employment, with the exception of the Civil and Public Service, An Garda Síochána and the Irish Defence Forces.

## **Accommodation for International Protection applicants**

In 2019, 3,847 new applicants were accommodated by the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) which represented 80.7% of 4,767 new protection applications to the IPO (not including applications under the IRPP).

The pressure on accommodation supply continued to be a challenge during 2019.

In November, there were 39 accommodation centres operating throughout the State. The centres, which had an approximate capacity of 6,140 bed spaces, accommodated 6,058 people.

## **New centres**

Several new accommodation centres opened during 2019 including a centre with own door accommodation for up to 16 families in Borrisokane, Co Tipperary and 25 own door apartments for up to 25 families in Ballinamore, Co Leitrim. Accommodation for a further 64 people was opened in Ennis, Co Clare.

A new public information website, [www.accommodationcentres.ie](http://www.accommodationcentres.ie), was set up to provide general information on new accommodation centres, including capacity and the impact on local services such as health, education and social protection. The website also encourages members of the community to join local “Friends of the Centre” groups to help residents integrate into the area.

As was the case during 2018, another challenge in relation to capacity was the number of people with status who stay on in accommodation centres while they attempt to source accommodation in the community. Over 800 people with status were still living in direct provision accommodation at the end of 2019. Some organisations, including the Peter McVerry Trust and DePaul Ireland, received support from us to assist people with status or permission to remain to access mainstream housing.

## **Joint Committee on Justice and Equality report on the direct provision system**

The Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality published a comprehensive report on the direct provision system in December 2019, calling for fundamental reform of the system. The report was based on public hearings with stakeholder groups, more than 140 written submissions, and visits by the Committee to direct provision accommodation centres in Mosney and Monaghan.

The Committee considered many issues including access to the labour market, the use of emergency accommodation and assessments of vulnerable applicants for reception needs.

### **National Quality Standards for accommodation centres**

In August 2019, the National Quality Standards for accommodation offered to people in the international protection process were published. The Standards were agreed following an extensive consultative process with UNHCR and relevant NGOs.

The Standards are set out within a framework of 10 themes. Collectively, they describe how a service provider should provide high-quality and dignified services to residents, which are human rights and equality-based.

The themes are:

- Governance, accountability and leadership
- Responsive workforce
- Contingency planning and emergency preparedness
- Accommodation
- Food, catering and cooking facilities
- Person centred care and support
- Individual, family and community life
- Safeguarding and protection
- Health, wellbeing and development
- Identification, assessment and response to special needs

The agreed Standards will come into force in January 2021 and a new inspection regime will be rolled out on an incremental basis from that date.

### **Establishment of expert group on direct provision system**

The Expert Group on the Provision of Support, including Accommodation, to Persons in the International Protection Process was established in December. The Expert Group will be chaired by Former Secretary General of the European Commission, Dr. Catherine Day.

Members of the Expert Group include relevant NGOs and as well as people who have direct experience of the asylum process and the reception system.

The Expert Group, which is due to report by the end of 2020, will:

- advise on the development of a long-term approach to the provision of supports including accommodation to people in the international protection process;
- identify good practice in European countries in the provision of supports to people within the international protection process, particularly dealing with variations in demand; and
- set out a process for achieving the long-term approach to support people in the international protection process.

### **Irish Refugee Protection Programme**

In 2015, the Irish Government approved the establishment of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) and agreed that this programme would accept people seeking protection under the EU Relocation and Resettlement programmes.

As part of this, 14 applications for protection were received in 2019 from people relocated to Ireland under search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean.

Some 783 people were resettled to Ireland, with the assistance of IOM, under the UNHCR resettlement programme in 2019. As of 31 December 2019, a total of 1,913 people had been resettled over the duration of the IRPP.

### **New refugee protection programme**

A new phase of the IRPP was announced in 2019 which will see Ireland welcome up to 2,900 refugees through a combination of resettlement and community sponsorship between 2020 and 2023.

For the first two years, the arrivals will mostly comprise of Syrian refugees who are resident in Jordan and Lebanon. A group of 150 Eritrean refugees, who are resident in Ethiopia. Between early 2020 and June 2021, funding of up to €9 million will be provided by the European Commission to support the resettlement of 900 people.

### **Humanitarian Assistance Programme (IHAP) and Family Reunification**

Under the IRPP's Humanitarian Assistance Programme (IHAP), which is run by the Department with assistance from UNHCR, family members of refugees from conflict zones can come to Ireland. During 2019, some 739 family reunification applications were received under the International Protection Act 2015. Of these, 259 were approved; however, some of these may relate to applications made in previous years.

The top five nationalities of subjects accepted were: Syrian Arab Republic (89); Zimbabwe (29); Somalia (17); Democratic Republic of Congo (15) and Afghanistan (14).

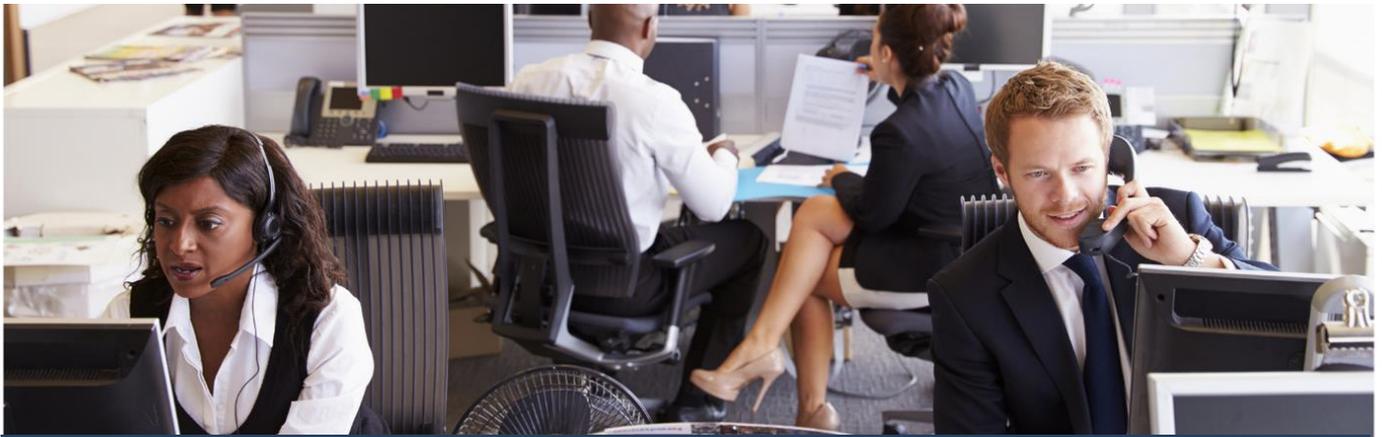
### **The Migrant Integration Strategy**

The Migrant Integration Strategy sets out the framework for a range of actions by Government departments and other agencies to help migrants to participate fully in Irish life. The Strategy is intended to cover EEA as well as non-EEA nationals, including economic migrants, refugees and those with legal status to remain in Ireland.

As part of the Strategy, funding of €526,000 was announced for community integration projects to be carried out in 2019. The Communities Integration Fund provides grant funding for local community projects that support the integration of migrants.

**Chapter 5:**

**Customer Service Summary**



# 2019 at a Glance

## Oireachtas



**6,280**

queries to our  
Oireachtas Mail Service



**1,038**

Parliamentary Questions  
answered

## Online



**2.6 million**

people visited our website  
for **5.8 million** sessions



**527 Freedom of Information**  
requests answered.



**385 Subject Access Requests**  
answered



## Information



**330,000**

applications across all our  
immigration schemes\*



**16.3 million**

passengers went through  
Dublin Airport immigration



**+3 million**

people used eGates at  
Dublin Airport

## People



**190,000**

email queries from  
customers received



**684**

press queries  
answered



**280**

customer complaints\*  
responded to

\*including residence permits, visas, registrations, international protection

\*to the dedicated complaints mailbox

## **Chapter 6:**

# **Looking forward to 2020**

In 2020, ISD will continue to meet the strategic commitments that we listed in Chapter 1. We will also:

- carry out the significant work outlined in the Service Improvement Plan, and
- implement new structures, work processes and skills to improve effectiveness as part of the Transformation Programme.

## 2020 objectives

### Naturalisation and immigration Service

In 2020, we aim to prepare immigration services for the impact of Brexit by:

- putting in place legislative changes needed,
- making necessary Common Travel Area (CTA) changes to the Regulations on Free Movement Directive (an EU directive that defines the right of free movement for citizens of the European Economic Area – the EU and other countries),
- making specific operational arrangements in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

### Mission, purpose and legislation

In 2020, we will update our mission, purpose and legislation in relation to immigration services. This includes:

- putting in place additional pre-clearance schemes, and
- rolling out online applications and payments.

### Safe and secure immigration system

We will maintain a safe and secure immigration system. We will do this by:

- working with the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB), including on Operation Vantage (an operation that targets individuals suspected of sham marriages and those facilitating such activities, see Chapter 3), and
- contributing to immigration policy at national, EU and international level (including our CTA co-operation).

## **Customer needs**

We will design immigration services based on customer needs. Where possible, we will take a service design approach to focus on the customer experience and quality of a service encounter with ISD.

## **Improve processing for international protection applications**

By the end of 2020, we will improve the processing rate for international protection applications (see Chapter 4), including the time taken for first instance decisions. First instance decisions are decisions made by the Minister to grant or refuse an application after it has been processed and before any appeals have been made.

## **Increased volumes**

In 2020, we will process more than 300,000 immigration applications including:

- visas,
- registration
- residence,
- EU Treaty Rights,
- family reunification (including the Family Reunification Humanitarian Programme), and
- citizenship.

## **Attend relevant forums**

We will represent Ireland at EU and international forums (meetings) about immigration and international protection. This includes forums about the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). This forum is being negotiated at EU level.

## **Investor Programme**

In 2020, we will administer the Immigrant Investor Programme – this is a programme open to non-EEA nationals and their families who commit to an approved investment in Ireland.

## **NGO Forum**

In 2020, the Department will continue to grow our engagement with NGO stakeholders through the NGO Forum. The Forum provides a platform for discussing the latest immigration issues and developments.

## **Service Improvement Plan**

ISD has changed over the last few years and we recognised the need to adapt to changing needs and become a more modern organisation. Accordingly, we are working to become more focussed on delivering high-quality services to all of our customers.

This led to staff developing the Service Improvement Plan which is designed to make sure we maintain a safe and secure immigration system based on customer needs.

Senior management signed off on the Plan in October 2018. The Plan sets out the strategic priorities, objectives and actions we need to put in place to improve our services between 2018 and 2020.

Much of the way we handle information is heavily dependent on paper-based processing and information and communication technology (ICT) systems that have limited interoperability (can't operate together that easily).

The Service Improvement Plan proposes that ISD invests in up-to-date technologies.

We set up a Change Management Unit in ISD to help us put the Service Improvement Plan in place.

The Change Management Unit and all project managers in ISD form the Programme Team. This team meet fortnightly to plan and manage how all aspects of the Service Improvement Plan are acted on.

The Service Improvement Plan is available online at [www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie)

## Glossary

**Asylum seekers** - see International Protection.

**Citizenship** - see Naturalisation.

**Civilianisation Programme** - a series of actions designed to transfer specific functions from An Garda Síochána to civilian staff, including ISD staff. The programme started in 2014 with the transfer of border management functions at Dublin Airport to ISD. This was followed by the transfer of immigration registration in the Dublin Metropolitan District in 2016.

**Common Travel Area** - The Common Travel Area (CTA) is the commonly used term for a variety of rights which can be exercised by citizens of Ireland and the United Kingdom (UK). It includes more than the basic right to travel freely between both countries.

**Direct provision** – a means of meeting the basic needs of food and shelter for international protection applicants directly while their International Protection claims are being processed. The State provides applicants for international protection with full-board accommodation, and services like food and medical care. It also gives applicants weekly personal allowance of €38.80 for adults and €29.80 for children. This rate applies from 25 March 2019.

**EU (recast) Reception Conditions Directive** – a directive to ensure better and more consistent standards of reception conditions throughout the European Union. It ensures that applicants for international protection have access to housing, food, clothing, health care, education for minors and access to employment under certain conditions. This Directive was revised in 2016 to further improve standards and consistency. Ireland opted in to this directive in 2018.

**EU Relocation Programme** - the transfer of asylum seekers from one EU State to another. Their asylum applications are examined in the Member State where they are relocated.

Eligibility for the relocation scheme is limited to applicants who are in clear need of international protection and are a national or stateless (not recognised as a national by any state) resident of those countries for which the EU-wide average recognition rate is more than 75 percent.

**EU Resettlement Programme** - the transfer of refugees into EU countries, including Ireland. The people transferred under this programme have already been granted refugee status in another country. People arriving under this programme are sometimes referred to as programme refugees.

**Family Reunification** - people who hold immigration permission in the State may be able to apply for their family members to enter and live in the State. The exact rights in relation to family reunification depend on the specific type of immigration permission held.

**International Protection** - there are two types of international protection: refugee status, and subsidiary protection (protection granted for those seeking asylum who did not qualify for refugee status).

People applying for such status are often called asylum seekers. A refugee is a person who cannot return to their own country for fear of persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or because they belong to a particular social group (for example, due to their sexual orientation). A person who is eligible for subsidiary protection is not a refugee but does face a real risk of suffering serious harm if returned to their own country.

**Naturalisation** - the process whereby a foreign national living in Ireland may apply to become an Irish citizen. To apply for naturalisation in Ireland, you must have been physically resident in Ireland for a certain length of time.

**NGO** - Non-Governmental Organisation

**Non-EEA National** - A non-EEA national is a person who is not a citizen of Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, or an EU country.

**Operation Vantage** - a multi-agency operation, involving An Garda Síochána, the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Revenue, the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement (ODCE), and the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC). It is focussed on preventing marriages of convenience from taking place and taking a fresh look at past cases with a view to revoking (cancelling) immigration permissions that may have been obtained under false pretences.

**Programme refugees** – see EU Resettlement Programme

**Service design** - the application of established design process and skills to the development of services. It is a creative and practical way to improve existing services and innovate new ones.

**Single Application Procedure** - the International Protection Act 2015 introduced a single procedure which enables one consideration of all grounds for examining and deciding on all applications for international protection (refugee status and subsidiary protection) or permission to stay in the State for humanitarian reasons.

**UNHCR** - the United Nations Refugee Agency

