National Asylum and Migration Management Strategy | Ireland

As required under Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on asylum and migration management

Glossary

Abbreviation	Description
AMIF	Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund
AMMR	Asylum and Migration Management Regulation
API	Advanced Passenger Information
AVATS	Automated Visa Application and Tracking System
BMU	Border Management Unit
CMS	Case Management System
CSOL	Critical Skills Occupations List
CTA	Common Travel Area
CTAF	Common Travel Area Forum
DETE	Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment
DFERIS	Department of Further Education, Research, Innovation and Sciences
DG Home	Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (European Commission)
DT4E	Displaced Talent for Europe
ECRIS	European Criminal Records Information System
ECRIS-TCN	European Criminal Records Information System for Third-Country Nationals
EEA	European Economic Area
EES	Entry/Exit System
EMN	European Migration Network
EMWP	External Migration Working Part
ESOL	English Speakers of Other Languages
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
ESTA	Electronic System for Travel Authorization
ETA	Electronic Travel Authorisation
ETB	Education and Training Board
ETIAS	European Travel Information and Authorisation System
EU	European Union
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
EU-LISA	European Union - Large Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice
GDISC	General Directors of Immigration Services Conference
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNIB	Garda National Immigration Bureau
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
IGC	Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees
IOL	Ineligible Occupations List
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IP	International Protection
IPAS	International Protection Accommodation Services
IPAT	International Protection Appeals Tribunal

IPO	International Protection Office
IPOP	International Protection Operation Portal
IRPP	Irish Refugee Protection Programme
ISD	Immigration Service Delivery
JIT	Joint Investigation Team
JR	Judicial Review
LA	Local Authorities
LAB	Legal Aid Board
LAIT	Local Authority Integration Team
MS	Member States
MPF	Migration Partnership Facility
NAP	Network Access Point
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RIAT	Return and Reintegration Assistance Tool
RRF	Return and Reintegration Facility
SEP	Seasonal Employment Permit
SIS	Schengen Information System
SPMG	Strategic Migration Policy Group
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
STEP	Skills, Talent and Empowerment through Pathways
TBB	Talent Beyond Borders
TCN	Third Country Nationals
The Pact	The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum
TSI	Technical Support Instrument
Tusla	Tusla (Irish Child and Family Agency)
UAM	Unaccompanied Minor
UCMS	Unified Case Management System
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VR	Voluntary Return
WRC	Workplace Relations Commission

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Executive Summary

Background

As part of Ireland's participation in the EU Pact on Asylum and Migration, Ireland has opted into *Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on asylum and migration management* (the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR)). Under the AMMR, all Member States are required to develop and submit a National Asylum and Migration Management Strategy.

This National Asylum and Migration Management Strategy is based on a common EU template, mandated by the European Commission and finalised in February 2025. In completing the required template, the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration has gathered input from relevant teams across the Department as well as the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment; the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

This National Asylum and Migration Management Strategy is unrelated to the commitment to develop a broader National Migration and Integration Strategy under the Programme for Government 2025, which is being led separately by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration in cooperation with other government departments.

Key Elements of the AMMR National Strategy

This National Asylum and Migration Management Strategy outlines existing and planned activities related to asylum and migration management in Ireland.

The key elements of the Strategy are summarised below:

- Sets out the **national context of increased net migration** in recent years, although the numbers of international protection applicants have shown a decline this year alongside increased resources and accelerated processing.
- Plans to **continue to increase returns** through aligning with EU law, continuing to encourage voluntary returns and through arranging more enforced returns, including through new charter flights.
- Continuing close policy, operational and policing co-operation with the United Kingdom on protecting the **Common Travel Area (CTA)** from abuse.
- Ensuring the **attraction of talent** to Ireland for the benefit of the Irish economy and society through expanding the occupations eligible for employment permits, piloting a new permit for seasonal workers to support agriculture and horticulture, developing a single streamlined application procedure for an employment permit, a visa and an immigration permission and establishing a programme to attract researchers.

- **Countering human trafficking** by making it easier for victims to be identified and to access supports.
- Taking measures to **prevent and combat migrant smuggling** through legislation, enhanced enforcement, international collaboration, and protective measures for victims.
- Implementing of the **EU Pact on Migration and Asylum** through a proposed new International Protection Bill which will enact the provisions of the Pact relating to screening and border procedures, restrictions on movement and more effective monitoring of presence at accommodation centres.
- Progressing a **comprehensive accommodation strategy** to move away from reliance on private providers, with a scaling up of state-owned accommodation at its core. The strategy is working to develop an accommodation portfolio with a 35,000 bed capacity by 2028, including 14,000 State-owned beds.
- Developing a successor strategy to the **Migrant Integration Strategy** 2017-2020 which will address ongoing and emerging needs in supporting and promoting migrant integration in Ireland. It will feed into a broader Migration and Integration Strategy that will be developed over the coming year as a commitment of the Programme for Government 2025.
- Establishing an **independent fundamental rights monitoring mechanism** to inspect asylum border facilities, investigate potential breaches of fundamental rights and deal with complaints.
- Fulfilling Ireland's obligations under the Pact in relation to **legal counselling**, legal assistance and legal representation for international protection applicants during the international protection application and appeals process.
- Using a **digital first approach**, taking into account people with vulnerabilities and the provision of information around special procedural or reception needs.
- Appointing a representative for **unaccompanied minors** and ensuring such minors will be accommodated in child appropriate accommodation in line with national law. Unaccompanied minors will also be excluded from the border procedure. The best interests of the child will be individually assessed and prioritised at all stages of the procedure.
- Creating a cross-government **Strategic Migration Policy Group** (SMPG) at Assistant Secretary level with the aim of developing a strategic approach to migration policy and its implications across Government and overseeing a Migration and Integration Strategy as mentioned above (already in place).
- Establishing a new **Unit for Future Planning**, under the Programme for Government 2025, to forecast demographic changes and ensure accurate estimates of the demand for essential services and employment.

1. National Asylum and Migration Management Context

Provide detailed summary of the current national asylum and migration situation, based inter alia on the results of risk analyses and assessments of the operational situation. Provide key elements of a strategic outlook, highlighting possible existing and future migratory risks, challenges, needs and opportunities taking into account *to the Member States' specific situation, in particular their geographical locations.*

Ireland is a small island State with an open economy reliant on trade, investment and migration to deliver economic growth and jobs, and to raise living standards, especially given the changing demographics and aging population seen throughout Europe. Thousands of people move to Ireland each year to work, to study and to fill essential skills gaps, making a significant contribution to the Irish economy and society.

Ireland has experienced significant growth in net migration over the last three decades, specifically, since the period of the Celtic Tiger (with the exception of the recession of 2008/09 and during the pandemic of 2020/21). In 2024, Ireland had inward migration of 149,200 people with outward flows of 69,900, resulting in net inward migration of 79,300 up from 77,600 in 2023, and 51,700 in 2022. The number of immigrants in the 12 months to April 2024 was the highest 12-month figure since April 2007 and consisted of 30,000 returning Irish citizens, 27,000 other EU citizens, 5,400 UK citizens, and 86,800 citizens of other countries including Ukrainians.

These flows have occurred during a period in which Irish economic growth has been very strong with unemployment falling to 4% in Q4 2024 (effective full employment).

Ireland also saw a significant rise in the number of people seeking international protection between 2015 and 2024. However, 2025 to date has seen a reduction in numbers. Accelerated processing has been introduced for certain international protection applications including those from safe countries, those who already have protection elsewhere and those from the countries with the highest number of applications. In 2015 Ireland saw a total of 3,275 International Protection applications compared to a total of 18,558 in 2024. This was up from 13,263 in 2023 or an increase of 39.9%. Whereas between 1 January and 30 April 2025 there were 3,021 applications for international protection, compared with 7,188 applications over the same time period in 2024, a decrease of 58%.

This does not include the number of Ukrainian beneficiaries of temporary protection who have found refuge in Ireland following the further Russian invasion of Ukraine and the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive in March 2022. There were 116,161 grants of temporary protection by 18 May 2025 in a country with a population of 5.38 million.

There has also been a significant increase in investment into the international protection system through staffing, infrastructure, processes and technology, which has allowed for a major increase in processing capacity. This has already demonstrated results with the International Protection Office (IPO) delivering over 14,000 decisions in 2024, a 60%

increase on the previous year. This increase in processing has allowed the IPO to reduce its large caseload, with the overall number of cases on hand dropping below 20,000 in early May 2025.

Ireland is in a separate Common Travel Area (CTA) with the United Kingdom, which has existed since 1923 and which allows British and Irish citizens to move freely between Ireland and the UK. It is an essential underpinning of the Good Friday Agreement maintaining peace across the island of Ireland. It extends beyond the right to travel and allows Irish and UK citizens to take up residence in each other's state including associated rights such as the right to work and study, access to healthcare and social and welfare benefits, and voting rights in local and parliamentary elections. The CTA means that there are no visa, passports or entry card requirements for UK and Irish citizens moving within the CTA and from an immigration perspective permits open-ended residence. This is not the case for those who are not citizens of Ireland or the UK and therefore do not enjoy the CTA's associated rights. However, the existence of an open land border and the need to balance CTA rights with border management in light of irregular border crossings creates operational challenges. Sustaining the CTA while addressing these challenges is achieved by the close and constructive cooperation between Irish and UK immigration authorities.

This overall migration context is acknowledged in Ireland's Programme for Government 2025 which recognises the need to attract and retain talent across various skill levels to sustain our economy and provide essential services while also ensuring a fair and firmer immigration and international protection system.

In response to this, the Government of Ireland has committed to the following measures among others:

- publishing a National Migration and Integration Strategy detailing how Ireland intends to meet the demands and the opportunities facing our society and economy over the next decade.

- investing further resources to ensure that Ireland can quickly process visa and immigration permissions.

- introducing a new International Protection Act in 2026 to implement the EU Migration and Asylum Pact, which will strengthen and integrate key EU policies on migration, asylum, border management and integration. This will provide for faster processing of applications, stronger border security, enhanced human rights protection, and a more efficient returns system in support of Pact measures.

- delivering a fair, efficient, and sustainable model of accommodating applicants.

It is intended that the development of a separate, broader National Migration and Integration Strategy will complement the content of this Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR) Strategy.

2. Strategic Objectives and Key Measures in the Field of Asylum and Migration Management

Establish under each of the following areas the strategic policy objectives and related key measures to effectively implement your asylum and migration management system, in accordance with the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility, the principle of integrated policy making and in full compliance with Union and international law and on the basis of full respect of fundamental rights. While designing these objectives, consider all identified current and future challenges, needs and opportunities for each heading. When describing the measures, consider which of them are relevant for achieving your current and future strategic objectives in the area concerned over the next five years and include information on how the results of the monitoring undertaken by the EU Asylum Agency (EUAA) and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), as well as how other relevant evaluations and monitoring results[1] are being taken into account. In addition, include, as necessary, references to other strategies and plans, including the national Strategy for Integrated Border Management and other relevant national contingency plans, in order to ensure synergies, consistency and complementarity.

2.1. Effective management of the asylum and migration system aiming at the reduction of migratory pressure on the basis of the comprehensive approach

2.1.1. External dimension elements

Considering your national context and geographic location and identified current and future challenges, as well as identified needs, describe how the strategic policy objectives will address the relevant migratory routes, in full compliance with Union and international law in full respect for fundamental rights.

Describe which of the following key elements and measures are relevant for achieving your current and future strategic objectives in this area. In addition, include any other measures that you consider the most relevant for achieving the strategic objectives.

2.1.1.1 How to best promote and build tailor-made and mutually beneficial partnerships with third countries of origin and transit and how to foster cooperation with relevant third countries at bilateral, regional and multilateral level, including on effective return.
Repatriation The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration's Repatriation Unit liaises with individual third country embassies in order to build and maintain a strong relationship on which an effective return process can be built. Specifically, the cooperation of third country embassies is required in the context of consenting to a given return, the determination that the returnee is a citizen of that country and in the provision of travel

[1] The evaluation carried out in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2022/922 as well as of the monitoring carried out in accordance with Article 10 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1356.

documents, without which a return cannot legally be effected. Investment in strong working relationships is also critical to the success of charter flight operations, and the promotion of voluntary return as an alternative to enforced return.

Enforced Return

In arranging Enforced Return the State uses both charter and commercial aircraft for the purposes of deportation. Deportations are effected by the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB). The use of charter deportation flights resumed in February 2025 and will continue with frequency. This enables the return of a large group of one nationality to that Country.

Voluntary Return

Voluntary Return (VR) currently accounts for the highest number of effected returns in Ireland. In 2024 there were 934 VRs compared with a total of 134 enforced deportations. This represented an increase of 338% in VRs and 153% of enforced deportations from 2023.

The Repatriation Unit currently operates a VR programme with the support of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The IOM offers particular support with more complex, vulnerable cases. Ireland currently has an agreement with IOM for the provision of reintegration support. Ireland does not participate in the Frontex Regulation as it is a measure building upon the Schengen acquis so Ireland cannot avail of Frontex led re-integration programmes as it is not a member of the Schengen area. However, Ireland does have a good working relationship with Frontex that is reviewed on an annual basis and intends to use joint return operations with Frontex in the future. Ireland intends to opt-in to the Returns Regulation.

Ireland will seek to procure additional partners to support the VR programme to increase its capacity and autonomy in order to meet the demand of an increased caseload as well as shorter timelines. A tendering process for support in the administration of the reintegration programme is currently at the planning stage. In support of these aims the Repatriation Unit joined the Return and Reintegration Facility (RRF) in April 2025 to avail of International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)/RRF support on return and reintegration. Once reintegration partners are sourced either through a grant agreement or through a service level agreement, Ireland may benefit from signing up to use the Return and Integration Assistance Tool (RIAT) to monitor the reintegration of voluntary as well as enforced returnees.

In addition, the capacity and knowledge base of the Voluntary Returns Unit is being aligned to that of EU counterparts working in the area of return. It is envisaged that a series of return counselling trainings will allow the Voluntary Returns Unit to become less reliant on external resources to effect returns and in doing so, will increase the overall efficiency of return operations. ICMPD has agreed to deliver this EU wide training to staff of the Voluntary Returns Unit over a period of 12 months and will focus on return

counselling, returns for persons with vulnerabilities, communication and outreach, and return counselling for those in detention.

Common Travel Area (CTA)

Ireland and the United Kingdom share a common interest in the effective operation of the CTA, and work cooperatively to prevent any abuses of the CTA.

The Common Travel Area Forum (CTAF), established in 2011 at a senior official and policing level in both countries, acts as a steering committee for the ongoing work of protecting the CTA in relation to free movement of its citizens between both countries while at the same time ensuring that the CTA is not abused by those not entitled to avail of it.

There is also very good co-operation at operational level between the Irish Border Management Unit (BMU), GNIB and colleagues in the UK Home Office Border Force and Immigration Enforcement. This includes a number of ongoing operations, in co-operation with the UK, tackling abuses of the CTA by identifying illegal secondary movement patterns within the CTA and taking effective actions to disrupt abuse of those routes.

External Migration Working Party

Ireland, along with other Member States and in conjunction with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, participates in the External Migration Working Party (EMWP) which meets approximately 8 times a year. The European Commission, at the EMWP, has presented action plans for 10 priority countries (Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tunisia, Niger, Nigeria, Iraq, Libya, Morocco, Pakistan and Egypt) and also for the Western Balkans and Central, Eastern and Western Mediterranean Routes. These action plans cover a wide range of issues including returns and readmission, border management, conditionality, targeting people smugglers, regional protection solutions and dignified reception facilities, legal migration pathways and addressing the root causes of migration, including irregular and forced migration.

2.1.1.2 How to promote legal migration and legal pathways for third country nationals in need of international protection as well as for those otherwise admitted to reside legally in the Member State, including, where relevant, participation in EU Talent Partnership[2] and in the Union Resettlement Framework.[3]

Employment Permit System

[2] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Attracting skills and talent to the EU COM(2022) 657 final.

[3] Regulation (EU) 2024/1350 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework, and amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1147.

To work in Ireland, a national of a state other than an EEA state, the UK or the Swiss Confederation must generally hold a valid employment permit. The employment permit system is demand-led and does not include any bilateral, regional or multilateral agreements. The employment permit system is administered through the operation of a Critical Skills Occupations List (CSOL) and an Ineligible Occupations List (IOL). In December 2023, there was a significant expansion of the Employment Permit system within Ireland with 11 roles added to the CSOL and 32 roles removed from the IOL, making them eligible for General Employment Permits. Ireland's economic migration system is a rights-based, vacancy-led model. If a job vacancy is eligible for a permit and the employer can prove that they are unable to fill the role from Ireland or the EEA, then they may apply for an employment permit. The CSOL and IOL undergo a periodic evidence-based review involving public/stakeholder consultation in order to maintain the relevance of the employment permits occupational lists and to ensure that the system is aligned with current labour market intelligence.

Seasonal Employment Permit (SEP)

The new Employment Permits Act 2024 provides for a SEP scheme. The SEP is a short-term employment permit for a non-EEA national to work for a maximum of 7 months in a period of 12 months in a seasonally recurrent employment, for example, soft fruit picking. It is designed to support targeted economic sectors, such as horticulture and agriculture, in addressing labour shortages and will be renewable across multiple years for the set calendar season.

A limited pilot scheme to assess the long-term viability of the SEP was launched in April 2025 and will conclude in November 2025. The pilot scheme is restricted to the soft fruit and vegetable growing sectors. It will be closely monitored, with two Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) inspections to take place over its course. A report on the pilot scheme will be prepared along with recommendations on the future viability of the SEP.

Skills Mobility Partnerships

A key strand in efforts to reduce irregular migration is to enhance legal and safe pathways for migration. Skills Mobility Partnerships place an emphasis on tailor-made, mutually beneficial partnerships that support migrants who may alternatively have taken irregular routes to follow a legal pathway, while also supporting a State in efforts to address skill shortages.

Talent Partnerships will enhance legal pathways to the EU, while engaging partner countries strategically on migration management. Talent Partnerships aim to provide a comprehensive policy framework to boost mutually beneficial international mobility based on better matching of labour market needs and skills between the EU and partner countries.

Ireland welcomes skill and talent mobility schemes such as the EU Talent Partnerships which have the potential, where well-designed, not only to help meet labour market needs within the EU but also to contribute to skills development in countries of origin and provide viable alternatives to irregular migration. Ireland is closely following the

development of Talent Partnerships at EU level to assess opportunities for well-structured mobility schemes with third countries, with a view to seeking observer status to those partnerships of most relevance to Ireland.

Migration Partnership Facility (MPF) funded Sustain Europe Project

The MPF is an ICMPD administered, EU funded programme seeking to strengthen cooperation between EU member states and partner countries on a range of migration-related themes. These themes include labour mobility pilots, dialogue on migration, projects that build capacity for migration management and those that maximise the development impact of migration.

The 'SUSTAIN Europe: Scaling Up STEM Talent from Africa in Europe' is a 33-month Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) focused skills mobility partnership pilot funded under the MPF. Beginning in 2025, this pilot project will support and upskill Nigerian graduates to come to Ireland and Germany to work in STEM fields. The SUSTAIN project is aligned to the new EU Talent Partnership framework.

The overall objectives of the SUSTAIN project are to:

- pilot a skilled migration model connecting private sector demand and supply;
- expand the pool of STEM graduates by developing sustainable training and tools for career planning;
- use learning from the project to increase institutional capacity for supporting the STEM labour market, including a model that would be replicable across Talent Partnership priority countries;
- place 200 graduates into STEM positions in Ireland and Germany.

The SUSTAIN project recognises the shortages in Ireland within STEM fields and the need to support international recruitment capacity, as well as the project's potential to support the development goals of Nigeria via support for circular migration, poverty alleviation and employment in Nigeria. The promotion of circular migration (in which participants return to their country of origin after a defined period of work or training) is an aspect promoted in the Talent Partnership framework as one option to address concerns about 'brain drain' in countries of origin. The SUSTAIN project provides specific supports for migrant reintegration for those who return home due to the end of their contract or who wish to return home for other purposes including an inability to thrive in the host country or to return to family. This represents a particularly holistic approach that also enables the creation of frameworks for future mobility and the promotion of legal routes that may provide alternatives to those who might otherwise migrate via irregular pathways.

The STEP project

Ireland is also a participating country in the Skills, Talent and Empowerment through Pathways (STEP) Project (March 2024- March 2027) which aims to improve labour mobility by increasing the scale, quality and sustainability of skills-based pathways for

people in need of international protection in Ireland, Italy and Spain. The project is being delivered in Ireland by Talent Beyond Boundaries (TBB), the Open Community and Fragomen with support from the Open Doors Initiative. The project aims to secure jobs and to provide a durable solution for 200 refugees and displaced people to move to Ireland, Italy and Spain over the three years of the project. The STEP project is co-funded by the European Commission and is gathering the evidence and building the alliances needed for sustainable labour pathways that work at scale. In Ireland, STEP uses the existing employment permit and visa system and engages employers via outreach, webinars and events. Although STEP functions like standard international recruitment (the employer pays for permit, visa, Irish Residence Permit, one-way flights and one month of accommodation), STEP provides CV and interview preparation, informed decision-making sessions, pre-departure and post-arrival supports to candidates. The project also supports employers with a tailored 'Welcome at Work' programme to assist with employee integration.

The Step Project builds upon the Displaced Talent for Europe (DT4E) Programme and uses a global 'Talent Catalogue' developed by TBB.[4] TBB's 'Talent Catalogue', is a global database and portal for displaced professionals which allows them to register, receive tailored recruitment support and connect with employers experiencing skills shortages, thereby facilitating complementary pathways for individuals in need of international protection. Working through the Talent Catalogue, DT4E mainly targeted displaced candidates in Jordan and Lebanon, focussing primarily on sectors with identified labour shortages in Ireland, such as healthcare, construction, engineering and IT.

Talent Pool

On 15 November 2023, the European Commission adopted a new package on skills and talent mobility. The package included a proposal for a new EU Talent Pool: a website designed to facilitate the matching of job vacancies of employers established in the EU with the profiles of jobseekers from third countries. The proposal aims to reduce barriers to international recruitment for EU employers and promote legal pathways and opportunities for jobseekers from third countries that have the skills required to work in EU-wide shortage occupations. Ireland welcomes this important initiative and opted-in to the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council Establishing an EU Talent Pool in March 2024.

Talent and Innovation Attachés

The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) plans to appoint six Talent & Innovation Attachés in key regions by 2030 as part of its Global Citizens 2030 - Ireland's Talent and Innovation Strategy.[5] This strategy aims to ensure Ireland is a first-choice destination for international learners, researchers and innovators, underpinning a new level of collaboration between Ireland, Northern Ireland

[4] The EU-funded Displaced Talent for Europe (DT4E) programme, led by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), with partners TBB and Fragomen was implemented in Ireland from 2022 to 2024.
[5] DFHERIS (2024) *Global Citizens 2030: Ireland's Talent and Innovation Strategy*, available at: https://www.gov.ie/ga/foilsiuchan/012d7-global-citizens-2030-irelands-talent-and-innovation-strategy/.

and Great Britain and enhancing Ireland's influence in EU education and research policy. The first Attachés are to be based in San Francisco and Boston, respectively, and will commence their roles from summer 2025.

Global Talent Initiative

DFHERIS is working with Research Ireland to establish a programme to attract established and rising star researchers to Ireland. The initiative will fund research on a number of thematic areas reflecting key economic and societal priorities such as renewable energy, food security and sustainability, AI and Semiconductors, although this is not an exhaustive list.

Innovate for Ireland

The Innovate for Ireland partnership is a programme of Research Ireland, an agency of DFHERIS, working in collaboration with higher education institutions and other state agencies such as the Higher Education Authority (HEA), IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland. This partnership between the government and industry was established to attract high-calibre PhD students to undertake research and innovation in Ireland.

Labour Market Access for International Protection Applicants

International protection applicants are eligible to apply for labour market access where they have not received a first instance decision within six months of making their international protection application. Under the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 230 of 2018), as amended, international protection applicants can apply for a permit five months after the date they applied for international protection. A permit will only become valid six months after the date the individual applied for international protection. Labour market access permissions can be renewed after 12 months, as long as the individual has not yet received a final instance decision from the International Protection Office. This legislation on labour market access for international protection applicants is currently under review and will be updated to the extent necessary to ensure that it properly transposes the labour market access provisions of the 2024 Reception Conditions Directive. It is likely that, under the provisions of the new International Protection Bill, when enacted, the majority of international protection applicants would have a first-instance decision within five months meaning that the number eligible for Labour Market Access will reduce significantly.

External Migration Working Party

As per previous Section 2.1.1.1., legal migration pathways form part of the action plans presented by the European Commission at the EMWP.

2.1.1.3 Other measures that could facilitate your strategic objectives in this area, such as: measures to support third countries that host large numbers of migrants and

refugees, measures to support third countries' operational capacities in migration, asylum and border management in full respect of human rights, measures to address root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement and to prevent and reduce irregular migration to the territories of the Member States, while ensuring the right to apply for international protection, measures to prevent and combat migrant smuggling and measures countering trafficking in human beings, while reducing the vulnerabilities caused by them, and to protect the rights of smuggled and trafficked human beings. Consider measures to address root causes and drivers of irregular migration and forced displacement.

Ireland has a long-standing partnership with the UNHCR, providing both core funding and earmarked support in countries hosting large numbers of refugees and displaced persons. Ireland also provides core funding to the IOM. Regarding the question of addressing the root causes and drivers of irregular migration, Ireland recognises that the relationship between economic development and outward migratory flows is a complex one and that effective actions should focus on issues such as corruption, weak rule of law, human rights infringements, discrimination in access to opportunities, conflict, instability and fragile statehood.

Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP)

Section 59 of the International Protection Act 2015 sets out the criteria for a programme refugee. The IRPP was established in 2015 as a key part of Ireland's response to the global humanitarian migration crisis and is approved by Government every four years.[6] The current programme was approved for the period 2024-2027. Resettlement pledges are set out in the programme, with review after two years. Resettlement pledges are also submitted to the European Commission every two years. Criteria and grounds for refusing admission are broadly in line with those envisaged in the Resettlement Regulation.

Over 4,000 refugees have arrived under various IRPP resettlement strands, the largest of which is a UNHCR-led programme. IRPP beneficiaries under the UNHCR led programme have been deemed to be refugees by the UNHCR, the refugees are selected before arrival, undergo security and health screening and have full refugee status from time of arrival in Ireland. Relocation is however open through a bilateral agreement with another MS to beneficiaries of international protection who have been granted that protection less than three years prior to the adoption of the Council implementing act establishing the solidarity pool.

Please also see Section 2.1.1.1 regarding the STEP programme.

Countering Human Trafficking

Ireland co-operates with multilateral international organisations that seek to address human trafficking, including the UN, Council of Europe, OSCE and the European Union.

[6] Established by Government Decision of September 2015 (S.I. 80/20/10/0122H)

In November 2023, Ireland's third National Action Plan to prevent and combat Human Trafficking was launched. A key action of the National Action Plan is the establishment of a revised National Referral Mechanism which will make it easier for victims of human trafficking to be identified and access supports. It will ensure that victims can come forward to a range of agencies and not just An Garda Síochána (Irish Police Force), as is currently the case. This is in recognition of the fact that victims, due to experiences in their own countries, may not trust police services. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Act 2024, put the revised National Referral Mechanism on a statutory footing.

In addition, the National Action Plan includes an action on funding initiatives, through Ireland's overseas aid programmes, which build the capacity of vulnerable groups to address the factors that can make them vulnerable to human trafficking (Action 1.6.2) . There is also an action to promote the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights as outlined in the National Plan on Business and Human Rights (2017- 2020) (Action 1.7.2).

The National Action Plan also contains a commitment to uphold and increase awareness of Section 38 of the Domestic Violence Act 2018, which made forced marriage a criminal offence (Action 3.6.1) and to examine the potential introduction of forced marriage Protection Orders in an Irish context (Action 3.6.2).

More broadly, the Government has supported the expansion of the BMU in order to tackle human trafficking. There are now approximately 200 members of BMU based at Dublin Airport alone. The Government has also supported the Garda National Immigration Bureau along with the BMU in engaging in intelligence led operations at ports of entry in an attempt to undermine unlawful entry into the State and any potential trafficking. In addition, there is ongoing development of training through NGOs targeting front line staff in industries such as hospitality, airline and shipping who may come into contact with trafficked persons.

Measures to Prevent and Combat Migrant Smuggling in Ireland

Ireland employs a multifaceted strategy to address migrant smuggling, which encompasses legislation, enhanced enforcement, international collaboration, and protective measures for victims. These efforts align with Ireland's obligations under European Union and international law.

<u>Legislative Framework</u>

- Criminal Justice (Smuggling of Persons) Act 2021: This Act criminalises the facilitation of illegal entry, transit, or presence of non-nationals into Ireland or another EU Member State, implementing obligations under the UN Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air (Palermo Protocol) and relevant EU directives.

- Immigration Act 1999, Immigration Act 2003, Immigration Act 2004: These Acts provide additional provisions addressing immigration control, including offences related to document fraud and unlawful entry.

- Carrier Liability Provisions: In 2024, the then Minister for Justice announced reforms to the carrier liability provisions of the Immigration Act 2003, increasing fines for carriers failing to ensure passengers have appropriate documentation from €3,000 to €5,000. Further measures include guidelines to assist carriers and consideration of a dynamic fines model recognising carriers who enforce documentation requirements effectively.

<u>Enforcement and Investigation</u>

- Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB): The GNIB leads investigations into immigration-related offences, including migrant smuggling. Personnel from GNIB have received extensive training in the area of migrant smuggling investigations, and sensitive engagement with potential victims of this crime.

- Joint Operations: Ireland collaborates with international partners through operations such as Interpol's Operation Liberterra II, targeting human trafficking and migrant smuggling. For example, in October 2024, GNIB and the Human Trafficking Investigation and Coordination Unit monitored 120 flights and checked over 16,000 individuals, resulting in arrests related to migrant smuggling incidents.

- Border Surveillance: Surveillance at key entry points, such as Dublin Airport and Rosslare Europort, has been intensified to intercept smuggling attempts.

<u>Border Control and Detection Measures</u>

- Advanced Passenger Information (API) Monitoring: Such systems are utilised for pre-arrival screening and risk assessment of travellers by border authorities, including detection of possible instances of migrant smuggling.

- Doorstep Operations: BMU and GNIB conduct intelligence-led operations at aircraft disembarkation points to identify individuals who may require further scrutiny, including both victims and facilitators of migrant smuggling. In the context of the Common Travel Area, Irish authorities have close relations with UK Border Force counterparts and joint operations regularly occur. Where appropriate, intelligence is shared to enhance effectiveness of operations.

<u>International Cooperation</u>

- Cross Border Policing Strategy 2025–2027: An Garda Síochána and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) have launched a strategy focusing on joint efforts to tackle crime, including migrant smuggling, through enhanced law enforcement and intelligence-sharing.

- EU Engagement: Ireland participates in EU initiatives to harmonise laws against migrant smuggling, including proposals for minimum rules to prevent smuggling and reinforce Member States' capacities.

- To further build on EU cooperation in this area, Ireland opted-in to the Europol Regulation to enhance police cooperation and support to Europol in the fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings and amending the Europol Regulation (COM (2023) 754) in April 2024.

- Ireland has also played an active role in negotiations at the EU Council COPEN Working Party with respect to a proposed directive laying down minimum rules to prevent and counter the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit, and stay in the Union (COM (2023) 755).

<u>Protection of Smuggled Persons and Human Rights Considerations</u>

- Non-Criminalisation Principle: Ireland adheres to the principle that smuggled people should not be penalised for their illegal entry, recognising them as victims rather than offenders.

- Access to Asylum Procedures: Smuggled people are provided access to international protection processes, legal assistance, and necessary supports, in line with Ireland's commitments under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights.

- National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (2023–2027): This plan outlines commitments to improve identification, protection, and support for victims, including migrants affected by trafficking.

2.1.2. Internal dimension elements

Considering your national context and geographic location and identified current and future challenges, as well as identified needs, describe the strategic policy objectives aiming notably to reduce incentives for and to prevent absconding and unauthorised movements of third country nationals or stateless persons between Member States.

Describe which of the following key elements and measures are relevant for achieving your current and future strategic objectives in this area. In addition, include any other measures that you consider the most relevant for achieving the strategic objectives.

2.1.2.1 How to best ensure the correct and expeditious application of the rules on the determination of the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection, and where necessary, carry out the transfer to the Member State responsible. Furthermore, indicate on measures aiming at an effective implementation of the take-back-and take-charge procedures, measures limiting abuses

of the national asylum system, including through absconding and unauthorised movements and how the results of the monitoring carried out in accordance with Article 14 of Regulation (EU) 2021/2303 of the European Parliament and of the Council[7] have been or will be taken into account, as relevant.

The strategic approach on measures aiming at an effective implementation of the take-back-and take-charge procedures are being implemented in line with the following objectives:

- Review and re-design existing operational team structure, Standard Operating Procedures and timelines to effectively manage shorter time frames (especially for take-charge and take-back notifications).
- Undertake research to inform decision making on whether to continue with a dedicated and specialised team or to train all interviewers to be in a position to consider AMMR considerations.
- Review how units dealing with AMMR applicants interact with other agencies and units to inform the building of coordination structures with the body responsible for reception conditions, enforcement, returns as well as other relevant bodies.
- Develop specialised training for AMMR considerations, to be delivered either for specialist teams or as an 'add-on' for some interviewer teams.
- Consider which IP applicants are eligible for the AMMR pathway under the Pact.
- Complete training for the operational team for AMMR procedures.
- Complete training for first tranche of interviewers for AMMR procedures.

Ireland's IPO undertakes ongoing review of efficiency measures under the current procedures for the Dublin III regulation to ensure correct and expeditious application on the rules for determining the MS responsible for examining an application for international protection. Recent improvements have resulted in the Dublin III team within the IPO now meeting the shorter timelines for take-back and take-charge procedures under the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR).

Ongoing engagement and representation at AMMR Contact Committee meetings has also supported the establishment of effective procedures including effective implementation of the take-back and take-charge procedures. Consideration is also being given to the frontloading of certain AMMR processes to enable learnings ahead of Pact implementation in June 2026. The IPO utilises EUAA training materials and guidance.

The proposed new International Protection Bill, which will give effect in Irish law to the measures of the Pact, will ensure proper implementation in Irish law of the AMMR measures and processes.

[7] Regulation (EU) 2021/2303 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2021 on the European Union Agency for Asylum and repealing Regulation (EU) No 439/2010.

EU Pact on Migration and Asylum

Overall provisions of the Pact are designed to prevent absconding, through the introduction of screening and border procedures, restrictions on movement for those arriving at the borders without the right to remain and the introduction of processes to more effectively monitor presence of international protection applicants at accommodation centres.

A digital first approach is being undertaken in developing a more efficient system for the application of the rules on the determination of the MS responsible for examining an application for international protection. Currently in Ireland, the national Case Management System (CMS) for Dublin cases are local databases: IP Live and the Dublin Regulation Database which are used in conjunction with DubliNet. Currently these systems are not integrated. At present, planning is underway for a new technical architecture as part of the delivery of the Pact including a new Migration Pact CMS which will be used across first instance, second instance and returns bodies.

Detailed future state process maps for the AMMR, inadmissible and subsequent applications have also been developed. As part of the preliminary checks (for those who present at ports or airports) and/or as part of the screening process in screening centres, international protection applicants will have their fingerprints taken and checked against relevant databases, including EuroDac. Should the EuroDac check indicate that the individual should be considered under the AMMR procedure they will be triaged to the AMMR processing stream. The individual will complete all other parts of the Screening process. All information gathered will be taken into account in order to ensure that any vulnerabilities are identified and family links are known. To establish family links under AMMR, family tracing with relevant partners will be considered where possible and appropriate.

The proposed new International Protection Bill will ensure proper implementation in Irish law of the provisions of the Pact relating to screening and border procedures, restrictions on movement and more effective monitoring of presence at accommodation centres. While Ireland is not bound by the 2024 Screening Regulation, it is proposed to align national law appropriately with that Regulation.

2.1.2.2 Measures to fight exploitation and reduce illegal employment, in accordance with Directive 2009/52/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, including measures to ensure the correct application of sanctions and to effectively prevent the exploitation of migrants in the labour market.[8]

The Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment (DETE) operates the employment permits system in accordance with the Employment Permits Act 2024. This Act represents the biggest reform of employment permits legislation in over a decade, allowing for a more modern, flexible employment permits system as well as ensuring employee rights are maintained. These reforms include the facility for employment

[8] Directive 2009/52/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 providing for minimum standards on sanctions and measures against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals.

permit holders to change employer after nine months in their first employment in Ireland, without the need for a new permit. This change balances the need for employment permit holders to seek more favourable employment conditions against employers' reasonable expectations after their investments in securing an employment permit and facilitating training.

The employment permits legislation sets out various criteria that must be met when considering a permit application, including immigration permission, testing of the labour market, minimum annual remuneration and minimum ratio of EEA employees to non-EEA employees. The WRC acts to promote and encourage good workplace practices and enforcement of relevant employment enactments, including the employment permits legislation, and provides support and guidance to employers in relation to compliance. There are a number of levers available to the DETE and the WRC where breaches of the legislation are identified up to and including prosecution. Where an employer has been convicted of an offence under the Employment Permits Act 2024 or other employment legislation specified under the Act, they may be prohibited from accessing further employment permits for five years.

Inspection and Enforcement

The WRC's Inspection and Enforcement Services have responsibility in Ireland for driving employment legislation compliance. This is achieved through a combination of targeted inspections, assisting non-compliant employers in becoming compliant and robust prosecution and enforcement where they do not.

WRC Inspectors are authorised to exercise powers on behalf of the Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment under the Employment Permits Acts. If an inspector detects an employee working without a valid employment permit, the WRC has the authority to initiate a prosecution against the employer on behalf of the Minister under the Employment Permits Acts.

Under the Employment Permits Acts, it is a criminal offence to work without an employment permit when a person is a non-EU/non-EEA national in Ireland without any other type of lawful immigration permission allowing them to work in Ireland. Penalties can range from a Class B fine (maximum €4,000) to €250,000, and terms of imprisonment can reach five years, depending on the specific breach and whether it is a summary conviction or conviction on indictment in respect of breaches of the Employment Permits Acts.

2.1.2.3 Regarding the effective management of return, describe your strategic policy approach ensuring effective management of the return of illegally staying third country nationals, including their effective and dignified return, in accordance with Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council. [9]

[9] Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals.

Ireland is not participating in Directive 2008/115/EC.

The Irish national return system is focused on removing not only failed international protection applicants, but also those who are found to be illegally in the State. VR is currently the more common method of return due to its reduced impact on resources, and work is ongoing to increase the volume of VRs effected. This includes investment in the capacity to offer in-house return counselling, improved communications on the benefits of VR, and reviewing the structure of Ireand's system of reintegration supports. A critical success factor in the deportation (or removal) process is the effective liaison with foreign embassies to procure travel documents and make arrangements for the return of the individuals concerned. In arranging enforced deportations the State uses both charter and commercial aircraft for the purposes of deportation. Deportations are effected by the GNIB. The use of charter deportation flights resumed in February 2025 and will continue with frequency. This enables the return of a large group of one nationality to that Country.

Legal Framework

In Ireland, all returns mechanisms have a basis in Irish domestic law and all decisions to make a deportation order may be subject to judicial review by the High Court. Returnees have access to legal representation. The GNIB complies with all relevant human rights standards. Custodial periods are provided for in law and are time-limited in terms of duration and may be challenged under Article 40 of the Irish Constitution. Places of custody are designated under legislation, usually a prison, and are subject to regular inspection by the Committee for the Prevention of Torture and the State's oversight bodies such as the Office of the Inspector of Prisons.

Ireland did not opt-in to the 2008 Returns Directive (Directive 2008/115/EC) or the 2024 Return Border Procedure Regulation that the Returns Directive is closely linked to. On 11 March 2025, the European Commission proposed a new Returns Regulation to establish a Common European System for Returns. This new legal framework is seen as a key complementary measure to the Pact that Ireland opted-in to, which will introduce a more comprehensive, streamlined, and efficient approach to asylum and migration in Ireland and the EU. Ireland intends to opt-in to the Returns proposal, which will allow for harmonisation and returns that are more efficient across the EU.

2.1.2.4 Other measures that could facilitate your strategic objectives in the area of return management, such as: establishing cooperation between relevant actors and authorities, strategic planning of capacities, using relevant Frontex tools or developing reintegration support measures. Moreover, consider how the results of the monitoring undertaken by the EUAA and Frontex and the evaluation carried out in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2022/922[10] are being or will be taken into account as relevant.

[10] Council Regulation (EU) 2022/922 of 9 June 2022 on the establishment and operation of an evaluation and monitoring mechanism to verify the application of the Schengen acquis, and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1053/2013.

As Ireland is not a Schengen State, it cannot participate in Regulation (EU) 2022/922 and is not a member of Frontex. Ireland has a working arrangement with Frontex which offers a valuable resource to An Garda Síochána (the Irish Police Force) in fields relevant to its own operational areas of interest including participation in Joint Return Operations and professional training as per the 2019 Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 while Ireland can also share information with Frontex and has observer status on the Frontex Management Board. Ireland has recently signed a contract for a charter aircraft supplier and it intends in the future to resume joint return operations with Frontex.

In the context of border management, all third country nationals (TCN) are subject to the Immigration Act 2004 upon entry to Ireland. Given its geographic location, the vast majority of those travelling to Ireland do so by air. Where a TCN is refused entry in accordance with Section 4(3) of the Immigration Act 2004 they are ordinarily returned to the point of embarkation at the earliest opportunity.

In the context of VR, Ireland has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with ICMPD that will allow access to not only RIAT as mentioned above in Section 2.1.1.1, but also the Return and Reintegration Facility (RRF). The RRF is part of the EU support structure that has been established to complement efforts by MS to increase the effectiveness of their return and reintegration programming and implementation. It acts as a laboratory of practices and ideas generated by MS to projects and activities enabling return and contributing to sustainable reintegration. It is this particular aspect that is of interest to Ireland as the facility opens up access to multiple VR Service Providers in countries of origin. The RRF supports the implementation of this strategy and return-related ambitions in the Pact by providing a mechanism for the development of such projects, which should be complementary to other activities in this area financed by the European Commission and by Frontex. The operational agenda is based on the needs and priorities expressed by MS, the Commission and Frontex and by the priorities identified in the Strategy which is rooted in the Pact.

2.1.3. Measures to provide effective support to other Member States

2.1.3.1 Describe your strategic approach to ensure the Member State capacity to provide effective support to other Member States in the form of solidarity contributions and under the Permanent EU Migration Support Toolbox referred to in Article 6(3) of Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 of the European Parliament and of the Council.[11]

[11]Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on asylum and migration management, amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1147 and (EU) 2021/1060 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 (OJ L, 2024/1351, 22.5.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1351/oj).

Ireland supports the AMMR provision on solidarity and responsibility, designed to strike a balance between clear rules for all MS to take up their share of responsibility for managing migration while ensuring that a MS facing disproportionate migratory pressure is supported.

From March 2022, Ireland has participated in the Europe-wide response to Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine with a co-ordinated, whole-of-government response that has provided protection and support to those who have had to flee and seek refuge in other States. This has resulted in the largest humanitarian effort in Ireland's history. Following the activation (and subsequent extension) of the Temporary Protection Directive, a total of 116,161 beneficiaries had been granted temporary protection by 18 May 2025.

The fair-share mechanism set out by the EU is based on 50% GDP and 50% population. While Ireland's economic growth means its GDP is higher than most MS relative to GNP, Ireland also has one of the smaller population sizes in the EU. Ireland will consider these factors when deciding on the best approach to delivering on the requirements of the solidarity mechanism.

The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration in consultation with other Departments as appropriate will assess the EU Commission's annual report assessing the migration situation in the EU within a designated timeframe each year before recommending an approach to Government based on the context at the time. Should the Government accept the recommendation, the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration will inform the EU Commission about its agreed approach and ensure that operational structures are in place to deliver within the asylum system and across the Government. Should Ireland be considered to be under migratory pressure in the future, it is intended to avail of solidarity from other MS.

The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration is currently considering whether national legislation is required to implement the solidarity elements of the AMMR or whether the AMMR itself provides sufficient basis for Ireland to engage in the solidarity mechanism.

2.2 Effective management of the EU external borders

Considering your national context and geographic location and identified current and future challenges, as well as identified needs, describe the strategic policy objectives to ensure an effective integrated management of the external borders.

Describe which of the following key elements and measures are relevant for achieving your current and future strategic objectives in this area. In addition, include any other measures that you consider the most relevant for achieving the strategic objectives.

2.2.1 Effective management of the EU external borders and access to international protection

2.2.1.1 **How to achieve a high level of complementarity between this strategy and the national strategy for European Integrated Border Management as set out in Article 3 of Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 of the European Parliament and of the Council.[12] If relevant, consider measures ensuring full respect for the obligations laid down in international and Union law with regard to persons rescued at sea.**

As Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 is part of the Schengen acquis, Ireland does not take part in the Regulation and is not required to produce a national strategy for European Integrated Border Management as set out in Article 3.

The BMU of the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration maintains border control and implements immigration controls at Dublin Airport, to ensure that persons entitled to enter the State are processed without delay while those who are refused leave to land have their case considered in a fair manner, taking all factors into account. The BMU leads on border management policy, working closely with the GNIB in relation to other ports of entry.

The Pact calls for a comprehensive border procedure and screening process. The Government does not currently have a border procedure set out in law, but intends to legislate to ensure that a border procedure will be operational once the Pact comes into effect. Given that Ireland could not opt-in to the Screening Regulation it will be necessary to align national legislation with this as closely as is appropriate.

Capacity is required to carry out screening and triaging cases into the correct cohort. Ireland is currently experiencing challenges in accommodating international protection applicants in State accommodation. The Government's Comprehensive Accommodation Strategy 2024 will address this shortfall in respect of international protection applicants.[13]

Applicants eligible for the border procedure include:

- Applicants from countries of origin with a recognition rate of 20% or less across the EU.
- Applicants who intentionally mislead the authorities by presenting false documents or withholding documents.
- Applicants who destroy their documents.
- Applicants deemed a security risk.

[12] Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 November 2019 on the European Border and Coast Guard and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1052/2013 and (EU) 2016/1624.
[13] DCEDIY (2024). Government agrees new comprehensive accommodation strategy for International Protection applicants [Press Release], available at: https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/9ed23-government-agrees-new-comprehensive-accommodation-strategy-for-international-protection-applicants/.

It is assumed the bulk of applicants would meet the criteria for applying the Border Procedure. Ireland's adequate capacity is set at 464 applications per year. However, it is intended to exceed this figure and it remains to be finalised who will be processed under this procedure.

2.2.1.2 How to ensure full implementation of the common visa policy at national level, including how to best organise the appropriate migration and security checks ahead of timely issuance of visa and how to prevent abuse of visa free schemes.

Ireland does not participate in nor is it bound by the Schengen Common Visa Policy. As a consequence, it does not have access to the Visa Information System. Ireland's visa policy takes account of Schengen visa policy and aligns as appropriate. Ireland has a system (AVATS) through which applications can be made online. All visa applications are subject to checks against databases of adverse immigration data. Fingerprint data is collected for visa purposes in respect of 4 countries with more countries to be added. Visa arrangements are kept under ongoing review. Indicators such as high asylum numbers, high rates of overstaying and high rates of refusals to enter are factors that are taken into account when deciding to impose a visa requirement. The Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration has powers under the Immigration Act 2004 to decide on visa requirements for the purposes of ensuring the integrity of the immigration system, the maintenance of national security, public order or public health or the orderly regulation of the labour market or for the purposes of reciprocal immigration arrangements with other states or the promotion of tourism.

2.2.1.3 How the main results of the monitoring undertaken by the EUAA and Frontex and the evaluation carried out in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2022/922 of the European Parliament and of the Council as well as of the monitoring carried out in accordance with Article 10 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1356 of the European Parliament and of the Council [14] are being or will be taken into account, as relevant.

Ireland is not a participant in the full Schengen acquis and is not a member of Frontex.

Under current legislation Ireland does not have an independent fundamental rights monitoring body operating specifically within the international protection process as envisaged by the Pact. Ireland's national human rights monitoring body, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission has a broad role in relation to the monitoring and upholding of human rights. In addition, there are numerous provisions within the International Protection Act 2015 requiring the IPO and other agencies involved in the asylum process to inform and notify the UNHCR of activities. Applicants have the right to communicate with the High Commissioner (UNHCR in Ireland as proxy) regarding their

[14] Regulation (EU) 2024/1356 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 introducing the screening of third-country nationals at the external borders and amending Regulations (EC) No 767/2008, (EU) 2017/2226, (EU) 2018/1240 and (EU) 2019/817.

case. All caseworkers and decision-makers involved in the assessment of applications within the IPO receive training conducted by UNHCR. Over the last 18 months, a large cohort of interviewers and decision-makers within the IPO have undertaken core modules of EUAA Training, and the IPO has worked with the EUAA to develop 'trainers' within the IPO so that staff there can deliver the training, increasing its capacity to train team members. There is also a mechanism in place for UNHCR Ireland to review case files and seek adjustment or redress on behalf of an applicant.

In order to continue to improve the quality of its consideration and decision-making, the IPO works with the UNHCR in Ireland. That involves the UNHCR monitoring aspects of the process in terms of quality and proving feedback and suggested improvements on new parts of processes. In order to do that, the UNHCR undertakes on-site visits to review the processes in place. The UNHCR undertakes quality audits of a sample size of cases. Feedback from those quality audits from the UNHCR is shared with IPO senior management through structured reports and with interviewers and decision-makers in a continuous learning loop. This engagement is part of the State's commitment to quality assurance activities.

Ireland fully participates in EUAA quality activities and the development of the EUAA Monitoring Mechanism, including through participation in the EUAA Monitoring Network, nomination of experts to the panel to potentially join the team of experts undertaking the monitoring exercises and with one expert taking part in one of the pilot exercises taking place in 2025. According to the EUAA's multi-annual programme, Ireland should be monitored in 2029.

The Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration will establish an independent fundamental rights monitoring mechanism, as provided for in the Screening Regulation and the Asylum Procedures Regulation to ensure safeguards are upheld in compliance with fundamental rights under EU and international law, including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and to investigate allegations of breaches. This monitoring body,the Chief Inspector of Asylum Border Procedures, will have responsibility for covering all activities undertaken by Ireland in implementing the national equivalent of the Screening Regulation. The purpose of the Chief Inspector of Asylum Border Procedures will be:

a) to ensure that, during the screening of third-country nationals and application of the border procedure, there is full compliance with EU and international law, including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and
b) to investigate any allegations of breaches. Provision is made for inspections, investigations and dealing with complaints.

The work of the Chief Inspector will also be supported by an Advisory Board, with membership from selected relevant bodies, such as the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, TUSLA (Irish Child and Family Agency) and Health Information and Quality Authority.

The Chief Inspector of Asylum Border Procedures in the General Scheme of the International Protection Bill 2025 is envisaged to have the power to inspect asylum

border facilities, investigate potential breaches of fundamental rights and deal with complaints. Following an investigation, the Chief Inspector will have the power to issue recommendations.

It will also have responsibility for monitoring compliance with EU and international law as regards to access to the asylum procedure, the principle of non-refoulement, the best interests of the child, relevant provisions on detention in national law during screening. MS are required to investigate allegations of breach of fundamental rights by ensuring that complaints are dealt with expeditiously and in an appropriate way. The monitoring body will oversee the progress of such investigations. This body will be provided for in the legislation to give further effect to the Pact measures. This legislation is currently in the drafting process and more information will be provided on this body in due course.

The UNHCR has given guidance on the design and development of a potential model including recommendations for the establishment of an advisory board in this space, to operate concurrently with the mechanism and to supporting the mechanism's functioning and independence. The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration is taking into consideration the UNHCR position and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights guidance document 'Monitoring fundamental rights during screening and the asylum border procedure – A guide on national independent mechanisms.' Work is ongoing in the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration to determine the most suitable model for the independent monitoring mechanism.

2.2.2 Effective access to international protection at the EU External borders

2.2.2.1 How to best ensure timely and effective access to fair and efficient procedure for international protection at the EU external borders, transit zones and the territorial seas.

In accordance with Section 13 of the International Protection Act 2015, where a person arrives at the frontiers of the State and indicates or is identified as being in need of international protection, they are admitted to the international protection process.

In preparation for implementation of the Pact, Ireland will develop a new screening process and create designated screening centre(s) which will enable timely and effective access to fair and efficient procedures for international protection at the external borders, transit zones and the territorial seas. Given that the State could not opt-in to the Screening Regulation, it will be necessary to align national legislation with this as closely as is appropriate.

Screening processes will apply to all those presenting in Ireland who claim international protection. For those arriving at ports or airports, and certain cohorts who are refused leave to land or who claim international protection, initial checks will include: EuroDac,

Schengen Information System checks and verification of identity to the greatest extent possible. Those who are discovered to be illegally residing in Ireland will also undergo preliminary checks and if they wish to apply for international protection, will be transported to a screening centre.

Legal counselling will be provided in the screening centre, and a multi-disciplinary team will be onsite to complete a full screening including:

- EuroDac checks.
- Schengen Information System checks.
- Public Health/Infectious Diseases Screening.
- Vulnerability assessment.
- Security check.
- Family tracing (where possible and appropriate).
- Verification of identity.
- Age verification (in the case of young person presenting as an Unaccompanied Minor (UAM)).

UAMs who are clearly identified as children will be immediately referred to Tusla, Ireland's Child and Family Agency. The relevant Ministers are also exploring the potential to agree a new protocol with Tusla to facilitate a mechanism for age assessments for UAMs, along with increased family tracing capabilities.

The General Scheme of the International Protection Bill 2025 provides for matters relating to the screening of applicants for international protection, including the taking of biometric data, designation of screening centres, the screening process, and preliminary health and vulnerability checks. It will ensure appropriate alignment with the 2024 Screening Regulation and will give effect to provisions of the 2024 Eurodac Regulation.

Ireland intends to amalgamate the vulnerability check envisaged under the Screening Regulation with the special reception needs assessment envisioned under the Reception Conditions Directive into a single multi-agency process in a designated screening centre. During the screening process, all information gathered will be taken into account in order to identify vulnerabilities and the need for special procedural guarantees and to establish family links, before assigning applicants to the most appropriate pathway. Appropriate data sharing will be required in order for different agencies, authorities and organisations to contribute different information as part of the process.

Ireland intends for all screening processes to be completed within seven days and during this time, applicants will be accommodated in designated accommodation in accordance with the provisions of the 2024 Reception Conditions Directive, along with appropriate use of additional restrictive measures set out in that Directive.

Once screening is complete, the applicant will be referred to the appropriate pathway and issued a notice of the interview date and location and transported to an appropriate accommodation centre. In order to support this process strong multi-agency co-

ordination and collaboration will be utilised in the establishment of the new screening centre and screening process to meet processing timeframes and create a human-centric experience.

2.2.2.2 In relation to the need for a continuous and effective implementation of the border procedure set out in Regulations (EU) 2024/1348[15] and (EU) 2024/1349 of the European Parliament and of the Council [16] in the future, describe any relevant measures that will ensure, among other, its correct application at the borders and will preserve the right of asylum. Moreover, consider and describe how to best streamline the asylum and return procedure in case of a rejection of the application for international protection, including at the stage of the judicial review.

The screening process elaborated on above in Section 2.2.2.1 will apply to all those presenting in Ireland who claim international protection including those subject to the border procedure ensuring vulnerabilities are identified, applicants are triaged to the right pathways and their rights are fully respected.

Additionally, it is envisaged that the following processes will be completed as far as possible in dedicated Border Procedure Centres using a multi-agency approach:

- Translation services, helpdesk, psycho-social supports.
- International protection payment and potential to apply for an exceptional needs payment.
- Increased security and monitoring.
- Medical and mental health supports requiring onward referral.
- Services for children.
- Provision of information.
- Legal counselling.

In the case of rejected applications, Ireland could not participate in the Returns Border Procedure and does not participate in the Returns Directive 2008. However, Ireland intends to opt-in to the European Commission proposed Returns Regulation. Currently, Ireland plans to align appropriately with the relevant provisions in domestic legislation and is currently considering the extent to which Irish law will align.

Within the future state process, there are two routes to return: VRs or Enforced Returns. Ireland is already preparing for increased activity in this area by increasing capacity to effectively manage VRs. Ireland has engaged extensively with ICMPD and the Repatriation team of Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration who are processing VRs, to receive return counselling training in 2025, which will enable staff in the Department to directly provide return counselling to those opting for VR.

[15] Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU.
[16] Regulation (EU) 2024/1349 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a return border procedure, and amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1148.

Ireland proposes to exercise flexibility in the case of particularly complex cases such as cases involving families or particular vulnerabilities amongst the individuals concerned. The State also currently has a long-standing agreement with IOM for the provisions of reintegration support and for escorted returns for vulnerable cohorts.

The General Scheme of the International Protection Bill 2025 povides for matters relating to outcomes of the international protection application process, including returns.

Under the current system, all International Protection applicants can register with the Legal Aid Board (LAB) for provision of legal aid. If the appeal is unsuccessful, the applicant may separately seek the assistance of a private practitioner to obtain legal advice about challenging the decision by way of judicial review in the High Court.

Where the judicial review of decisions come before the Courts, there is a requirement to support the Courts to enable robust and timely decision-making. Arising from the implementation of the Pact, consideration is to be given to measures to strengthen the capacity and speed of the Courts to deal with applications for judicial review in the areas of migration, international protection and returns. This includes dedicated arrangements to facilitate the Courts in their role.

As outlined in Section 2.2.1.3, currently, there is no independent fundamental rights monitoring body as envisaged by the Pact operating specifically within the international protection process under current legislation. Building block nine of the Pact introduces new safeguards for asylum applicants. This includes increased monitoring of fundamental rights, by ensuring effective procedures while protecting human dignity and a genuine and effective right to asylum including for the most vulnerable, such as children. The new International Protection Bill 2025 will provide for the establishment of an independent monitoring mechanism as provided for in the 2024 Asylum Procedure Regulation and the 2024 Screening Regulation as outlined in Section 2.2.1.3.

2.3 A fair asylum and integration system

Considering your national context and geographic location and identified current and future challenges, as well as already identified needs, describe the strategic policy objectives ensuring that the asylum management system provides an effective access to the international protection procedure that provides applicants with an adequate standard of living and grants international protection to applicants who are in need, ensuring their adequate integration.

Describe which of the following key elements and measures are relevant for achieving your current and future strategic objectives in this area. In addition, include any other measures that you consider the most relevant for achieving the strategic objectives.

2.3.1 Ensuring timely and effective access to fair and efficient asylum procedures in the territory of a Member State

2.3.1.1 **Your strategic approach to ensure, at administrative and judicial level (courts and tribunals), in full respect of the principle of judicial independence, high quality and consistency of the administrative and judicial decision-making processes in a timely manner in the Member State, including through measures aiming at convergence of asylum decisions and reducing the risk of abuse of the national asylum system.**

To ensure the high quality and consistency of administrative decision making the strategic approach employed will aim to meet the following objectives:

- Ensuring the most efficient asylum processing times are being achieved. Adhering to the recommended processing times for asylum applications under the accelerated process for all applications will require streamlined workflows, adequate staffing, and robust technology.
- Ensuring that data from screening is sufficient to support efficient consideration of cases and mitigate delays in processing cases at a later stage.
- Appropriate access to legal supports.
- The ability to train staff to make fair, transparent and consistent decisions on international protection cases by implementing clear guidelines and processes to achieve a high standard of consideration in advance of reaching decisions.
- Ensuring there is appropriate support for persons with vulnerabilities, such as specialised interviewers (trained to undertake such interviews), trauma-informed care, and appropriate interview spaces to guarantee their rights are protected at all times.
- Implementing a quality assurance system with relevant stakeholders to ensure compliance with regulatory standards.
- Implementing a continuous improvement process based on feedback and periodic reviews.

The second instance decision body in Ireland, currently the International Protection Appeals Tribunal, is based on a quasi-judicial tribunal model. The Programme for Government 2025 commits to replacing the current International Protection Appeals Tribunal with a new, more expeditious appeals system. It is envisaged that the appeals mechanism will shift to a significantly larger number of whole-time appeal officers with additional and possibly 'surge capacity' being provided by persons operating on a part-time basis to handle the caseload.

The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration is also exploring technical solutions to scheduling interviews with multiple actors including applicants, interpreters, legal representatives and immigration officers. This solution will be developed in a manner that ensures that it can also support the appeals process.

Work is underway to analyse how to provide legal information, legal counselling and legal assistance and to meet the requirements of the Pact. As is currently the case with IPAT,

the future appeals body will have full independence to ensure impartiality and strong accountability of decisions made during second instance.

2.3.1.2 Measures aiming at strategic planning, ensuring necessary capacities at administrative and judicial level (courts and tribunals), in full respect of the principle of judicial independence, to correctly comply with the obligations laid down in Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 and (EU) 2024/1347 of the European Parliament and of the Council [17], regarding access to procedure and review of applications for international protection.

The strategic approach to ensuring necessary capacities at administrative and judicial level in complying with Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 and (EU) 2024/1347 will involve the implementation of the following objectives:

- Strong multi-agency co-ordination and collaboration in the establishment of the new screening centre and screening process to meet processing timeframes and create a human-centric experience.
- Appropriate resources for the target caseload across the international protection system end-to-end; in accommodation provision and in health and psychosocial services.
- Robust monitoring of the timelines of progression of all applications in the border procedure pathway to ensure applications are progressed under the required timelines and any challenges are rapidly escalated.
- Recruitment of staff and decision-makers for the future appeal mechanism.
- Increasing the availability of legal support provision.
- Ensuring the most efficient processing times are being achieved.
- Appropriate access to legal supports at all stages of the asylum process.
- The ability to train staff to make fair, transparent and consistent decisions on international protection cases by implementing clear guidelines and processes to aim for a high standard of consideration in advance of reaching decisions.
- Ensuring there is appropriate support for persons with vulnerabilities, such as specialised interviewers (trained to undertake such interviews), trauma-informed care, and appropriate interview spaces to guarantee their rights are protected at all times.
- Implementing a quality assurance system with relevant stakeholders to ensure compliance with regulatory standards.
- Implementing a continuous improvement process based on feedback and periodic reviews.

Second Instance Decisions

[17] Regulation (EU) 2024/1347 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection and for the content of the protection granted, amending Council Directive 2003/109/EC and repealing Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council.

International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT)

The International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) is an appellate body established under the International Protection Act 2015. IPAT provides an effective remedy for applicants for international protection in respect of recommendations of international protection officers. IPAT is a statutorily independent body and exercises a quasi-judicial function.

The Tribunal's current legislative remit is to determine appeals from first instance decisions in respect of:

- International protection
- Inadmissibility of an application for international protection
- Refusal of consent to make a subsequent application for international protection
- Transfer orders under the Dublin III Regulation
- Reception conditions, including labour market access, for applicants in the international protection process.

Refugee Status and Subsidiary Protection

The International Protection Act 2015 provides for applications for international protection (refugee status and subsidiary protection) as well as permission to remain cases to be processed. IPAT has jurisdiction to determine appeals against recommendations to refuse refugee status and/or subsidiary protection. Legal aid is available for these appeals and a time limits of 15 working days generally applies to the process.

Subsequent Appeals

A person who has previously applied for international protection in Ireland is not permitted to make a subsequent application without the consent of the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration. The International Protection Act 2015 allows an International Protection Officer to recommend that the Minister give their consent to the making of a subsequent application where, following a preliminary examination of an application the officer is satisfied that:

- since the determination of the previous application new elements or findings have arisen or been presented by the person which make it significantly more likely that the person will qualify for international protection, and the person was, through no fault of the person, incapable of presenting those elements or findings for the purposes of their previous application, or
- where the previous application was withdrawn or deemed withdrawn, the person was, at the time of the withdrawal or deemed withdrawal, through no fault of the person, incapable of pursuing their previous application.

Where neither of the above conditions is fulfilled, an International Protection Officer shall recommend that a subsequent application for international protection not be allowed. A time limit of 10 working days is provided for to appeal following a recommendation. Legal aid is available to applicants.

Dublin III transfers

If an applicant believes that Ireland is responsible for their claim, they may appeal the decision to transfer them to the other country to IPAT. Appeals must be submitted within

10 working days from the date of the sending of the notification of the transfer decision to the applicant. The appeal will solely focus on deciding which country is responsible for the consideration of the applicant's international protection claim.

The applicant will have an opportunity to put forward their claim for protection at the conclusion of the Dublin III procedure. The appeal before IPAT is a full appeal and the appellant may request an oral hearing. If their appeal is successful, Ireland will consider their claim. If it is not successful, they will be transferred to the responsible EU MS and their claim will be considered there. Legal aid is available for these appeals.

Reception Conditions

The recast Reception Conditions Directive 2013/33/EU, was transposed into domestic law by the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018. The Regulations were since amended in 2021. The Regulations provide for a right of appeal to IPAT. The appeal is against a decision of a Review Officer in the relevant department and the decision of the Review Officer must be submitted to IPAT in order for the appeal to be valid. There is a 10 working day limit for the submission of appeals. While there is provision for an oral hearing, generally these appeals are determined on the basis of the papers before IPAT. A decision must be determined within 15 working days of the acceptance of the appeal.

International Protection Bill 2025

The General Scheme of the new International Protection Bill 2025, published in May 2025, proposes new arrangements where an applicant will receive decisions on their refugee status, subsidiary protection and a remain permission/return order simultaneously, which then also can be appealed simultaneously. The new Second Instance Body will have the power to make decisions itself to grant or refuse refugee status or subsidiary protection and to affirm, overturn or vary return decisions. It is proposed that oral hearings of appeals will be considerably more limited than at present under the International Protection Act 2015. The General Scheme will now go through the legislative process and will be examined by both Houses of the Oireachtas (Parliament). Amendments to the General Scheme can be proposed in both Houses.

Judicial Review

Judicial Review (JR) is a mechanism by which an application can be made to the High Court to challenge the decision making processes of administrative bodies and lower courts. It is a way for the High Court to supervise the lower courts, tribunals (including IPAT) and other administrative bodies to ensure that they make their decisions properly and in accordance with the law. JR is not a further appeal but allows the courts to examine the legality of the decision-making process rather than the merits of the decision itself. At any one time a number of JRs related to decision making in cases related to decisions regarding international protection applications and immigration permissions are before the High Court. It is a strategic aim to improve the JR process to make the system more accessible and efficient to enable robust and timely decision making.

National Integration Strategy

Work is underway to develop a successor strategy to the Migrant Integration Strategy 2017-2020. The new strategy will build on the momentum of its predecessor and address ongoing and emerging needs in supporting and promoting migrant integration in Ireland. The

strategy will serve as the Government's primary policy framework for supporting the integration of all migrants and their Irish-born children. It will feed into a broader Migration and Integration Strategy that will be developed over the coming year.

2.3.2 Procedural safeguards and fundamental rights

2.3.2.1 How the strategic policy approach, accompanied by relevant key measures ensuring respect of fundamental rights and safeguards, including those enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, including procedural safeguards and conditions of detention, is ensured, and monitored with due regard to national, Union and international case law. Take into account specific needs of unaccompanied minors and vulnerable applicants.

Ireland intends to implement fully the new safeguards for asylum applicants envisaged in the Pact. This includes increased monitoring of fundamental rights, by ensuring effective procedures while protecting human dignity and a genuine and effective right to asylum including for the most vulnerable, such as children.

Broadly speaking, these rights, safeguards and guarantees can be summarised as follows:

- **The Establishment of an Independent Monitoring Mechanism**

As outlined in Section 2.2.1.3 Ireland will provide for the establishment of an independent monitoring mechanism, the Chief Inspector of Asylum Border Procedures.

- **Legal Support for applicants.**

Policy analysis is ongoing on how to fulfil Ireland's obligations under the Pact in relation to legal counselling, legal assistance and legal representation for international protection applicants during the international protection application and appeals process.

- **Information Provision to applicants.**

Information provision to applicants will use a digital-first approach, taking into account people with vulnerabilities and the provision of information around special procedural or reception needs.

- **Safeguards for Children.**

Safeguards for Children including:

  - That a representative be appointed for UAMs.

- That child appropriate accommodation is provided for UAMs in line with national law.
- Exclusion from border procedure for UAMs.
- Training standards.
- Prevention of trafficking.
- Approach to age assessment, medical assessments as last resort.
- That the best interests of the child are individually assessed and prioritised at all stages of the procedure.
- Independent mechanism for the monitoring of fundamental rights.
- Detention as a measure of last resort.
- Commitments related to the capacity of services.

The strategic approach to this will include:

- The delivery of a monitoring system that is fully independent and adequately funded.
- Early and ongoing engagement with NGOs, agencies and other organisations working in proximity to fundamental rights areas to ensure the body meets its obligations.
- Communication and engagement with the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights to ensure there is access to best practice methods and training for staff.

2.3.3 A Robust Reception System

2.3.3.1 Your strategic approach to best ensure that the reception system has the capacity to provide access for applicants to adequate reception conditions in accordance with Directive 2024/1346 of the European Parliament and of the Council. [18]

The responsibility for the accommodation (reception) of international protection applicants and provision of related services will lie with an Accommodation Body. The future state model for reception seeks to streamline applicants based on their assigned processing pathway and specific needs, while practically addressing the accommodation challenges faced in the State. Adherence to the new accelerated timelines identified within the Pact is at the core of the model, with co-location of asylum processing and accommodation and enhanced processes identified as key enablers to success. The model identifies different accommodation pathways, with varied potential cohorts identified through the screening phase grouped under these pathways based on their needs. Each of these pathways, along with the screening and returns phases, has further detail provided below.

[18] Directive (EU) 2024/1346 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection.

Screening Centres

The following processes will be completed in the screening centre using a multi-agency approach:

- Reception pathway designations.
- Legal counselling.
- Special Reception Needs Assessment.
- Trafficking and smuggling assessments.
- Preliminary health check and support of acute health needs.
- Registering to avail of state services.
- Provision of information.

While international protection applicants must have an initial screening completed within seven days, some subsequent processes such as the special reception needs assessments will be completed within 30 days. Applicants will be accommodated in a screening centre for a maximum stay of seven days before being allocated accommodation suitable for their pathways. Any processes which are incomplete at this point will continue via the new accommodation.

Border Procedure Centres

The following processes will be completed as far as possible in the Border Procedure Centre using a multi-agency approach:

- Translation services, helpdesk, psycho-social supports.
- International protection payment and potential to apply for an exceptional needs payment.
- Increased security and monitoring.
- Access to community and mental health services.
- Provision of information.
- Legal counselling.

Appropriate arrangements will also be put in place to ensure that children in the border procedure have access to education services.

International protection applicants who receive a negative decision in the Border Procedure will be immediately transported to basic needs centres until their return. If an international protection payment and/or other State entitlements have been provided up to this point, they will cease upon receipt of a negative decision.

Standard Needs Centres

Standard Needs Centres will provide material reception conditions with the following processes completed using a multi-agency approach:

- Access to labour market post six months, only where first instance decision has not been made by the Asylum First Instance Decision Body.

- Integration services (including the signposting of language supports, training and educational opportunities), translation services, helpdesk, psycho-social supports.
- International Protection Payment (including exceptional needs payments).
- Access to community and mental health services.
- Education services (including language supports, vocational training, and further educational opportunities).
- Educational services for Children
- Provision of information.
- Legal counselling.

Standard procedure decisions to first instance are required within six months, with a decision for accelerated cohorts within three months.

Basic Needs Centres

The following processes will be completed in Basic Needs Centres which apply to processes that are to be delivered within three months.

- Translation services, helpdesk.
- Access to community and mental health services.
- Provision of information.
- Legal counselling.

Accommodation Strategy

Ireland is progressing the Comprehensive Accommodation Strategy, which was announced in March 2024. This multi-strand strategy outlines a move away from reliance on private providers, with a scaling up of state-owned accommodation at its core. The strategy is working to develop an accommodation portfolio with 35,000 bed capacity by 2028, including 14,000 State-owned beds.

The goal is to develop a sustainable international protection accommodation system which would enable the State to meet its legal and humanitarian commitments. Accommodation is being sourced and developed through a range of teams, through a multi-strand approach:

- Targeted purchase of medium and larger turnkey properties.
- Use of State land for prefabricated and modular units.
- Conversion of commercial buildings.
- Design and building of new Reception and Integration Centres.
- Upgrading of existing International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) centres.
- Supplemented by commercial providers, but phasing these out as more State services come onstream.

2.3.3.2 Other measures that could facilitate your strategic objectives in this area, such as: measures to ensure a sustainable, resilient and adequate reception system, measures to ensure the monitoring of adequate reception conditions (and basic needs, if applicable), measures to reduce the risk of abuses of the reception system, measures to cater for specific needs of unaccompanied minors and vulnerable persons add measures related to ensure early integration in accordance with Directive 2024/1346 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

Measures to reduce the risk of abuses of the reception system

Enhanced monitoring of presence and alternatives to detention

Ireland has enhanced obligations under the Pact to ensure that applicants, as well as those subject to a Deportation Order, do not abscond. However, detention remains a step to be taken as a matter of last resort under Article 10 of the 2024 Reception Conditions Directive Recast.

The State has agreed to the principle of co-locating services in reception centres with IPAS. The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration will evaluate a number of potential monitoring arrangements and alternatives to detention for application in the border procedure, during screening, and during pre-return or deportation periods.

Improving monitoring mechanism arrangements will be used to ensure that applicants are present in accommodation centres in line with Recital 64 of the Reception Conditions Directive (recast). This includes attendance of international protection applicants being monitored at accommodation centres to provide quick identification of absentees via alerts if an international protection applicant has not been logged within a certain timeframe. The type of monitoring system to be employed is being explored.

Alternatives to detention will be considered for those in the international protection system, as well as those subject to a return decision, following an individual assessment to ascertain whether a legal ground for detention exists in respect of the person in question. In respect of applicants without a return decision, the alternatives identified for use will be in line with Article 10(5) of the Reception Conditions Directive and laid down in national law. The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration is currently evaluating the feasibility of using technological alternatives to detention, for example, through enabling online check-ins which capture the geographic location of a person. The following measures are under consideration:

- International protection applicants being subject to regular reporting requirements.
- Those subject to return decisions being required to report more frequently to an immigration officer or member of An Garda Síochána (the Irish police force) potentially through the use of technology.
- Applicants or those subject to return decisions being required to remain in a certain geographic area within Ireland based on Article 8 of the Reception Conditions Directive.

- International protection applicants in the border procedure granted off-site access to services under limited circumstances.
- Travel or ID documents may be seized and held.
- IPAS is also developing a technical solution for a new bed management system that will interface with the asylum system's new case management system, allowing a full view of applications at all times. This may be complemented by measures to monitor presence at Reception Centres as provided for in Recital 17 of the Reception Conditions Directive (recast).

Under current legislation, the detention of international protection applicants and those subject to Deportation Orders is subject to strict conditions. Post-June 2026, with the implementation of the Pact measures, Ireland intends to continue this practice, limiting the use of detention to those considered a threat to national security as well as short as possible periods of detention directly before a return decision is enforced.

2.3.4 Creating conditions for a successful and early integration

2.3.4.1 Your strategic approach to ensure successful integration of beneficiaries of international protection and beneficiaries of other national protection schemes, including the respect of the rights under Regulation (EU) 2024/1347 (education, including language courses, employment, healthcare, housing, social and social assistance).

Ireland has not opted-in to Council Directive 2003/109/EC of 25 November 2003 concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents. The State is reviewing the national regulatory frameworks, including the Qualification Regulations, and will introduce new legislation as appropriate.

National Integration Strategy

Work is underway to develop a successor strategy to the Migrant Integration Strategy 2017-2020. The new strategy will build on the momentum of its predecessor and address ongoing and emerging needs in supporting and promoting migrant integration in Ireland. The strategy will serve as the Government's primary policy framework for supporting the integration of all migrants and their Irish-born children. It will feed into a broader Migration and Integration Strategy that will be developed over the coming year.

Integration Measures

Beneficiaries of international protection are subject to the same benefits applicable to Irish citizens regarding access to social assistance, medical care and social welfare benefits including access to jobseeker's allowance, disability allowance, single-parent family payment and child benefit.

Participation in integration programmes is not a prerequisite. Training, language courses and other supports are available to those residing in IPAS accommodation. For example, the State's 16 Education and Training Boards (ETB) offer free English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses to help learners achieve functional language proficiency, fostering social cohesion and creating pathways to education, training, pre-vocational opportunities and work.

In the case of the IRPP, local authorities (LAs) are issued grants to assist with integration for the period of the resettlement programme in that specific area.

Local Authority Integration Teams

Ireland, in collaboration with LAs, established permanent Local Authority integration Teams (LAIT) in each local authority to co-ordinate the provision of supports to international protection applicants, people with status, programme refugees and beneficiaries of temporary protection. The LAITs provide ongoing integration supports, information, advice, and guidance with the overarching aim to empower individuals to ultimately live independently in the community. These integration supports are provided free of charge. Ireland will consider how to signpost beneficiaries of international protection to access these integration measures in a timely manner. Consideration will also be given to further cooperation arrangements, partnerships and service agreements with social and economic partners, local and regional authorities, international and civil society organisations, and migrant-led organisations.

International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS)

IPAS is responsible for the provision of accommodation and related services to people in the international protection process. While an application is being examined by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, IPAS offers accommodation and related services to international protection applicants who wish to accept the offer of accommodation from Ireland. This includes all meals and utilities. A weekly personal allowance is paid to each person by the Department of Social Protection (currently at €38.80 for adults and €29.80 for children).

Healthcare

International protection applicants are entitled to free healthcare if they pass a means assessment. Beneficiaries of international protection are currently entitled to the same medical care as Irish nationals.

Education

Beneficiaries of international protection have the right to access education and training in a similar manner to nationals. Adult beneficiaries can access the general education system, further training or retraining, under the same conditions as nationals.

<u>Recognition Procedures (Qualification)</u>

The State's National Academic Recognition Information Centre and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) operate within the broad parameters of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The Government expects any recognition bodies to take all feasible and reasonable steps within the framework to develop procedures designed to assess fairly and expeditiously whether refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation fulfil the relevant requirements for access to higher education, to further higher education programmes or to employment activities, even in cases in which the qualifications obtained cannot be proven through documentary evidence.

Providers of education and training, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, and employers make recognition decisions. QQI advises individuals seeking to have their qualifications recognised through a self-service system of comparability statements which can be used when they go to bodies who make such decisions. Further consideration will be given to tooling to support this, i.e. EU Skills profile tool for third country nationals.

DFHERIS supports the bodies which make recognition decisions through awareness raising, and explanation, of their responsibilities under the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its subsidiarity texts, which include, in the case of refugees, the Recommendation on Recognition of Qualifications held by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-like Situation.

Recipients of international protection have access to the Student Grant Scheme in the same way as any other eligible student (including eligible Irish students). A grant may be refused to any student who fits the definition of student on the grounds of not meeting some other eligibility criteria under the Scheme. The Act does not refuse a grant solely on the basis of the person being an International Protection recipient.

Employment

Ireland's legislation on labour market access for international protection applicants will be updated to the extent necessary to ensure that it properly transposes the labour market access provisions of the 2024 Reception Conditions Directive. The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration is designing a digital Labour Market Access process as part of the Change, Technology and Innovation work stream to drive efficiency.

2.4 Preparedness and contingency planning

Consider how, in relation to the current and future identified challenges, as well as identified, needs, contingency planning and preparedness for crises are embedded in the strategic approach to asylum and migration.

Consider and describe key elements and measures that are relevant for achieving your current and future strategic objectives in this area. Consider that Regulation (EU)2024/1351

and (EU) 2024/1359 of the European Parliament and of the Council [19] stipulate that the elements listed below are to be covered in the strategy. In addition, include any other measures that you consider the most relevant for achieving the strategic objectives.

2.4.1 How to best ensure that the obligations in Regulation (EU) 2024/1359, Regulation (EU) 2019/1896, Directive (EU) 2024/1346 and Regulation (EU) 2021/23022303 of the European Parliament and of the Council are taken into account and reflected when implementing of the national strategy.

The objective of the National Contingency Plan is to ensure that Ireland's asylum and reception systems are resilient and responsive to sudden surges or crisis situations. In alignment with the Pact, particularly the recast Reception Conditions Directive, the plan sets out to:

- Guarantee dignified and timely reception for all applicants, including unaccompanied minors (UAMs).
- Prevent service disruption during periods of disproportionate pressure.
- Establish a coordinated national response with clear roles and rapid scaling of capacity.

The plan's scope is comprehensive, encompassing reception, asylum processing and specialised care for unaccompanied children. It ensures a focus on safeguarding human rights, maintaining continuity of services and efficiencies in processes, ensuring effective resource mobilisation, and fostering coordinated, transparent communication among all involved parties. This plan details:

- Reception conditions (including alternative and emergency measures).
- Asylum processing (ensuring continued access and fair procedures).
- UAM processing and care (with emphasis on safeguarding vulnerable children).

2.4.2 How to achieve, on a strategic level, and based on continuous analysis of emerging challenges and possible future risks, the relevance of your contingency plans on asylum and migration, while also ensuring the obligations laid down in Directive (EU) 2024/1346 of the European Parliament and of the Council are met. Moreover, consider how to ensure that the national strategy is consistent with and strategically complements other relevant national contingency and preparedness strategies, such as in the area of security.

[19] Regulation (EU) 2024/1359 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 addressing situations of crisis and *force majeure* in the field of migration and asylum and amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1147 (OJ L, 2024/1359, 22.5.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1359/oj).

The National Contingency Plan takes into consideration other national plans and strategies, the table below illustrates the plans that are relevant to the contingency plan on asylum which covers the areas of reception, asylum and unaccompanied minors.

Other relevant strategies are outlined in the below table.

Title of the plan	Scope	Institution responsible for the plan
Comprehensive Accommodation Strategy for International Protection Applicants	Covering an approach to deliver 35,000 bed capacity under the international protection system by 2028, including 14,000 State - owned beds through use of State land for prefabricated and modular units; conversion of commercial buildings; targeted purchase of medium and larger turnkey properties; design and building of new centres and upgrading of centres.	Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration
Strategic Emergency Management Framework	Includes emergencies abroad with the result of mass inward population displacement.	Department of Defence; Office of Emergency Planning
Health Protection Strategy 2022-2027	Addresses inequities in health service provision for certain population groups including migrants. The Health Protection Surveillance Centre monitors infectious disease for migrants through the publication of a Migrant Toolkit.	Health Service Executive; Department of Health
National Development Plan 2021-2030	Calls for a significant increase in digital services in the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration's immigration service delivery.	Government of Ireland

The below table outlines the scope and specific objectives covered by Ireland's National Contingency Plan template.

Areas covered by the Plan	Specific Objectives	Other existing plans
Reception conditions	Ensure adequate and dignified reception conditions, maintain a basic standard of material reception conditions for all applicants, (as defined under the International Protection Act and Reception Conditions Directive). Ensure clear roles and responsibilities are outlined for all designated stakeholders. Ensure alternative material reception conditions are defined.	Comprehensive Accommodation Strategy for International Protection Applicants; National Implementation Plan for EU Pact on Migration and Asylum
Asylum Procedures	Use an Early Warning and Preparedness System to monitor end-to-end asylum processing indicators, consistently clear backlog issues (first-instance, second-instance) in order to ensure the system can withstand significant increases in situations of crisis. Ensure data from national sources and EUAA dashboards is used to strengthen the monitoring and reporting mechanism to alert responsible authorities to significant surges. Ensure response plans put in place for surge capacity and ensure applicants can	National Implementation Plan for EU Pact on Migration and Asylum

	lodge claims without delay, even during significant surges. Prevent procedural delays while upholding legal safeguards. Ensure adequate staffing and training to be responsive to indications identified in early warning systems.	
UAM processing and accommodation	Strengthen safeguards for vulnerable applicants. Protect vulnerable groups throughout the end-to-end process. Ensure the Child and Family Agency (Tusla), has plans in place to scale up its capacity.	New IPO & Tusla protocol for handling UAMs; International Protection Bill
Enhance EU and Interagency Coordination	Collaborate closely with EUAA and the European Commission. Use and leverage EU solidarity mechanisms and effectively use EU funding to manage asylum processes.	

2.4.3 How to make use of reports issued by the Commission within the framework of the Migration Preparedness and Crisis Blueprint,[20] so that they support your contingency planning needs.

The Migration Preparedness and Crisis Blueprint ('Blueprint') is a mechanism established by the European Commission to support the EU's emergency and crisis response. It aims to improve monitoring and to better anticipate migration movements. The Blueprint is complementary to other EU crisis management mechanisms (including the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and the Integrated Political Crisis Response) and is managed by Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG Home).

[20] Commission Recommendation (EU) 2020/1366 of 23 September 2020 on an EU mechanism for preparedness and management of crises related to migration.

Ireland is represented in the Blueprint network subgroup which facilitates sharing of knowledge and expertise by European partners such as EUAA, Frontex, other EU MS on the drafting of the National Contingency Plan. The information shared, guidance provided and examples of preparedness measures presented in the network subgroup equipped Ireland's representatives with the knowledge and tools to build the National Contingency Plan. It is a useful platform to showcase examples of scenarios and preparedness measures as well as governance structures put together for the strengthening of contingency planning.

The reports issued by the network are built into the monitoring and reporting mechanism which serve as part of the indicators to assist Ireland in building appropriate thresholds and in turn determining the activation as well as escalation and de-escalation mechanism.

2.4.4 How to ensure that your national system is equipped with necessary measures to prepare for, respond to and resolve exceptional situations of mass arrivals of third country nationals or stateless persons in your Member State by land, air or sea, including of persons that have been disembarked, where relevant. Including through measures to protect the fundamental rights of applicants and beneficiaries of international protection and of other forms of protection.

The European Communities (International Protection Procedures) Regulations 2022 (S.I. No. 541 of 2022) amended the International Protection Act 2015 to enable acceleration and prioritisation of international protection applications to respond to increased numbers of applicants from specific countries.

In July 2024, Ireland announced that the IPO will be prioritising and accelerating the processing of international protection applicants from countries with the highest number of international protection applications in Ireland over the previous three months. Under this accelerated process, first instance decisions will be made within 90 days. The two countries with the highest application numbers will be assessed on a rolling basis every quarter.

This is in addition the accelerated processing for countries on the safe country list introduced in November 2022. Under the International Protection Act 2015, the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration can declare that a country is a safe country of origin. This means that the Minister has declared that there is generally no persecution, no torture or inhuman or degrading treatment, or no threat of violence from an armed conflict in that country. While people from safe countries are still entitled to apply for international protection and have their application considered thoroughly, they will have to submit grounds that the country is not safe in terms of their personal circumstances. Under this accelerated decision-making process applicants from safe countries are currently receiving first decisions in less than 90 days.

In relation to Statelessness, claims can arise at any point in the immigration and protection processes and the numbers involved are very low. The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration deals with such cases without recourse to a determination of

their statelessness status - applications for immigration permission or naturalisation are determined through the procedures set out under the Immigration Acts, the International Protection Act 2015 or the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended.

Where an international protection applicant claims to be Stateless, the international protection officer makes every effort to determine if the relevant applicant is entitled to a particular nationality, including in their country of former habitual residence. Where this is not possible, the applicant's case is processed based on the working assumption that the applicant is Stateless and their nationality record will represent them as such, solely for the purposes of the international protection determination process.

Independent Monitoring Mechanism (Chief Inspector of Asylum Border Procedures)

Ireland is currently undertaking the establishment of an Independent Monitoring Mechanism as provided for under the Screening Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2024/1356) and the Asylum Procedures Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2024/1348). To align it with other Ombudsman and oversight organisations in Ireland, the General Scheme of the new International Protection Bill identifies a single figure to head this: the Chief Inspector of Asylum Border Procedures. This has been done to enhance independence and accountability. While the establishment of an Independent Monitoring Mechanism is predominantly related to the provisions of the Screening Regulation it should be noted that Ireland cannot opt-in to this measure due to it being a Schengen measure. However, it is the intention to align with it in our national law as closely as is appropriate, in order to ensure harmonisation with other Member States to the greatest extent possible.

The powers of the Chief Inspector shall, in the course of carrying out his or her functions in relation to the inspection or investigation of designated asylum border facilities, include visiting rights and access to information and persons. The Chief Inspector is also to have access to records held in designated asylum border facilities. The Chief Inspector shall also have the opportunity to have private interviews with applicants.

The General Scheme of the new Internation Protection Bill prescribes that the Chief Inspector of Asylum Border Procedures may make regular inspections of all designated asylum border facilities in the State, as is required by the Pact. The General Scheme also provides for a complaints system, in line with guidance received from the UNHCR and EUAA. An applicant, or their legal representative may make a complaint to the Chief Inspector which would be followed up by a preliminary investigation to determine if the complaint is admissible or not.

If a potential breach of fundamental rights has been identified in the inspection or following the preliminary investigation of a complaint the Chief Inspector may pursue a formal investigation at his or her own discretion. The Chief Inspector may be accompanied by any staff as required to carry out functions.

The new International Protection Bill includes a legal mechanism to enable Ireland to seek activation of the 2024 Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation (CFMR). In the case of an exceptional situation of mass arrivals of third-country nationals or stateless persons or a

situation of instrumentalisation, a reasoned request as defined in Regulation 2(2) of CFMR to be submitted to the Commission will be placed before the Houses of the Oireachtas (Parliament).

2.4.5 How to ensure that your national system is equipped with necessary measures providing for overall readiness to prepare for, respond to and resolve situations of instrumentalisation in the field of migration and asylum, where a third country or a hostile non-state actor encourages or facilitates the movement of third-country nationals or stateless persons to the external borders or to your Member State, with the aim of destabilising the Union or a Member State, and where such actions are liable to put at risk essential functions of a Member State, including measures to protect the fundamental rights of applicants and beneficiaries of international protection and other forms of protection.

The Data Analytics Unit within the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration is tasked with monitoring data on a regular basis to identify any surges through the development of reporting mechanisms that examine application numbers and provides forecast estimates. This is done through dashboards available to the relevant policy and operational colleagues and subsequently operational teams with access to the data and feedback from the Data Analytics Unit on changes in migratory trends, which can be reported and escalated through the coordination mechanism. In the case of the breaching of thresholds, this can be immediately reported to the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration's Management Board and onwards to the Senior Officials Group supporting the Cabinet Committee on Justice, Migration and Social Affairs (see Section 2.5.1).

The Co-ordination Unit within the IPO currently sends a weekly report detailing applications received to the EUAA based on a weekly Data Analytics Unit report which is cross checked against local databases. The weekly report contains applicant nationality and number of applications received.

Other indicators include ongoing briefings from EU MS+; European Migration Network reports; EUAA published statistics and briefings prepared within Government. Horizon scanning and engagement with embassies and diplomatic missions abroad through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will also be utilised to anticipate surges.

The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration will use and employ data published or actively seek to gather and analyse information collected at EU level:

- Quarterly forecasting – all routes.
- Annual forecasting – multiannual monitoring cycle conducted by EUAA.
- Scenario modelling for specific situations – Middle East, Ukraine.
- Preparedness measures overview utilising the Solidarity Platform.

The data reporting mechanism put in place by Ireland serves to identify key trends and monitor arrivals of TCNs through regular border crossings, and regularly notify the

relevant business areas involved in the asylum and migration space if a surge of irregular arrivals of TCNs suddenly increase at the borders. The linkage with other Government Departments, such as the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as well as collaboration with the EU and access to EUAA and Eurostat also equip the national authories with the relevant datasets to ensure a national response can be put in place to increase readiness to face situations of instrumentalisation in the area of asylum and migration. The National Contingency Plan of Ireland will establish close links with other national strategic plans to form a cohesive response at a national level in situations of crisis and *force majeure.*

2.4.6 How to ensure that your national system is equipped with necessary measures to prepare for, respond to and resolve situations of *force majeure*, including measures to protect the rights of applicants and beneficiaries of international protection and other forms of protection.

The below table illustrates the specific preparedness measures and mechanisms Ireland intends to put in place to ensure that the State is prepared for situations of uncertainty and will be equipped with the responsive measures in situations of crisis and *force majeure*.

Responsible Area	Specific Preparedness Measures and Mechanisms
Overarching Principles	Regular monitoring via an Early Warning and Preparedness System with clear, pre-defined thresholds. Pre-agreed surge capacity mechanisms for housing, staffing and processing. Rapid procurement protocols for emergency resources. Established coordination channels among national, local/regional, and EU-level agencies. Periodic simulation exercises to test the scalability of the response.
Reception Actions	In line with the amended version of the Comprehensive Accommodation Strategy for international protection applicants, approved by the Government of Ireland on 27 March 2024, the multi-strand plan outlines a move away from reliance on private providers, with a scaling up of State-owned accommodation. The strategy is designed to develop an accommodation portfolio with 35,000 bed capacity by 2028, split out as follows: 13,000 (permanent IPAS accommodation – State owned), 1,000 (in-community accommodation – State owned, 11,000 (contingency accommodation – commercial) and 10,000 (emergency accommodation – commercial). There are currently approximately 230 staff working in the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) and wider reception and integration area (covering a range of areas including procurement – contractual and public, estate management,

	resettlement, integration, strategy and research), in addition to staff recruited by individual contractors in accommodation centres. Appropriate staff levels will be maintained to ensure adequate delivery of day-to-day reception services in line with obligations under the Pact and, in parallel, delivery of the Comprehensive Accommodation Strategy. Define alternative material reception conditions (e.g. tents, modular units, repurposed buildings, increased Daily Expense Allowance, day services, in-kind delivery of some aspects of material reception conditions); Speedy negotiation and procurement of services from named stakeholders; ensure access to healthcare (including mental health services) via HSE partnerships. Consideration of referral pathways for certain cohorts. Disproportionate pressure would be considered to be a situation where the number of applicants requesting material reception conditions in the form of accommodation is greater than the number of available beds in regular accommodation. As the number of beds begins to become exhausted the reception authority will seek to utilise emergency tented alternative accommodation for temporary use, e.g. tented accommodation for certain cohorts of applicants, relevant stakeholders will be contacted to request buildings, tents, and sites that would be available for temporary accommodation. If bed capacity is fully reached, alternative material reception conditions may also be provided to those who are not immediately accommodated. This could include e.g. an increased Daily Expense Allowance payment, a vulnerability 'triage" and day services provided by third parties, with access to e.g. facilities including hot showers, meals and laundry services
Asylum Actions	***Recruitment***: Put in place a recruitment plan to allow the first-instance and second-instance decision-making bodies to scale up on human resources quickly and redeploy staff members when and where in need. It is important to note that this is already an ongoing operation put in place to address caseload increases over the past year as Ireland faced significant pressure on its system, hence the determining authority is performing ongoing reviews to identify gaps and address capacity and capability issues as they arise.

	Training and updating of standard operating procedures: regular training provided to staff on all aspects of asylum processing to enable rapid redeployment. ***Contingency training:*** A suite of training packages designed to respond to emergency situations such as how to identify a disproportionate and crisis situation, information channels and notification pathways for stakeholders, how to activate quickly and which response plans to prioritise. ***Resource Mobilisation:*** Pre-agreed procurement processes for services such as interpretation/cultural mediation/vulnerability assessments and additional part-time contractors to undertake interviews and recommend case decisions in surge situations. ***Coordination:*** communication pathways and decision-making protocols agreed to ensure rapid responses for emergency situations. Ensure response measures are communicated promptly to all stakeholders. **Reporting**: use real-time reporting and regular briefings to keep up to date with indicators and ensure timely identification of thresholds breach, and adjust any response measures dynamically.
UAM actions	Tusla (Irish Child and Family Agency) to design and implement a new representative model whereby the International Protection process for UAMs is outsourced. Build pre-defined protocols for scaling up capacity and ensuring representative model is tested and trialled, any issues addressed and refined to ensure it is fit for purpose. Strengthened links with relevant authorities, in particular to ensure swift identification and support for vulnerable children.

2.5 Delivering on the integrated approach - measures to implement the principle of integrated policymaking

Consider how the implementation of the principle of integrated policy making on the basis of a comprehensive approach to the asylum and migration management policies is ensured and further developed on a strategical level, including the consistency between the internal and

external components of those policies and the necessity for close inter-institutional collaboration at national level.

Consider and describe which of the following key elements and measures are relevant for achieving your current and future strategic objectives in this area. In addition, include any other measures that you consider the most relevant for achieving the strategic objectives.

2.5.1 How to best set up institutional arrangements for migration and asylum governance based on the comprehensive approach to migration and asylum management at the national level, including coordination structures between various government departments (relevant ministries and agencies) to deliver on the internal and external components of the comprehensive approach to migration and asylum and their mutual coherence.

Existing coordination structures are being utilised including the Cabinet Committee on Justice, Migration and Social Affairs and the cross-government Strategic Migration Policy Group. Additionally, the independent monitoring mechanism (the Chief Inspector of Asylum Border Procedures) will be established under the new International Protection Bill to ensure protection of applicant rights during the screening process and the application of the border procedure and will be in communication with the departments and agencies involved.

<u>Cabinet Committee on Justice, Migration and Social Affairs</u>

Under the Government formed in January 2025, a new cabinet committee on Justice, Migration and Social Affairs was established to replace the previous Cabinet Committee on Migration, Integration and Ukraine. This Cabinet Committee provides overall oversight of migration policy and is chaired by the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) and consists of the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration and other relevant Cabinet Ministers. It is supported by a Senior Officials Group which meets beforehand to agree agendas and papers.

<u>Strategic Migration Policy Group</u>

A cross-government Strategic Migration Policy Group (SMPG) at Assistant Secretary level has been established with the aim of developing a strategic approach to migration policy and its implications across Government. Reporting to relevant Secretaries General, the SMPG aims to develop a whole-of-government approach to migration management and related policy issues that is coherent across departments and responsive in seeking to address Ireland's current and future demographic, economic and social policy needs. It will particularly oversee the development of a Migration and Integration Strategy as a commitment of the Programme for Government 2025. The SPMG met for the first time in January 2025 and meets on an approximately monthly basis.

<u>Unit for Future Planning</u>

As a commitment of the Programme for Government 2025, a new Unit for Future Planning will be established to forecast demographic changes and ensure accurate estimates of the demand for essential services and employment.

International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)

Ireland became a member of the ICMPD in July 2024. The ICMPD is an international organisation headquartered in Vienna with the purpose of promoting innovative, comprehensive and sustainable migration policies and to function as a service exchange mechanism for governments and organisations in the wider European region. This move strengthens Ireland's multilateral presence in European and international migration discussions. This is viewed as a strategic step to enhance Ireland's role in international migration policy.

Engagement at EU level

Ireland actively participates in and engages with EU work in the sphere of migration, including attendance at EU meetings, strategic, policy, technical and operational, including Council working groups, Commission expert and contact groups etc. Ireland endeavours to positively contribute to policy discussions as well the exchange of best practice. Ireland is eager to consider, and implement as appropriate, lessons learned from other Member States, as well as to share Irish experience. Ireland fully participates in EUAA quality activities and the development of the EUAA Monitoring Mechanism, including through participation in the EUAA Monitoring Network.

Ireland is also an active member of the General Directors of Immigration Services Conference (GDISC) and the Inter-Governmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC) and regularly participates in its discussions to share best practice and learning with other member states.

Ireland is also a member of the European Migration Network (EMN), working with other MS to provide objective, comparable policy-relevant information and knowledge on emerging issues relating to asylum and migration in Europe. EMN Ireland is the Irish National Contact Point of the European Migration Network and is part of the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.

Moreover, at competent authority level, relevant Departments will continue to build on the existing governance structure successfully established to oversee the drafting of Ireland's National Implementation Plan for the Pact, and ensure all aspects of the plan are monitored and reviewed. The roles and responsibilities for different processes and different agencies will be clearly laid out in agreed structures to ensure when the plan is activated, there is a lead agency for each area requiring attention. The Terms of Reference will define how information should be shared and what type of information is to be communicated regularly, such as a monthly report on influx stats, processing numbers and reception capacities, how many UAMs are currently in the system etc.

2.5.2 How to ensure effective arrangements aiming at efficient coordination and cooperation between the government and the judiciary (courts and tribunals), in full respect of the principle of judicial independence, and between different State levels (national, regional, local), as appropriate and in accordance with national law.

Judicial Resources

Judicial Planning Working Group

It is a priority for the Government of Ireland to ensure that the courts are resourced to administer justice efficiently and effectively. The Government endeavours to fill judicial vacancies at the earliest opportunity. In accordance with Articles 13.9 and 35.1 of the Constitution, judicial appointments are made by the President of Ireland, acting on the advice of the Government, and following the process set out in legislation.

A Judicial Planning Working Group was established in April 2021 to consider the number of and type of judges required to ensure the efficient administration of justice over the next five years. The final report of the Judicial Planning Working Group was published in 2023 and recommended the recruitment of additional judges over the next five years to reduce excessive waiting times across the courts and ensure timely access to justice. It recommended the appointment of 44 additional judges in two phases as well as a range of other measures aimed at increasing the efficient use of judicial and court resources. A first phase of 24 additional judges was approved by Government and appointed throughout 2023.

Following the completion of an assessment on the impact of the judges appointed in Phase 1 and progress made in other areas of the report's implementation, the Government agreed another increase of 20 judges in the Court of Appeal, High, Circuit and District Courts in October 2024. The new Programme for Government 2025 contains a commitment to put these 20 extra judges (6 District Court, 6 Circuit Court, 6 High Court and 2 Court of Appeal) in place within 12 months. The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration is currently considering the drafting of necessary legislative amendments to provide for the increase in judges.

The Working Group's Report also contained a recommendation to establish a formal judicial resource planning model in the medium term, to assess judicial resource requirements and related supports going forward. Work has commenced in the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, the Courts Service and the Judiciary to develop such a model.

Judicial Appointments Commission

On 1 January 2025, the Judicial Appointments Commission Act 2023 came into operation in its entirety. The Act establishes a new, independent Judicial Appointments Commission to select and recommend persons for all judicial offices in Ireland and in the EU and international courts. This Act provides for the biggest reform in the way judges are chosen for appointment in a quarter of a century including a requirement that all candidates be

interviewed and will be required to show they have undertaken judicial training or continuous professional development. The Judicial Appointments Commission is currently running competitions to fill the vacancies in the District, Circuit and High Court. The Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration has also recently written to the Commission requesting them to run a competition for a list of suitable candidates to fill one anticipated vacancy in the Court of Appeal.

Courts Service Modernisation

The Courts Service is progressing an ambitious 10-year modernisation programme commenced in 2020 to deliver digitally enabled services designed around the user. The programme is currently in the third of its four implementation phases, with the fourth phase scheduled to commence in 2026. A key highlight of the modernisation programme is the continued roll-out of video-link and technologically enabled courtrooms. The Courts Service has continued the expansion of technologically-enabled courtrooms, providing remote courts and digital evidence display functionality. Video technology is now available in 165 courtrooms, increased from 46 at the start of 2020. The use of video enabled courtrooms continues to deliver benefits across the Irish Justice Sector, including for the Irish Prison Service, An Garda Síochána (Irish Police Force), as well as for litigants and witnesses before the courts.

Another key highlight is the introduction of a Unified Case Management System (UCMS.) The Courts Service is currently conducting a major modernisation and consolidation initiative for digital case management systems. This is replacing over 150 individual legacy case management systems into a unified one. Once in place the UCMS will support the introduction of a portal allowing court users to file, pay and track cases online. A judicial view of the UCMS is being developed for judges to enable them to view case documentation, filings, etc. This will also support improved data sharing between justice sector bodies to increase efficiencies across the sector, particularly in the area of criminal justice.

Additional highlights include:

- The development of 360-degree tours of four of Court buildings, allowing people to navigate and understand the environment before coming to court.
- The use of virtual reality headsets to help witnesses and vulnerable users prepare for the court experience in advance.
- Providing plain language information on the Courts Service website about the Court System. Information currently updated includes domestic violence, family law topics, debt, repossessions, assisted decision making, probate, small claims and jury service. People are also signposted to relevant support services. A significant upgrade to the courts website (courts.ie) to improve content and accessibility will continue during 2025.
- New accessible plain language forms for making an application to the District Court in relation to domestic violence, maintenance and arrangements for children (guardianship, access and custody). The forms have been designed,

iterated and tested with a wide range of stakeholders including the judiciary, advocacy and NGO groups, legal practitioners and members of the public.

International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT)

IPAT is a statutorily independent body and exercises a quasi-judicial function. Between 2022 an 2024 IPAT has doubled its resources to facilitate the processing of appeals. A gap analysis was conducted into the current IPAT system to identify what capacity gaps needed to be addressed to meet the requirements for an effective remedy and appeals process under the Pact.

The General Scheme of the new International Protection Bill 2025, published in May 2025, proposes new arrangements where an applicant will receive decisions on their refugee status, subsidiary protection and a return order simultaneously, which then also can be appealed simultaneously. The new Second Instance Body will have the power to make decisions itself to grant or refuse refugee status or subsidiary protection and to affirm, overturn or vary return decisions. The General Scheme will now go through the legislative process and will be examined by both Houses of the Oireachtas (Parliament).

Judicial Review

As noted in Section 2.3.1.2 it is a strategic aim to improve the JR process to make the system more accessible and efficient to enable robust and timely decision making.

In the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, the Legal Services Support Unit (LSSU), within the Immigration Service Delivery (ISD) function, currently coordinates and manages all immigration and asylum litigation on behalf of the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Mirgration. ISD is a highly litigated area of public service delivery, making up a significant proportion of overall litigation against the State. This is in the context of several hundred thousand immigration and asylum applications being processed each year, where decisions on these applications have a significant impact, whether positively or negatively on applicants and their families.

The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration has invested significantly in legal expertise to support units and provide advisory services to ISD units and the IPO. The primary focus is on implementing a dedicated legal team-led training programme to equip case workers to make decisions that are more legally robust, taking into account jurisprudence, the intersection of national and international legal frameworks and the complexity of developing well-reasoned case specific rights considerations. LSSU also acts as an interface between the Chief State Solicitors Office and the responsible line area unit of ISD, including the IPO and IPAT, and ensures that all litigation is dealt with efficiently and requests related to court proceeding such as documents/information are expedited. This is important to ensure efficient case management and to ensure the Minister's good standing in the superior courts. The circulation of regular court judgment summary updates highlighting key learnings and developments to managers and case workers is a core focus. A key objective is the provision of enhanced information and status updates to applicants awaiting a decision, to reduce the need to take judicial review mandamus proceedings. In addition, under the ISD Modernisation Programme (see Section 2.6.2), we are developing systems that will enable service users to self-check the status of their

applications and receive meaningful information. The new systems will also enable ISD to improve efficiency and speed up decision-making.

2.5.3 How other stakeholders, including international and non-governmental organisations, economic and social partners and migration organisations can be meaningfully involved.

Relationships with specific NGOs involved in the International Protection process (e.g. IOM, UNHCR) are being strengthened prior to the Pact's implementation and partners are being involved in process mapping and training where appropriate. These organisations are strategic partners who feed into strategic planning, act as a knowledge base, and are kept informed of developments and decisions as appropriate.

For example, the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration held a forum with approximately 60 representatives from the NGO community in September 2024, with a focus on the delivery of fundamental rights and safeguarding measures under the new process and the potential partnerships that might be formed with NGO and other partners. Another forum was held in March 2025 and provided the NGO community with an overview of the key changes outlined in Ireland's National Implementation Plan.

An existing structure is in place for engagement with NGOs. A forum, named the NGO Forum, is held bimonthly by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration on a range of immigration topics. Invitations are extended to a wide range of NGO bodies who deal with immigration matters and immigrants from various communities. These include the Irish Refugee Council, Citizens Information Board, Oxfam, Legal Aid Board, UNHCR and many more local migrant services around the country.

The aim of the NGO Forum is to distribute information and explain upcoming changes to the Department's policies and procedures to the NGO groups, which in turn allows them to relay the information to migrants who are availing of their services. The forums also give NGOs a place to raise any queries or issues they have with existing Department services or sections and to speak to senior management on a range of different topics.

In 2024, NGO Forums were run on the following topics:

- The EU Migration & Asylum Pact.
- International Protection Office processing & modernisation.
- Registration Office Update.
- Repatriation Unit & Voluntary Return Programme.
- Citizenship Unit update on processes & new Digital Contact Centre.
- Family Reunification Policy.

This forum provides an opportunity for stakeholders to engage with matters relating to migration policy, in addition to enabling the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration to provide accurate and up to date information on relevant developments.

NGOs have the opportunity to provide feedback on legislation during the pre-legislative scrutiny process before a report by the relevant Oireachtas (Parliament) Committee is published. This process occurs prior to the formal parliamentary debates on proposed legislation and amendments to proposed legislation can be put forward based on recommendations made by the Committee and submissions received by NGOs.

Many NGOs obtain government funding to provide services on behalf of the Irish Government. In doing so, NGOs are integrating their work and objectives with the strategic direction of Government. Coordination of outputs between Departments and NGOs and evaluation of services provided ensures that consistency between policy and output is achieved. This approach will continue to be used to ensure an aligned approach between services provided by NGOs and Government priorities.

2.5.4 How the overall cooperation with other Member States is ensured (including exchange of information required under Union law) and how the consistency with the actions by other Member States and Union institutions is ensured.

Overall cooperation with other MS is ensured via active participation in EU-level meetings, and continued engagement with the EUAA, ICMPD, Frontex, IOM, and the EMN in addition to government counterparts in other EU MS on migration policy principles and best practice. Projects to ensure full implementation of ICT integration with EuroDac to enable data sharing are already underway.

Ireland works closely with the European Commission and DG HOME and avails of the extensive support provided by the country liaison officers and engage in opportunities to understand similar key challenges facing other countries, actively work in collaboration to try and address any issues arising and share best practice. The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration is also availing of the support provided through Technical Support Instrument funding to strengthen collaboration with other EU MS.

2.6 Ensuring sufficient capacity and capability for an effective implementation of the national strategy

Considering the identified current and future challenges, as well as identified needs, describe your strategic policy objectives to ensure sufficient human resources, material and financial capacity to implement the different components of the strategy.

Describe which of the following key elements and measures are relevant for achieving your current and future strategic objectives in this area. In addition, include any other measures that you consider the most relevant for achieving the strategic objectives.

2.6.1 How the availability of the necessary human, material and financial resources and infrastructure to effectively implement this strategy is best ensured, considering that the strategy will be implemented over a period of five years.

To deliver on the requirements of the Pact, it is recognised that there is a need for Ireland to develop a new end-to end- International Protection process and organise, execute, and behave differently to ensure the right configuration of capabilities, talent, and structures are in place to enable efficient, effective and agile implementation of the Pact requirements.

Ireland adopted a progressive, sequenced approach to the development of a new Future State Target Operating Model together with an associated organisational structural design and workforce planning necessary to drive implementation of Pact requirements. High level as-is capabilities have been documented and mapped against future state capabilities in line with the design of the new end-to-end process. A new functional model will be the foundation for future organisational structures.

It is expected that in 2025, an action plan and roadmap will be completed to support the implementation of the new structure. This will include recommendations for transition planning.

The Plan and roadmap will focus on ensure that the State, amongst other matters:

- Has an **organisational design and workforce plan** that defines clear roles and responsibilities and provides appropriate reporting lines, spans of control and organisational layers to support transparent activities, clear escalation routes and informed decision-making. Staff across all grades and specialisations must operate at the 'top of their license' and will be empowered to complete tasks, be accountable for actions and make decisions, appropriately escalating questions and eliminating duplication of effort;
- Put in place strategies to ensure availability of **key skills and capabilities** necessary to deliver on Pact obligations, with timely recruitment of staff being a critical requirement to facilitate Pact delivery;
- **Adopts Innovative approaches to service design and delivery**, to counteract potential limitations in capacity of the labour market to deliver requisite levels of suitably qualified resources to support scaled-up processing;
- Prioritises the development of a **modern, co-designed case management system** which provides a holistic view of an application, enabling all units to understand the nature of a case, and act on this information appropriately. This will require a common data platform within the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration and with partner agencies and government departments where appropriate;

- Has appropriate **governance** structures in place which are understood by all stakeholders involved in the multi-agency delivery approach required for delivery of the Pact to ensure efficiency, accountability and co-ordination;
- Develops, in suitable locations, appropriate **infrastructure** to deliver reception conditions, covering basic needs and material reception conditions with associated services.

Future Staffing Strategy

A comprehensive process has been conducted to determine indicative future staffing requirements based on consideration of the Future State Target Operating Model, having regard to anticipated process changes being put in place to support implementation of key Pact requirements. This view will evolve as design is iterated and finalised and transition needs become clear.

Future State capabilities have been mapped to the high-level Target Operating Model and work is ongoing to finalise how these will be organised within the new structures and how the required capabilities will be sourced or developed. This may include internal development programmes, recruitment drives, or partnerships with external organisations. Using the Target Operating Model, the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration will detail the organisational structure for all future roles and grades, providing a clear picture of future operations, defining roles and responsibilities using a Responsibility Assignment Matrix, setting out reporting lines, skills and process requirements across all key roles, along with the definition of key metrics (Service Level Agreements /Key Performance Indicators) for any external actors and partners.

Data analysis is informing a workforce plan model to forecast ongoing workforce needs. A review of enabling technology and other people and process-related opportunities will help quantify the human resource requirement. This comprehensive process will ensure that staffing requirements are thoroughly assessed and planned. To ensure Ireland is best placed to comply with key Pact objectives around processing timeframes, significant scaling up of the end-to-end international protection process is already underway.

Training Strategy

The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration will engage with the EUAA to provide training in multiple areas. The international protection bodies will engage with the EUAA to ensure they avail of new materials and modules being designed to support staff transitioning to the new Pact requirements, and a comprehensive plan will be developed once the training resources are clear.

At present, training responsibilities are shared: individual business units oversee on-the-job training specific to their operations, while the rollout of core training modules is centralised under the IPO's Training Unit in conjunction with Legal Services Support Unit and UNHCR. This hybrid approach has been effective, but impending changes require a more unified training function that can ensure consistency and readiness across the organisation. Training will be closely integrated with the programme's change management strategy, ensuring that staff are not only prepared for new roles and processes but are supported through the transition.

Preparing for Transitioning to the Pact

Preparations are already underway to ensure the State is ready to meet commitments under the Pact. The IPO tripled its resources between 2022 and 2024. The IPAT has doubled its resources in the same period. The Government has approved the recruitment of additional staff to the international protection end-to-end process, including associated functions such as border control, litigation management and downstream application processing such as family reunification.

An organisational design plan has been completed as part of preparation for the Pact implementation.

This plan sets out commitments to:

- Scope the availability of key skills and capabilities necessary to deliver on Pact obligations. Early identification of the capabilities required and decisions on how they are to be sourced will be critical.
- Ensure access to training and learning and development opportunities to upskill new and existing staff around changes in processes, systems and roles and responsibilities.
- Deliver change management support to staff in adapting to a new set of processes requiring a faster pace of decision-making and delivery of negative decisions.

Frontloading elements of the Pact requirements

The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration has agreed to frontload elements of the new end-to-end international protection process in line with current legislation. This includes a pilot to test and validate the proposed approach to the new screening and border procedure requirements. Other elements will be added in 2025 and 2026 to ensure the State is ready for full implementation.

2.6.2 How modern digital data management and communication tools are used for an effective asylum and migration management system at national level, including the large-scale IT systems and tools of the Union, managed by eu-LISA.

Technology contributes significantly to the maintenance of border security both in terms of data systems and physical infrastructure. As a non-Schengen MS, Ireland's ability to access databases used as part of the interoperability framework at EU level is a critical consideration.

As part of an immigration systems digitalisation programme, the Smart Borders project will seek to switch the focus to a greater level of pre-authorisation to travel, replicating the ETIAS, ETA, ESTA systems of the EU, UK and US respectively. The current system needs to be expanded to a more holistic view of our border management; managing and tracking the progress of an individual prior to arrival and through to exit from Ireland,

integrating with systems that manage immigrant applications in-State and with those of relevant partners.

Advanced Passenger Information (API)

Ireland opted-in to the API borders and API police regulations in 2024 (Regulations (EU) 2025/12 and 2025/13). Under these new rules, all air carriers will be required to collect and transmit API (which are the details of travellers' information gathered by air carriers at check-in) in a harmonised and systematic manner to competent authorities, improving border controls and making it easier to identify persons posing security risks. These Regulations require air carriers to transmit API data to the Irish Immigration Service for all inbound flights to Ireland from outside the European Union. API data is used by the BMU of the Irish Immigration Service for border management and immigration control purposes, and to identify persons of concern in advance of travel. API data collected under these Regulations is deleted within 24 hours of the arrival of the flight. However, API data relating to a person of concern may be retained for longer if required for the purposes of border management and immigration controls. In such circumstances, the API data may be retained for a period of up to 3 years.

Joint Investigation Teams Collaboration Platform

Ireland, like other EU MS, participates in the EU's Joint Investigation Teams (JITs) collaboration platform, which is a digital platform to facilitate cooperation and communication between judicial and law enforcement authorities in cross-border crime investigations. This platform is designed to streamline information sharing, secure communication, and data storage for JITs, which are teams formed by two or more EU member states for specific, time-limited criminal investigations. The platform provides a centralised information system for temporary data storage, secure communication tools (e.g., messaging, video conferencing), and connections with relevant IT tools. Eu-LISA is responsible for developing and managing the JITs collaboration platform, with input from the JITs Collaboration Platform Advisory Group. The platform is being developed in accordance with EU regulations (EU) 2023/969 and (EU) 2018/1726, and MS, including Ireland, are responsible for implementing the platform nationally.

The platform is expected to facilitate the rapid and secure exchange of operational data, improve coordination and management of JITs, and ensure traceability of evidence exchanged.

e-Codex and Digitalisation

The e-CODEX Regulation (2022/850) was adopted on 30 May 2022 and provides for the establishment of a new, decentralised IT system so that EU MS can communicate on matters pertaining to certain EU instruments in both the civil and criminal law areas. Regulation (EU) 2023/2844 (the Digitalisation Regulation) entered into force in January 2024 and applies from 1 May 2025. The instrument concerns the digitalisation of judicial cooperation and access to justice in cross-border civil, commercial and criminal matters. The Regulation is accompanied by Directive (EU) 2023/2843 which amends certain legal

acts with respect to the digitalisation of judicial cooperation. Both the Regulation and the Directive aim to streamline electronic communications for cross-border judicial cooperation in civil, commercial, and criminal matters.

Ireland opted-in to this suite of Digitalisation measures in 2023 and is committed to meeting the schedule of deadlines for implementation. National experts have been nominated to service relevant in-person and online committee meetings and the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Immigration with input from the Courts Service and other relevant bodies continues to engage with committee meetings, to ensure a smooth roll-out of the IT system. Ireland is also engaged in preparatory meetings with the European Commission and other EU MS to ensure that our current IT infrastructure is compatible with the new computerised system for exchanging messages. These meetings are serviced by officials from the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration alongside other bodies that are deemed relevant. For example, the Courts Service is participating in these meetings because it acts as the competent authority for various instruments such as the Service and Evidence Regulations.

Interoperability

With regard to the large-scale IT systems and tools of the Union managed by eu-LISA, Ireland has opted-in and connected to the Schengen Information System (SIS) and Eurodac.

Ireland cannot participate in the established Visa Information System (VIS) nor the upcoming Entry-Exit System (EES) or the European Travel Information Authorisation System (ETIAS) as they are Schengen-related measures.

Ireland has not opted-in to the Interoperability Regulations; Interoperability (Borders) Regulation and Interoperability (Police) Regulation.

Ireland can only participate in the Interoperability (Police) Regulation that will establish connection between the Eurodac recast, the SIS and the European Criminal Records Information System for Third-Country Nationals (ECRIS-TCN).

Ireland has opted-in to the revised Eurodac Regulation as part of the Pact. This enables Ireland to participate in the Interoperability (Police) Regulation and ECRIS-TCN, subject to an Article 4 opt-in under Protocol 21 being exercised in the future.

Ireland is supportive of the aims of the interoperability project and welcomes the benefits to be realised from it for a more effective asylum and migration system in Ireland. Ireland's Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration has established a new cross-departmental coordination group on interoperability and is engaging with eu-LISA on opportunities to ensure Ireland participates to the greatest degree possible. A new Interoperability Roadmap to 2028 has been developed and Ireland is reviewing its approach, which includes consideration of opting into the Interoperability (Police) Regulation and the ECRIS-TCN Regulation.

Employment Permit System

Over the last number of years, DETE has substantially increased the resourcing of the Employment Permits system to ensure an efficient and robust service. The IT system has recently been upgraded. The new Employment Permits Online System launched on 28 April 2025. It is an efficient portal-based platform, supported by an easy-to-use back-end system to ensure the optimal processing of permit applications. The upgraded system also facilitates the comprehensive reporting of key metrics to manage demands on the service.

Single Permit Directive

In May 2024, the Government of Ireland gave its approval to begin the roll out of a single streamlined application procedure for an employment permit, a visa and an immigration permission. It is envisaged that the new streamlined procedure will consist of a common platform to apply for employment permits, visas and immigration permissions, while each Department (DETE and Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration) retains its current policy and operational responsibility for employment permits and immigration permissions, thus optimising the overall customer experience. Moving towards a single application procedure is a complex programme of work that is estimated to take around three years, at which point Ireland will be in a position to opt-in to the Single Permit Directive.

Immigration Service Delivery (ISD)

There are separate but complementary modernisation programmes being undertaken within the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration. These modernisation processes will support digital first end-to-end processes to increase processing efficiencies for immigration permission and international protection processing.

In 2023, ISD of the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration established a modernisation programme to transform their immigration operations to provide a modern, transparent and accessible immigration system that is faster, easier to access and more efficient for all its users. This programme of modernisation is aimed at improving the services provided and to move towards a digital first approach to immigration services. Upon completion of the programme:

- ISD will have a complete view of each customer's engagement with ISD on a single platform.
- Customers will be able to log onto a secure portal for self-service management.
- There will be a new Case Management System to process applications on a digital first basis.

- ISD will have restructured its operations, with teams built around functions e.g. customer service, identity verification, case processing etc. rather than around application types.

- While services will be maintained for customers who cannot access online services, all applications, and payments, will be processed digitally.

One of these reforms has already been delivered as the Digital Contact Centre, an online self-service portal for applicants, was launched in October 2024. Work is ongoing within ISD to prepare for the additional reforms and it is anticipated that a first version of the Case Management System and the restructuring of ISD to a functional model will happen later in 2025.

International Protection Office (IPO)

The Modernisation Programme of the International Protection Office has introduced a new Digital Storage and Application Platform, the International Protection Online Portal (IPOP), to enable full digitalisation of all IPO case-files and digital end-to-end processes. Further developments in this space include; building a Resource Management System to evolve the interview scheduling process and allow significant scale-up, while enabling more effective handling of nuanced cases, including disability, and provide more robust reporting of interview statistics as well as remote/online interviewing capacity. In addition, there are projects upcoming that will enable EU systems integration with IPOP, such as, the SIS and the Eurodac re-cast.

Several upgrades have been delivered to national asylum and migration management systems, such as, IP Live and AISIP to facilitate IPOP integration and end-to-end digitalisation of asylum processes. These also allow greater traceability of applicants and their families, while providing more robust means of communication with verified emails and Portal accounts.

A business plan is approved to enable implementation of the required changes to the DubliNet as agreed at EU level (DubliNet is an encrypted mailbox used exclusively to communicate with all Dublin Units across EU MS).

2.6.3 How the available operational support tools set up at Union level are or could be used for an effective asylum and migration management system, such as those provided by the EUAA, and Frontex or the Permanent EU Migration Support Toolbox.

The Repatriation Unit of the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration joined the RRF in April 2025 to avail of ICMPD/RRF support on return and reintegration. Together with the European Commission and Frontex, the RRF contributes to the development of the RIAT, a digital platform designed to streamline the management and delivery of reintegration assistance to returnees. RIAT acts as a central hub for the exchange of information and coordination among a diverse range of stakeholders, including EU MS, other host countries, EU institutions like Frontex, and reintegration service providers worldwide.

State actors in the international protection system avail of products developed by EUAA and engage in training methodologies provided by the Agency.

2.6.4 How to best ensure that available financial support by the Union can efficiently contribute to support the implementation of the strategy, while complementing national funds, and to ensure effective functioning of the asylum and migration management system.

The Government has committed to invest in successful implementation of Pact measures, and to draw down the maximum available support from the EU (via AMIF) and technical support opportunities (via Technical Support Instrument (TSI)).

The European Commission has nominated a national contact point for the State, and a team to support development and implementation of the Pact national implementation plan.

Regular meetings are held to review progress and agree upcoming priorities, as well as potential sources of EU funding. Ireland will receive almost €30 million for Pact implementation.