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Chapter 1
Our mission and objectives
Introduction

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

One of the Department’s core objectives is to deliver “a fair and balanced immigration and protection regime.” The strategic objectives and priority actions contained within its Strategy Statement 2016 – 2019 express how this objective will be met. On pages 7 and 8 you can see progress made towards our objectives in 2018.

Our strategic objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic objectives</th>
<th>Priority actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| To ensure a streamlined and effective international protection regime, including improvements to the Direct Provision system | • Implement the Single Application system in accordance with the International Protection Act 2015  
• Improvements to the Direct Provision system particularly for families |
| To support the relocation and resettlement of programme refugees and relocated asylum seekers | • Manage the resettlement and relocation strands of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme so as to fulfil the Government’s commitment towards programme refugees and relocated asylum seekers  
• Co-ordinate the resettlement in Ireland of Programme refugees and relocated asylum seekers who have received a grant of international protection |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic objectives</th>
<th>Priority actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **To enhance immigration controls at the State’s borders**                         | - Introduce a number of technology solutions to enhance border security, including:  
  - checking passenger information,  
  - automated checking  
  - electronic gates at ports of entry  
  - further civilianisation of frontline immigration controls |
| **To ensure responsive policies in respect of non-EEA nationals resident in the State and effective implementation of these policies** | - Regular policy reviews of immigration including for students, retirees, workers, and so on, to respond to changing requirements and demands  
  - Effective processes for registration of non-EEA nationals  
  - Effective dealing with applicants for a wide range of immigration services and citizenship |
| **To provide a balanced visa regime to enable legitimate visitors, tourists and long term applicants to come here whilst ensuring relevant controls are maintained** | - Continued enforcement of immigration laws including addressing immigration abuses |
| **To continue to effectively operate the Common Travel Area**                      | - Continue to work with UK colleagues on enhancing and securing the Common Travel Area (CTA)  
  - Ensure Ireland’s position is reflected at EU level on immigration matters  
  - Consider and address implications of Brexit on all aspects of immigration including the CTA |

Specialist terms above are explained in the glossary on page 61.
2018 in Summary

Migration to Ireland
In 2018, the number of people from non-EU countries legally living here increased by almost 11% compared to 2017. In 2017 there were 127,955 people in this category and in 2018 there were 142,924 people.

Visa applications have also increased dramatically over the past few years. In 2018, there were over 140,500 visa applications, an increase of almost 12% on 2017.

Citizenship
In 2018, over 8,000 people became Irish citizens. There were citizenship ceremonies at the INEC Killarney and the National Concert Hall in Dublin. Since citizenship ceremonies began in 2011, over 120,000 people have received their citizenship certificates. Adults receive these at the ceremony, which minors do not have to attend to get citizenship.

Common Travel Area
Maintaining the Common Travel Area (CTA) between the UK and Ireland is one of the priorities of Government in Brexit negotiations. This is reflected in the Draft Withdrawal Agreement between the UK and EU from November 2018. INIS has been actively involved with other Government Departments in contingency planning to make sure that we are prepared for any outcome, including a no-deal UK withdrawal from the EU.
International protection
The Irish Refugee Protection Programme accepted over 2,000 people into the country in 2018. Ireland has committed to providing a safe haven for up to 4,000 people under EU Relocation and Resettlement programmes.

The average length of time people spend in State-provided accommodation centres has been reduced. In 2015, the average was 38 months. By the end of 2018, it was 24 months, a slight increase on 2017 which reflects the increasing demands on our asylum services.

IPIU formed
The Irish Passenger Information Unit (IPIU) was set up in May 2018. It provides for the use of passenger name record data to prevent acts of crime and terrorism and improve co-operation between European law agencies.

Reception Conditions Directive
On 1st July 2018, the EU (recast) Reception Conditions Directive became law in Ireland. This placed the Direct Provision system on a legal footing. It also allowed international protection applicants to get a job or be self-employed (‘access the labour market’). Since July 2018, INIS received over 2,600 applications with more than **1,800 applications approved.**

New Schemes
In 2018, an immigration pathway was opened for certain non-EEA nationals living in the State who held a valid student permission between 1 January 2005 and 31 December 2010. We received over **3,000 applications.**

Two new pre-clearance schemes have also been established for non-EEA citizens. These allow qualifying people permission to stay for up to 3 years. The schemes are:

- The Ministers of Religion scheme – a scheme that allows Ministers to work with an eligible religious body or faith community here, and
- The Volunteers scheme – a scheme that allows people to carry out volunteer work for registered charities.

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

- using plain English across all our communications,
- piloting an online application system, and
- reviewing worldwide visa services.
Chapter 2
A fair and balanced immigration system
Residence: Living in Ireland for work, study or family reasons

Registrations

At the end of 2017, 127,955 non-EEA nationals had permission to live in Ireland. At the end of 2018, the figure was almost **143,000** (see Figure 1). These registrations can be valid for between 8 months and 5 years. In 2018, INIS and An Garda Síochána issued almost 138,000 new or renewed registrations of permission to remain in the State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Registrations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>142,924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>127,955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>115,077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>114,586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>105,569</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Valid permissions by year

Registration requirements

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

People living in Dublin register with INIS, and those living outside of Dublin register with An Garda Síochána. The breakdown of those who registered in 2018 is provided in Figure 2. You can see, for example, that October 2018 was a particularly busy month for registrations with 18,312 people registering in all: 9,600 people registered in Dublin and 8,712 outside Dublin.

Registrations experience seasonal peaks, particularly when students are registering. This is partly the reason that people have experienced difficulties in booking appointments to register. We regret the issues that occurred in 2018 as a result of bots (automated software programmes) taking up appointments on our system. A new and improved registration booking system is being developed.

Applications for permission to live in the State

Certain types of applications to live in the State are more complex and require detailed consideration before a permission is granted. When permission is granted, the applicant then registers in the normal way. The Residence Division of INIS received over 9,800 of these complex applications in 2018.
Registered nationalities

The current top 10 registered nationalities, which account for over 60% of all people registered, are:

- Brazil (16%),
- India (15%),
- USA (9%),
- China (8%),
- Pakistan (4%),
- Nigeria (3%),
- Philippines (3%),
- Malaysia (2%),
- Canada (2%), and
- Mexico (2%).

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

Figure 3: Top 10 registered nationalities in 2018
In-country residence applications and EU Treaty rights

EEA nationals living in Ireland may have the right to bring non-EEA national family members to live with them here.

The relevant EU legislation in this area is the ‘Directive on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and live freely within the territory of the Member States’ (Directive 2004/38/EC). It was published in 2004.

The Irish legislation which gives effect to this Directive is the ‘European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2015’ (S.I. No. 548 of 2015).

Under this legislation, we received more than 5,200 EU Treaty Rights residence applications in 2018. This was down 5% on the previous year.

We also received 1,092 review applications in 2018, down 40% on the previous year.

We made more than 5,700 decisions on EU Treaty Rights residence applications and reviews in 2018. While the decisions were made in 2018, the applications may have been made in previous years.
Visas: Visiting Ireland for short or long stays

Visas

Visa applications increased again in 2018. This is in line with increases in applications in recent years. We received 140,533 applications in 2018, an increase of almost 12% on 2017. Applications have risen by 38% since 2014 when we received just over 100,000 applications. We expect this upward trend to continue in the coming years.

Much of the increase is due to our better economy and greater connectivity with the rest of the world. Despite the increased demand for visas, our processing times are as fast, and in many cases, faster than last year.

New measures have helped us deal with increased demand

We have put measures in place to deal with the increased demand for visas to come to Ireland. These include:

- additional staff to help process applications, and
- the streamlining of visa processes.

During the year, we also completed a joint visa service review with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The review’s recommendations aim to improve the service. They are wide-ranging, and they will be implemented across both Departments in the short to medium term.
Visa applications processed

In 2018, there were over 140,000 applications for short-stay and long-stay visas.

This is an increase of almost 12% on 2017 (see Figure 4).

Over 121,000 visas were granted in 2018, almost 11,000 more than were granted in 2017.

There was a 4.2% rise in re-entry visa applications processed in 2018.

Over 53,000 re-entry visas applications were processed in 2018, this is an increase of 4% on 2017. For the majority of cases, re-entry visas will be abolished in 2019.

The top ten countries of origin for visas granted were India, China, Russia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Turkey, Philippines, Ukraine, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia, illustrated in Figure 5.
**New schemes**

INIS introduced two new Pre-clearance schemes on 30 April 2018. Pre-clearance schemes assess people’s applications before they travel to Ireland. The two new schemes are for people wishing to come to Ireland to work for more than 90 days as:

- Ministers of Religion, or
- volunteers for registered charities in Ireland.

The schemes apply to people from non-EEA countries.

**Minister of Religion scheme**

Under the Minister of Religion scheme, those working for a recognised religious group may be granted permissions to enter and remain in the State for up to three years.

**Volunteer scheme**

Under the Volunteer scheme, people who are invited to work with a registered charity or a qualifying sporting organisation are allowed to enter and remain in the State for up to two years, with an option to apply for an extension for a third year.

Further pre-clearance schemes are expected to be introduced in 2019.

**Applications received and granted under these new schemes**

In 2018, we received 123 Minister of Religion applications. 88 were successful (81.5%). We refused 19 applications, with the remainder still being processed.

This compares to 209 applications for the Volunteer scheme and 169 were successful (81%). We refused 27 applications, with the remainder still being processed.
EU Treaty Rights Visas

From 2014-2016, there was an enormous spike in visa applications from people outside Ireland claiming to exercise EU Treaty Rights. EU Treaty Rights give EU citizens and their families freedom to freely move and reside within EU member states. This means that if a non-Irish EU citizen is living and working in Ireland, they can have their non-EEA family members join them. These family members would apply for an EU Treaty Rights visa.

Most of these visa applications came from four countries:

- Pakistan,
- Afghanistan,
- Iraq, and
- Bangladesh.

There were significant concerns that many of these applications were attempting to circumvent immigration laws either in Ireland or in other EU countries. A number of court cases have arisen in this area, with most broadly resolved in favour of the State.

In 2018, a total of 2,845 EU Treaty Rights visa applications were received. Of a total of 2,269 applications processed, only 218 (9.61%) were granted. Most were refused or withdrawn.
Immigrant Investor Programme

The Immigrant Investor Programme (IIP) started in 2012. This Programme is open to non-EEA nationals and their families who commit to an approved investment in Ireland. The programme will facilitate participants, over time, to establish a permanent relationship with Ireland. This is a sort of residence by investment scheme. It is important to note that no right to Citizenship accrues from the programme.

Since this programme started, up to the end of 2018, over 700 applications have been approved with a value of over €500 million. In 2018, 420 applications were received, with 45 approved, 3 refused, 15 withdrawn and the remainder carried over into 2019.

In 2018, the IIP was under increased public scrutiny, with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Commission reporting on their concerns about investment schemes generally. We proactively engaged with both of these organisations to identify areas of concern.

In 2018, we introduced measures to improve the governance and transparency of the IIP. These included:

- Improved quality control checks of applications, including enhanced anti money laundering checks, and
- Provision for a new data sharing agreement with Revenue, to help stop people trying to evade paying tax. This is based on the OECD Common Reporting Standard.

In 2018, a significant number of improved checks of IIP applications have been put in place. This meant that fewer applications were processed in 2018 than in previous years.

The Start Up Entrepreneur Programme

The Start Up Entrepreneur Programme (STEP) started in 2012. It enables non-EEA nationals and their families who commit to a high potential start-up business in Ireland to reside legally in Ireland.

The Programme encourages successful entrepreneurs to start businesses in Ireland. 467 applications have been made to this scheme since 2012. In 2018, there were 42 applications received, of which 23 were refused and 19 were approved. In 2017, there were 158 applications received, of which 126 were refused and 32 were approved.
Atypical workers

The Atypical Unit issues short-term working permissions (generally 15 to 90 days long) to non-EEA nationals planning to enter the State to undertake specific, specialised work for a fixed period. In some instances, they help to address areas of critical labour shortage in sectors such as health. We can grant permissions longer than 90 days for specific sectors. This work comprises the Atypical Workers Scheme.

This scheme provides a streamlined way to deal with atypical, short-term employment and other employment situations which are not covered by the Employment Permits (Amendment) Act 2014— an Act that specifies types of employment permits.

We operate the following streams within the Atypical Workers Scheme:

- Seafarers,
- Nurses,
- Locum GPs,
- Locum Hospital Doctors,
- Gulf Doctors, and
- General Atypical Permissions.

In 2018 a total of 2,986 applications were received, and most (2,911) were approved and 75 were refused.
Former Student Scheme

Special scheme for students from 1 January 2005 to 31 December 2010

The Minister for Justice and Equality launched a **new online scheme** on 15 October 2018. This scheme allows non-EEA nationals who live in the State and who had valid student permission between 2005 and 2010 to apply for permission stay here.

The scheme addresses a significant group of people who have been in the State for a number of years without valid residency documents. It also addresses the concerns raised by the Supreme Court in the *Luximon* and *Balchand* judgments in April 2018, providing an immigration pathway for people who may have acquired private and family rights under the European Convention on Human Rights.

Successful applicants receive permission to live in the State for a probationary period of two years under the Scheme. This permission includes the right to work without an employment permit.

Applicants may renew the permission after two years. At renewal stage, applicants must show that:

- they can support themselves and their family members, and
- they did not become an unreasonable burden on the State.

The scheme closed to new applicants on 20 January 2019. We received 3,097 applications, including former students and their family members.
Citizenship: Welcoming Ireland’s newest citizens

Citizenship ceremonies were first introduced in 2011. They mark the granting of citizenship and the integration of our newest citizens into Irish society in a dignified way. New citizens value and enjoy the experience very much. The ceremonies mark the end of their journey towards Irish citizenship and help their continuing integration into Irish society.

Ireland continues to be the preferred destination for people from over 180 different nations. This is remarkable for a small island on the edge of Europe and the Atlantic Ocean. The top ten nationalities of people naturalised since 2011 are, in order:

1. Poland,
2. India,
3. Nigeria,
4. Romania,
5. Philippines,
6. Pakistan,
7. China (incl. Hong Kong),
8. Ukraine,
9. South Africa, and
10. Bangladesh.

In 2018, Poland was still at the top. (Please see page 24 for the top ten nationalities of people naturalised in 2018.)
Since 2011, over 130 citizenship ceremonies have been held where:

- 90,000 applicants attended a ceremony,
- 120,000 people were granted citizenship (this includes minors who do not have to attend the ceremonies).

In 2018 there were three citizenship ceremony days:

- two were in Killarney where almost 6,500 candidates received their certificates of naturalisation, and
- one was in the National Concert Hall where almost 500 people received their certificates.

The ceremony in the National Concert Hall was very special as one of our new citizens, Miriam Kaczor, originally from Poland, a flautist, played the national anthem. Miriam was granted a bursary from the Royal Dublin Society (RDS) where she will play with the Rádio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ) Symphony Orchestra in the RDS.

Figure 6 shows the numbers of certificates issued since 2014. These numbers include minors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>8,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>8,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>13,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>21,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: Applications granted (certificates issued)

**Time differences in processing applications**

Some naturalisation cases take longer than others to process. Applicants for naturalisation must be of `good character` – this means they have maintained the expectations of the law. Most cases are straightforward and we can make a decision in about six months. In more complex cases, it can take up to a year to carry out the necessary checks.
Chapter 2 | A Fair and Balanced Immigration System

Top 10 nationalities naturalised in 2018

1. Poland - 17.8%
2. Romania - 10%
3. United Kingdom - 8.4%
4. India - 7.6%
5. Nigeria - 5.8%
6. Pakistan - 4.4%
7. Philippines - 3.9%
8. Latvia - 3.7%
9. China - 2.8%
10. Brazil - 2.7%
Chapter 2 | A Fair and Balanced Immigration System

Irish Citizenship Ceremonies 2018
Chapter 3
Enhanced immigration and border controls
Enhancing border security

The Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) has prioritised improving controls at places where people enter the State. This includes rigorous checks by staff at points of entry and backed up by improved technological support.

eGates

Since November 2017, automatic border control ‘eGates’ have been operating at Dublin Airport. Twenty-five eGates have been installed:

- 10 in Terminal 1,
- 10 in Terminal 2, and
- 5 in the new transfer area within Terminal 2.

Irish and other EU travellers who have a passport with an electronic chip and are 18 years or older may use the eGates.

Statistics show that more than 2.5 million travellers successfully used the eGates in 2018. This included over 1.3 million Irish passport holders.
How do eGates work?

The eGates integrate with national and international ‘watch lists’. They use facial recognition technology to provide highly secure automated passport validation and security checks on passengers.

In 2019, we plan to introduce facilities to allow people with an Irish Passport Card to use the eGates. This card can be used by Irish citizens for travel within the EU/EEA and Switzerland.

In addition, we will develop a Registered Traveller Programme for non-EU travellers. This will allow regular visitors, like business travellers, to use eGates technology and enter Ireland efficiently.

We may install more eGates at Dublin Airport and other places where people enter the country if it makes operational and financial sense to do so.

The eGates have increased the capacity to the immigration service at a time of increasing passenger growth. In 2018, the immigration services at Dublin airport processed a record 15.6 million arriving passengers. Overall, passenger numbers at Dublin airport have grown by 45% since 2014 – from 21.7 million to 31.5 million (Figure 7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Passengers (in millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7: Dublin airport passenger numbers (in millions)
Irish Passenger Information Unit

The European Union (Passenger Name Record Data) Regulations 2018 transposes Directive 2016/681 into Irish law. It allows the use of passenger name record (PNR) data to investigate and prevent acts of crime and terrorism.

The Directive means Member States must set up a Passenger Information Unit (PIU) to collect PNR information from air carriers. They must transfer and exchange any information they gather with various organisations as the law dictates.

The Irish Passenger Information Unit (IPIU) is a part of the Department of Justice and Equality and was formally established on 25 May 2018.

The IPIU now carries out work previously done by us in relation to Advanced Passenger Information (API). This information is collected under the European Communities (Communication of Passenger Data) Regulations 2011. This puts in place the European Council Directive 2004/82/EC.

API information is collected so the law can be applied in relation to:

- people entering the State,
- combatting illegal immigration,
- people smuggling, and
- human trafficking.

The flights covered by the API regulations are only those that travel outside the EU.

The main function of the IPIU is **to identify people who require further examination by a competent authority, such as Revenue or An Garda Síochána.**

Information about passengers can be checked against databases or watch lists, and it can be used to automatically detect suspicious travel activity. Further legislation is planned to extend the scope of the checks being carried out.
People removed from the State during 2018

In 2018, 5,028 people were deported or otherwise removed from the State (see Figure 8). Of this figure, more than 95% were refused entry into the State and were returned to the place from which they had travelled. Figure 9 sets out the top 10 nationalities removed from the State in 2018.

In 2018, 163 people who were either living illegally in Ireland or who had applied unsuccessfully for international protection were deported from the State. A total of 68 EU nationals were also returned to their home countries following EU Removal Orders. An EU Removal Order allows for the removal of an EU national to their home country if their conduct in the State represents a serious threat to society.

Under the Dublin Regulation, a further 22 applicants for international protection were transferred to the EU country in which they had first made an application for international protection. The Dublin Regulation establishes the Member State responsible for examining the asylum application.

Voluntary returns

The State uses enforced removals only as a last resort. We continue to actively encourage people to return home voluntarily. In 2018, 213 people were helped to voluntarily return home. Of this number, 91 were helped by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the remaining 122 were helped by the Department of Justice and Equality.
Tackling illegal immigration

Improved enforcement

The introduction of the International Protection Act 2015 brought changes that improved our capacity to enforce Deportation Orders where people tried to evade or frustrate the immigration process. People subject to a Deportation Order must remove themselves from the State. However, the new laws allow for greater capacity to arrest, detain and remove such people. They also give greater capacity to handle those who are refused permission to land.

In 2018, we continued to work with our partners in other European member states and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX). We worked together in the areas of joint planning and enforcing the law.

Operation Vantage

All modern states need to enforce immigration laws. Ireland is no different. This means that some people who travel to Ireland will not qualify for immigration permission. It also means that we need to robustly investigate immigration abuses. One of the ways we do this is through Operation Vantage.

Operation Vantage was set up by the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) in August 2015 to tackle illegal immigration, including marriages of convenience. INIS works very closely with GNIB and other agencies as part of Operation Vantage, and this inter-agency operation has been very successful.
As part of Operation Vantage, the EU Treaty Rights Investigations Unit investigates applications for residence permissions by non-EEA family members of EU citizens where immigration abuse, including marriages of convenience, is suspected.

We reviewed nearly 2,500 applications for residence cards since the operation began.

We have now finalised more than 2,100 of these investigations. Of these, we have refused or revoked (cancelled) 91% of these residence permissions – 91 out of every 100.

In 2018, we initiated investigations in more than 1,000 cases.

In 2018, the EU Treaty Rights Investigations Unit issued 1,000 decisions (some of these decisions relate to investigations initiated before 2018). In 2018, we revoked 865 residence permissions that had been granted under EU Treaty Rights – an increase of 173% compared to 2017.

By the end of 2018, we made 200 deportation orders where we found a ‘marriage of convenience’ had been entered into.

In addition, the EU Treaty Rights Investigation Unit responded to almost 7,500 queries in 2018 from many government departments and State agencies. These included the:

- Garda National Immigration Bureau,
- Civil Registration Service,
- Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection,
- Passport Office, and
- Border Management Unit and Embassies.
EU Treaty Rights Investigations
Overview 2018

1,032 Investigations started
1,097% increase in decisions since 2016
7,499 queries answered
509 cases of marriage of convenience and/or fraud identified

865 permissions revoked (cancelled)
91%
- Refusal / revocation
- Approvals / remains valid
Planning for Brexit

Protecting the Common Travel Area (CTA)

The UK and EU reached agreement on the text of a Draft Withdrawal Agreement in November 2018. The draft Agreement includes ways to continue the Common Travel Area (CTA) between Ireland and the UK while fully respecting the rights of people under EU law. These rights include freedom of movement for EU citizens and their qualifying family members.

The Irish and British Governments consistently commit to maintain the CTA when the UK leaves the EU in any circumstances, including a no-deal situation. When we published this Annual Review, the Agreement had yet to be ratified (formally agreed).

We have also been making plans to prepare for a no-deal UK withdrawal. This has included working on legislation. The legislation includes special provisions in Part 14 of the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Act 2019.

Our EU partners understand how important the CTA arrangement is to Ireland, and this is reflected in the draft Withdrawal Agreement itself.

Ireland remains a committed member of the European Union and will continue to uphold the right of free movement for all EU citizens and their non-EU qualifying family members after the UK leaves the EU. We will also make arrangements for UK nationals with qualifying non-EU family members, who may wish to travel or move to Ireland after the UK withdrawal from the European Union.
Chapter 4
A streamlined and effective international protection system
Applications for international protection

We received 3,673 applications for international protection in 2018. About 27% of these (1,028) came in the last quarter of 2018 (Q4 – see Figure 10). This is an increase of 26% on applications received in 2017. The top five countries of application for 2018 were:

- Albania (459)
- Georgia (450)
- Syria (333)
- Zimbabwe (282)
- Nigeria (251)

Cases processed

There were 5,700 cases for international protection on hand at the end of 2018. Of these:

- more than 1,600 were either scheduled for interview or were waiting for a recommendation or decision,
- More than 750 (of the 5,700) were dependent children who did not require an interview, only a decision,
- 80 cases were being considered under the EU Dublin Regulation. The Dublin Regulation establishes the Member State responsible for examining the asylum application,
- about 1,600 had not yet returned their Application for International Protection Questionnaire,
- 165 did not attend for their scheduled interview, and
- 1,500 who were waiting to have an interview scheduled in the IPO.

Subsidiary protection

In 2018, the International Protection Office also received 22 applications for ‘subsidiary protection’ made under the European Union (Subsidiary Protection) Regulations 2017. Subsidiary protection is international protection for people seeking asylum who do not qualify as refugees.
Other applications

International Protection, Relocation Programme, and search and rescue migrants

In 2018, 266 people who were relocated to Ireland under the EU’s Relocation Programme applied for International Protection. This programme has now ended.

Since the programme began in 2015, a total of 1,022 applicants arrived in Ireland from Greece.

Figure 10: International Protection, 2018 applications and grants
For operational reasons, the vast majority of EU Relocations were from Greece to Ireland. After a request from Italy, Malta and the European Union, the Irish Government also pledged, on a voluntary and solidarity basis, to take a number of migrants who were rescued from the Mediterranean during 2018.

The International Protection Office used its experience and network of contacts built up during EU Relocation to organise missions to meet the migrants coming to Ireland. The IPO organised and ran three missions, one to Malta and two to Sicily. During these, 58 migrants were assessed, including a security assessment. The migrants arrived in Ireland as asylum seekers and applied for international protection at the International Protection Office.
International protection and the right to work

Access to labour market for International Protection Applicants

In June 2018, Minister Flanagan signed the Regulations to finalise Ireland’s opt in to the EU (recast) Reception Conditions Directive. This Directive gives protection applicants the right to work or be self-employed, amongst other things.

On 2 July 2018, we began processing applications for ‘labour market access permission’ – the right to work or be self-employed.

Eligible applicants have access to all employment except those that have a long-term residence or citizenship requirement. These include:

- the Civil and Public Service
- An Garda Síochána
- the Defence Forces

An applicant must be waiting on a decision on their protection application for nine months or more to be eligible to work or be self-employed. This is as detailed in the EU Directive.

Applicants can apply for free and they do not have to apply for a job with any minimum level of pay. In order to be eligible for permission to access the labour market, an applicant must be waiting on a decision on their protection application for 9 months or more. Applicants who are eligible to work can work part-time, full-time or be self-employed.

By the end of 2018, we had received 2,889 applications and 1,965 were approved.
Accommodation for International protection applicants

By the end of 2018, there were 6,252 applicants for international protection living in State provided accommodation centres (see Figure 11). These centres are funded by the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA).

More than 700 had already been granted some form of status, but they continued to live in State-provided accommodation while they looked for private accommodation.

Another 226 people had deportation orders requiring that they leave the State.

The average length of time spent in State-provided accommodation centres was:

- 38 months in 2015
- 23 months in 2017
- 24 months at the end of 2018

Putting direct provision recommendations in place

Cooking facilities

The McMahon Report (Working Group Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers) was significant. It examined how the existing protection system might be improved to show greater respect for the dignity of people in the system and the quality of their lives. One of its main recommendations was to provide cooking facilities in accommodation centres.

Since 2017, the RIA has overseen the roll out of the Independent Living model.
With this model residents can get their food, toiletries and other goods in a food hall in their accommodation centre. They can then use the cooking facilities to prepare their own meals.

By the end of 2018, Independent Living was in operation in nine centres across the country and being used by 2,070 residents. Access to food and cooking facilities only (but not other goods) is provided in an additional seven centres.

At present, about half of the residents of accommodation centres have access to cooking facilities. This number will continue to increase in 2019.

**Accommodation**

In 2018, the Department of Justice and Equality invited people to bid to provide suitable accommodation in regions around the country. In order to be awarded a contract under this competition, successful bidders must agree to put in place independent living facilities within a specific timeframe.

The RIA expects this to significantly increase the number of centres offering independent living facilities during 2019, and, therefore, the number of residents being able to avail of these.

The first bids were held in the Sligo region in the second half of 2018, and the building of a food hall and cooking facilities is now underway in Globe House, Sligo.

**Standards**

Following the McMahon Report, a Standards Advisory Group was set up in 2017 and continued their work in 2018. This group’s work was to build on the recommendations of the McMahon report and develop a set of standards for accommodation provided for those people seeking the protection of the State.

The standards will align with the standards set out in the Recast Reception Conditions Directive (EU standards for conditions at reception centres) and EASO (European Asylum Support Office) guidance on reception conditions.
Residential centres must, as defined by the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty:

- promote equality,
- prevent discrimination.

They must also protect the human rights of:

- employees,
- customers,
- service users,
- everyone affected by policies and plans.

A standards document has been developed, and we expect it to be published in 2019.
Family Reunification

Someone may apply for Family Reunification for their eligible family members if they:

- hold a current declaration as a Convention Refugee or Programme Refugee, or
- are currently a beneficiary of Subsidiary Protection (international protection for those seeking asylum for those who did not qualify as refugees).

Section 56 of the International Protection Act 2015 sets out who the eligible family members are. They include:

- spouses and civil partners,
- children under 18.

Where the Protection Holder is under 18 and unmarried, eligible family members include their parents and the unmarried children (under 18) of their parents.

A person must apply for Family Reunification within 12 months of being granted International Protection.

In 2018, there were 315 eligible applications under the IP Act, covering 419 people. Of the 419 people:

- 211 were approved, and
- 102 were refused.

The remainder are being processed.

In addition:

- 328 people were approved under the Refugee Act for applications made in previous years, and
- a further 326 were refused.
Irish Refugee Protection Programme
Humanitarian Admission Programme

The Irish Refugee Protection Programme has set up a Humanitarian Admission Programme (IHAP). This programme provides a new pathway for people to escape humanitarian crises and join their family members living in Ireland.

To participate in IHAP, family members must be from one of the top ten major source countries of refugees in the world as listed in the Annual UNHCR Global Trends Report.

The family member living in Ireland that they wish to join must have:

- convention refugee status,
- subsidiary protection status,
- programme refugee status, or
- Irish citizenship.

Under the scheme, the family member living in Ireland submits a proposal for their family member(s) to be considered for Irish residency status by the Minister for Justice and Equality.

The first call for proposals ran from 14 May to 30 June 2018. A total of 908 proposals were received which amounted to 2,187 individuals.

Of these:

- 714 (1,733 people) applications were not accepted (usually due to being incomplete),
- 85 (253 people) were ineligible,
- 98 (166 people) were granted,
- 9 cases were withdrawn, and
- 2 cases are still being processed.

This programme encourages migrant integration.

A second call opened on 27 December 2018 and closed on 8 February 2019. Currently, this two-year programme has **530 spaces** available, and proposals are currently being processed. It is hoped that the majority of cases will have a decision by the end of August 2019.
Irish Refugee Protection Programme

Background
On 10 September 2015, the Government set up the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP). This was part of Ireland’s response to the migration crisis in central and southern Europe. Under this programme, the Government committed to accepting up to 4,000 people into the State. They would do this through a combination of the:

- EU Relocation Programme,
- UNHCR-led refugee Resettlement Programme.

By the end of 2018, more than 2,000 people had arrived in Ireland under the IRPP.

EU Relocation Programme

Under the EU Relocation Programme, people seeking asylum are relocated to Ireland from another EU Member State to have their claim for international protection assessed.

Ireland originally pledged to accept 2,622 relocated asylum seekers under the IRPP. This figure comprised:

- 1,089 people from Greece,
- 623 people from Italy, and
- 910 unallocated.

These commitments were revised in 2018 as the numbers expected, in terms of eligible nationalities, did not exist on the ground in Greece.

Agreement could not be reached with the Italian authorities on screening and security matters, therefore, only asylum seekers from Greece were relocated.

The initial estimates of numbers produced at EU level did not materialise. Following the safe arrival of 1,022 people into the State, Ireland’s EU Relocation Programme ended in March 2018.

More than 89% of the people admitted under the EU Relocation section of the IRPP have now been resettled in local communities throughout Ireland. More than 100 remain in Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROCs), while the IRPP continue working with local authorities to source accommodation.
UNHCR-led Refugee Resettlement Programme

People admitted into Ireland under the Resettlement section of the IRPP have their claim for international protection assessed by the UNHCR in the country they first arrived at as asylum seekers. In this scheme, they are granted programme refugee status under section 59 of the International Protection Act 2015, which is different to asylum seekers who apply in Ireland initially.

Between 2015 and 2018, Ireland welcomed 1,130 programme refugees under the UNHCR-led Resettlement Programme.

Our original commitment was 1,040, and the Minister pledged to accept a further 945 between 2018 and 2019.

The remaining 855 people under this section of the IRPP are expected to arrive by the end of October 2019.

As a member of the IRPP Taskforce, the Irish Red Cross (IRC) has been working with the Department of Justice and Equality to help refugees access formal and informal social support services.

Mediterranean search and rescue missions

In 2018, Ireland admitted 58 people from search and rescue missions in the Mediterranean. Some 22 adults and four unaccompanied minors arrived from Malta, while 32 adults arrived from Sicily. Their claims for international protection will be assessed in Ireland.

Community Sponsorship Ireland

A pilot community sponsorship project for 50 refugees began in autumn 2018. It will run for 18 months. Community Sponsorship Ireland (CSI) is an alternative to the traditional state-centred model for resettling people in Ireland. Under the CSI programme, private citizens and community-based organisations will provide direct support and assistance to refugees invited to settle in their locality.
**Unaccompanied minors**

When announcing the Refugee Protection Programme in September 2015, the Government recognised how important it was to address the position of unaccompanied children. In November 2016, the Dáil passed an all-party motion committing Ireland to taking up to 200 children from the former Calais migrant camp. This was a gesture of humanitarian assistance towards the most vulnerable caught up in the migration crisis.

Following the Government decision, Tusla (the Child and Family Agency) of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, launched the Calais Special Project (CSP).

Since 2015, the French authorities identified, in cooperation with us, 41 children as being suitable to relocate to Ireland. All of these unaccompanied minors, who used to live in the migrant camp at Calais, have arrived in the State under this initiative. This initiative has now ended.

In 2018, the final 11 of the 41 unaccompanied minors arrived in Ireland under this initiative. Three children were reunited with family in Ireland. The remaining children were placed in the care of Tusla.
Migrant Integration Strategy

We are represented on the Migrant Integration Strategy Monitoring and Co-ordination Committee, which is chaired by Minister of State David Stanton. The committee includes:

- government departments,
- public bodies,
- local authorities, and
- non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Its role is to monitor how all actions under the Strategy are put in place. Several subcommittees have been set up to focus on particular themes. We chair a subcommittee on the ‘Active Citizenship’ theme. This work involves the following areas of responsibilities:

- citizenship,
- long-term residency,
- registration of minors,
- statistics, and
- fees.

This subcommittee also covers issues related to:

- the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government,
- Sport Ireland, and
- the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration.

Progress under the Strategy was reviewed at the end of 2018, as required by Strategy Action No. 76. We contributed to this review, which is due to be published in 2019.
Chapter 5 | Customer service

2018 immigration customer service at a glance

**Oireachtas**
- 852 Parliamentary questions
- 5,418 Queries to our Oireachtas Mail service

**Web**
- 2.48 million users
- 5.67 million sessions

**Information**
- 116 Subject Access Requests
- 414 Freedom of Information Requests

**People**
- 286,000 Applications across all immigration schemes*
- 15.6 million Passengers through Dublin airport immigration
- 2.5 million users of e-Gates

**Queries**
- 206,000 Email queries from customers
- 257 Press queries
- 298 Customer complaints*

*including residence permits, visas, registrations, international protection

* to the dedicated complaints mailbox
Use of plain English

During 2018, INIS committed to further the use of plain English across all of its communications. Plain English is a way of presenting information that helps ensure people will understand it the first time they read it. We took a number of actions throughout the year, led by our communications unit and the wider communications network, made up of representatives from units all over INIS.

One-day plain English training
In 2018, 70 people across the organisation received training in plain English from the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA). This gave us an insight into what we were doing well in our writing and where we could do even better. It also gave us tools to use when updating materials. These included:

- plain English checklists,
- the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Plain English Style Guide,
- the National Disability Authority’s Communication Toolkit,
- plain English guides to specialist terms (legal, political and financial), and
- samples of our own work edited using plain English guidelines.

Our management team are keen supporters of plain English.
Revised forms
Staff reviewed all of our application forms. Most are now published in a new, more coherent and easy-to-use format. We are monitoring how well these are completed relative to the original forms. We use plain English on all new information going on our website, with a full review of all existing content ongoing.

Sharing our knowledge
A representative from our management team addressed an audience of over 400 staff at a Department of Justice and Equality in 2018. He shared his experiences of working to be an organisation that consistently provides information in plain English. This presentation got a very positive response, as it was a fair and honest description of our work towards being an organisation, with complex and often legalistic schemes, that consistently provides information in a clear and accessible way.

Plain English Mark
In 2017, for the first time, the Annual Review of Immigration in Ireland received the Plain English Approval Mark from NALA.

We were also shortlisted for the Mason Hayes & Curran/NALA national Plain English awards in the category of Best Use of Plain English by an Organisation. The judging panel was independent, and we were proud of our staff’s work. We are committed to doing more work in plain English in 2019.

In a survey of our website users, 80% of people said they found the language used easy to understand.
Staff feedback

**My work as an immigration officer**

My name is Barry Moore and I have been working as an Immigration Officer in the Border Management Unit since October 2018. My role is to immigrate passengers arriving from both EU and non-EU countries. The thing I most like about my role is that every day is different. I get to meet many people from all over the world. The thing I least like about my role is the queues at busy times – although myself and my colleagues ensure that passengers are immigrated as efficiently as possible. The plus side of this is that the shift goes very quickly. Team work plays a big part in an immigration officer’s role.

Dublin Airport is a very busy place to work and passenger numbers are increasing. It is a busy, challenging role, but I enjoy it and would recommend it to anyone who likes working as part of a team in a busy varied role.

**Customer feedback**

- As a regular traveller, I am so impressed to be able to use my Irish Passport card at the electronic gates in Dublin Airport.
  - eGates customer, November 2018

- I must thank the entire staff team for their great customer service. Although, they had pressure that the systems were slow and speakers were not working that day the staff were incredibly patient with a welcoming smile to customers.
  - registration office customer, December 2018
Chapter 6
Looking forward to 2019
Looking Forward to 2019

In 2019, the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) will continue to meet the strategic commitments that we list in Chapter 1. We will also:

- carry out the significant work outlined in the INIS Service Improvement Plan, and
- take part in and shape the wider Transformation Programme underway in the Department of Justice and Equality. (This programme plans to put in place new structures, work processes and skills to improve effectiveness.)

2019 objectives

Naturalisation and immigration Service

In 2019, we aim to prepare immigration services for the impact of Brexit by:

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

Mission, purpose and legislation

In 2019, we will update our mission, purpose and legislation in relation to immigration services. This includes:

- commence the implementation of the recommendations of the worldwide review of visa service delivery, and
- reviewing our immigration legislation.

Safe and secure immigration system

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

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

In 2019, we will begin planning how to transfer the registration function (outside Dublin) from GNIB to INIS. This will be supported by a new INIS owned and operated Immigration and Border Information System (IBIS).

**Customer needs**

We will design immigration services based on customer needs and where possible take a service design approach. This includes putting in place additional pre-clearance schemes. For the majority of existing INIS application types we will roll out online applications and payments.

In the Registration office we will commence development of:

- a new appointment system and,
- remove the need for re-entry visas for most adults.

**Improve processing for international protection applications**

By the end of 2019, we will improve the processing rate for international protection applications (see Chapter 4), including the time taken for first instance decisions. First-instance decisions are decisions made by the Minister to grant or refuse an application after it has been processed and before any appeals have been made.

**Increased volumes**

In 2019, we will process more than 300,000 immigration applications including:

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

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

Investor Programme

In 2019, we will administer the Immigrant Investor Programme – this is a programme open to non-EEA nationals and their families who commit to an approved investment in Ireland. An external review of the programme will be carried out in 2019.
Service Improvement Plan

What is the Service Improvement Plan?

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Change Management Unit and all Project Managers in INIS form the Programme Team. This team meet fortnightly to plan and manage how all aspects of the Service Improvement Plan will be acted on.

Glossary

Asylum seekers - see International Protection.

Citizenship - see Naturalisation.

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

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

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

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

EU Relocation Programme - the transfer of asylum seekers from one EU State to another. Their asylum applications are examined in the Member State where they are relocated. Eligibility for the relocation scheme is limited to applicants who are in clear need of international protection and are a national or stateless (not recognised as a national by any state) resident of those countries for which the EU-wide average recognition rate is more than 75 percent.

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

Family Reunification - people who hold immigration permission in the State may be able to apply for their family members to enter and live in the State. The exact rights in relation to family reunification depend on the specific type of immigration permission held.
International Protection - there are two types of international protection:

- refugee status, and
- subsidiary protection (protection granted for those seeking asylum who did not qualify for refugee status).

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

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

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation

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

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

Programme refugees – see EU Resettlement Programme

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

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

UNHCR - the United Nations Refugee Agency