

Overview of PA Report Recommendations and actions taken to date by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) in ongoing implementation of those recommendations (November 2006)

Recommendation 1. *Redeploy staff from the asylum agencies into DJELR Visa, Immigration and Citizenship. Staff may be redeployed due to a 40% reduction in the volume of asylum applications between 2003 and 2004.*

Action to date

The Report sets out a framework for the re-deployment of some 140 posts from the asylum area to other immigration functions such as visa processing, citizenship services and repatriations. This strategy for the movement of large numbers of staff to address changing demands for the various services provided by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) – which is indicated by a fall in asylum numbers and an increase in demands for other immigration services - has been ongoing for some time now. Over 120 posts have been moved to date.

Recommendation 2. *Introduce a Shared Corporate Services to provide the necessary corporate support for the immigration and asylum areas in the Department, ORAC, RAT and RIA.*

Action to date

INIS has established a Corporate Support Division to deal with accommodation, finance and personnel matters, management information and co-ordination functions. To date these functions are being performed for INIS Divisions located in Burgh Quay and the Irish Life Centre. It is intended to bring all corporate support matters in ORAC¹ and RAT under its control in due course having particular regard to the proposed new processing framework in the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill. IT services for INIS have also been centralised in the Department's IT Division with policy matters on IT developments being handled by relevant Divisions in INIS.

¹ The Scheme of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill which was published on 6 September 2006 provides for the functions being carried out by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) to be subsumed into the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS). It also proposes that the Refugee Appeals Tribunal be replaced by a statutory independent Protection Review Tribunal.

Recommendation 3. *Establish a central source for the Country of Origin (COI) information supply, further consolidate research activities and performance improvement across the agencies and DJELR.*

Action to date

It has been decided that the Refugee Documentation Centre (RDC) which is operated by the Legal Aid Board and the Refugee Legal Service will act as the central COI source for the INIS.

A new Country of Origin IT System is being developed to enhance the operational capacity of the RDC as part of a new IT system for INIS called AISIP (Asylum Information System Information Programme) which is due to commence construction in late 2006 for delivery over a period of 15 months approximately.

Recommendation 4. *Introduce a dedicated Service Development team in DJELR to progress critical organisational initiatives such as implementing key change initiatives, developing guidelines governing critical processes, designing and implementing management processes for performance and service improvement.*

Action to date

A team has been put together in the INIS to produce guidelines for staff on various immigration related issues. Work is also ongoing on the enhancement of information leaflets. The INIS under the Director General has been charged with overseeing the implementation of key change initiatives to enhance customer service as well as designing and implementing management processes for performance and service improvement.

Recommendation 5. *Make Organisational adjustments within DJELR to strengthen capacity with regard to operations and policy.*

Action to date

The capacity for policy development in the areas of immigration and asylum (including in the EU area) is being strengthened on an ongoing basis and includes staff development initiatives as well as structural changes within the organisation. For example, enhanced co-ordination arrangements have been introduced to support EU related activities. A Security and Control Unit has been established in the visas and immigration operations areas. Some structural changes have also been introduced to more clearly delineate functions in areas dealing with Entry (visas), Residence and Removals.

The plan also is to centralise all judicial review functions in one Unit to cover both first instance asylum and all immigration matters.

New Visa processing offices have been opened by INIS in Beijing, Moscow and New Delhi and there are plans to open additional offices in the coming months.

This whole area is being kept under ongoing review so that INIS has the capacity to provide a first class service in key areas such as policy (including legislative) development, case management and processing and operational support services.

Recommendation 6. *Develop a focused Customer Service Model within DJELR.*

Action to date

This recommendation is one of the projects being undertaken by the Corporate Support Division in INIS. A number of Customer Service changes and improvements have been introduced for those seeking visas to re-enter the State following a visit abroad. These include longer Public Office opening hours, the extension of Helpline operating hours and the introduction of an Enquiry Desk.

In addition, a Customer Action Plan and Customer Charter are being drafted and will be published shortly. This will be followed by specific training for staff on customer service.

The planned introduction of a new IT system for the INIS will provide critical support in this area and allow an enhanced capacity to provide more efficient services to customers.

New Visa processing offices have been opened by INIS in Beijing, Moscow and New Delhi and there are plans to open additional offices in the coming months.

Recommendation 7. *Provide a single view of the client through an integrated case management, workflow and scanning system for the entire process of immigration and asylum.*

Action to date

A high level specification has been developed for a new "whole of process" IT system for the INIS called AISIP. This will include a case management and statistical information system; a country of origin information system; a new accommodation management system for the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) and a file tracking system. Tenders have been evaluated and a preferred bidder chosen (subject to Peer Review process currently underway). The intention is to sign contracts and commence building work in late 2006 with the new AISIP system to be delivered over a period of 15 months approximately.

Recommendation 8. *Adopt a single procedure for all protection and other issues including a streamlined removals process.*

Action to date

The introduction of a single protection procedure in which all protection needs are considered together (refugee and subsidiary - ECHR; CAT etc) as well as the discretionary/humanitarian functions of the Minister is included in the Scheme of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill published on 6 September 2006, which is now with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel for drafting.

Recommendation 9. *Co-ordinate activities on immigration through the formation of a new institutional structure, INIS.*

Action to date

The Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) was established in March 2005 and incorporates the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform's structures dealing with asylum, immigration, visas and citizenship. The Visa Office of the Department of Foreign Affairs transferred to INIS in January 2006.

Some of the key functions of INIS include

- **Providing a single contact point or “one stop shop” for applications for entry to the State.**
- **Strengthening the effectiveness and the integrity of the State's immigration and protection system.**
- **Providing a clearer system involving more streamlined processes.**
- **Improving sharing of information in order to simplify decision making.**
- **Improving service times as applications do not have to be submitted to a number of organisations, and**
- **Improving control and enforcement mechanisms.**