



Clare Public Participation Network
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Clare PPN submission to inform a new migrant integration strategy 30th November 2023

Clare Public Participation Network welcomes this opportunity to make this brief submission in relation to the above consultation.

Over the last five years Clare PPN has worked closely with communities all over Clare including communities who have become the receiving communities for Programme Refugees, International Protection Applicants and beneficiaries of Temporary Protection from Ukraine.

Prior to this and on an ongoing basis Clare PPN has engaged with the Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland who are one of our member groups and they have lent their support to our work with communities and those new to our communities in the county. With their input we have campaigned to end direct provision, secure the right to work for international protection applicants and to explain changes in the international protection process to residents of direct provision and emergency centres in Clare.

Working alongside our member groups we have also established welcome groups and activities for new arrivals and host communities in Lisdoonvarna, Ballyvaughan, Miltown Malbay, Ennis and helped to establish 'Failte Isteach' in the county.

We have worked to combat the rise of the far right through organising community information sessions, anti-racism training and integration events.

In line with our remit, we have delivered training on the Irish Political System to programme refugees, international protection applicants and other groups and organised voter registration and election hustings with candidates.

We and our members are deeply committed to ensuring that migrants to our county are welcomed and accepted in our communities. Much of our recent research work which relates to poverty and socio economic rights in Clare has demonstrated firstly that Clare needs inward migration to ensure our communities are sustainable and secondly that the current methods of managing the migration to Clare are creating poverty traps, ghettoising and concentrating many new arrivals in congregated institutional settings.

In brief, we do not think that the Irish state is investing sufficiently in communities and community supports and in essential infrastructure to make growing inward migration a success for both migrants and host communities.

We would like to outline below some of the key measures we think are immediately necessary:

1. Implement all of the recommendations from the Catherine Day Report and the resultant white paper.
2. Ensure that Children's allowance payments are made to all children in Ireland irrespective of their migration status.
3. Construct sufficient purpose built reception centres for current and future levels of predicted arrivals of international protection applicants and ensure that they are staffed with skilled social care staff, provide early access to legal support teams and translators. End the practice of unrelated people sharing rooms.
4. Provide immediate access to the labour market to anyone who has been accepted into the international protection process.
5. Ensure that those who have received an initial negative response to their protection claim have continued access to the labour market until such a time as their case is finally decided. It is beneficial to the state and to the person affected and their dependents if those within the protection system can work. It also helps to prevent abuses in workplaces.
6. Establish a fast track process for the recognition of qualifications to ensure that migrants can work at the level to which they are qualified.
7. Ensure that spouses/partners of those granted working visas here are entitled to work.
8. Ensure that once in Ireland the immigration status of spouses/partners is not dependent on their relationship with the original visa recipient.
9. Remove or significantly reduce the fees associated with gaining citizenship. These can be prohibitive for families in particular.

10. Redress the current system of anomalies where those who have come to seek protection here are treated differently with one group (BOTP) entitled to full social welfare and supports and with a tax free payment available to landlords who might offer them houses, a situation that is not available to IPOs or indigenous people in the same communities. We recommend strongly that the full range of social welfare and housing supports be made available to IPOs and that if landlords are to be incentivized to offer housing that this incentivization must be available equally for all within a community.
11. We recommend that sufficient social housing, modular housing, Traveller specific accommodation and the attendant services are planned for and constructed. There are currently approximately 4,000 people in Clare living in unsuitable congregated commercially owned properties. Integration strategies will not work where people new to our communities live in institutions set apart from the community as a whole.
12. We need considerable investment in the services in rural areas in order to accommodate those migrating to Ireland and to ensure that services are available to host communities. With access to health including mental health support services, education and transport being key
13. Ensure that non commercial community spaces are available and welcoming for cultural, social and sporting activities for communities from all backgrounds including existing indigenous communities. This is particularly important if modular housing or new developments are being created. If so sports, recreation, services and community centres should be built or identified first. Street level units for the establishment of businesses are a key factor in creating vibrant communities – barbers, cafes, bakeries, hair stylists, convenience shops etc are necessary.
14. We need to develop and establish new ways of communicating with communities within which migrants are being located by the state. We in Clare PPN do not believe that communities should have a veto on who lives within them however we do understand the frustration some communities may have when commercial operators in their areas make decisions based on profit which affect a whole town and they are not included in either the information or the planning for these changes. This practice undermines positive integration from the outset and can and has lead to tensions which can easily be manipulated into racism. Sharing correct timely information with communities and migrants must be a key priority, as we have learned there are actors committed to division ready to provide misinformation very swiftly if a vacuum is left for them to fill.

15. Ensure that children and young people's opportunities are not limited by their parents or their own immigration status- access to third level education and apprenticeships should be available to migrant children and young people. Voting franchise should be extended to children of migrants when they reach 18, to not do so may mean they have no access to democratic participation anywhere. This can be based on habitual residence if necessary. We recommend the restoration of eligibility for Irish citizenship to all of those born in Ireland and understand that this can be achieved through legislation without recourse to a constitutional referendum.
16. Strengthen, increase and develop the community development projects across the whole country and ensure they have an integration brief and the resources to deliver on it.
17. Strengthen and increase the language supports available for all migrants to Ireland. This is an investment that will pay for itself with host country language skills being a key determinant in positive integration and the ability to build a successful life here for migrants.
18. For BOTPs – it would be highly beneficial to ensure that they receive permission to remain here for greater lengths of time. In focus groups held by us many in this category felt that they would not establish a business here if they did not know they could stay longer than a year.
19. In recent years the Spanish Government had a system whereby if a migrant had been three years or more in Spain, whether 'legally' with a visa or as an irregular migrant they would be given the opportunity to regularise their status. We recommend similar is adopted in Ireland, noting the success of the recent regularization process held here.
20. The state must also stop treating inward migration as a problem. We recommend a state led positive communications campaign which demonstrates how much we need inward migration and the positive contributions it makes.
21. Understanding how significant arts, music, culture and sport are in Ireland for wellbeing and for the development of our communities a new migrant integration strategy must seek to identify and provide supports both for the inclusion of migrants within existing activities in Ireland and for the development of practices originating elsewhere which may be important to communities migrating here. This will mean allocating funding streams for these pursuits and ensuring that their availability is communicated to the diverse communities of migrants.

22. A new migrant integration strategy must be cognizant of the diversity within each migrant community, there has been a tendency here to identify 'community leaders' from different countries and for the state to engage with migrant groups through them. In many cases this has meant that religious leaders play a key role in integration and whilst valuable this should not be the only channel of engagement by the state or other bodies.

Clare PPN looks forward to continuing to engage in this process and welcomes any communications or queries in respect of this submission.

Yours Sincerely,

Sarah Clancy

Clare PPN Coordinator

Any queries in relation to this submission can be directed to Sarah Clancy, Clare PPN Coordinator, for the attention of the Secretariat of Clare PPN:

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