

## Immigration and Integration Policy: Developing a coordinated approach to immigration and integration policy and legislation

### Introduction:

The Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI) believes immigration to Ireland is a positive reality and that migrants contribute to this country economically, socially and culturally. The ICI continues to call on the Irish Government to develop and implement integrated, transparent and rights-based immigration and integration policies to reflect this reality.

### Key recommendations for consideration

- Current and future Irish Governments need to adopt a **more strategic, long-term approach to immigration and integration policies**. There is an urgent need for an integrated, coherent and co-ordinated national policy on immigration and integration that has been shaped by all those affected by it and is part of a shared vision on the future development of Irish society
- A **'rights-based' approach** should be adopted in the development of all migration law and policy so that the rights and specific needs of those affected most by the policies, migrants themselves, are at the centre of future policy development
- The **rights and entitlements of migrants and their families** should be set out more fully in immigration law. If migrants and their families have needs over and above those of the receiving society members, those additional needs should be identified and appropriate services put in place
- A **high-level, cross-departmental structure** needs to be set up to coordinate the work of all statutory bodies that have a brief in the area of immigration and integration. This cross-departmental body should be driven by a senior **Minister who has a seat at the cabinet table, is specifically responsible for immigration and integration issues** and has sufficient financial and human resources to drive the process under a clearly defined strategy
- **More research and data collection** should be undertaken on migration to Ireland. This work should be funded appropriately and data collection should be more comprehensive, disaggregated fully, and published regularly

### The ICI's work in this area

#### Campaign for cross-departmental structure led by a senior minister:

The ICI has been campaigning for a more coordinated approach between Irish government departments and for greater coherence in policy making on immigration issues. In particular, we have been calling for the establishment of a robust, high-level cross departmental structure, which is led by a senior Minister with a seat at the cabinet table, to coordinate the work of all statutory bodies that have a brief in the area of immigration and integration issues.

## 2.

Migrants seeking information and support from the ICI repeatedly express frustration with the confusing system they must negotiate. They are often required to go from one government department or agency to another to sort out their legal situation or obtain information about their rights. The ICI believes this situation been caused, to a large degree, by the fact that there is no lead agency responsible for immigration and integration in Ireland at present, with responsibility for coordination of all policies, legislation and related activities.

To further the debate on this issue, the ICI commissioned a discussion document on the issue in late 2006. It looks at examples of joined-up government approaches to immigration and integration in other countries. These examples provide some initial learning for Ireland when developing a more coordinated and whole-of-government approach to immigration and integration. Recommendations are made on the role and remit of such a structure.

The ICI's discussion document, "*Coordinating Immigration and Integration: Learning from the International Experience*", was launched in June 2007 (see the publications and research section of this website).