

Strategic Plan

2017-21

Working for **equality**



Who we are

The Immigrant Council was founded in 2001 and is the leading voice in securing improved rights and protections which benefit Irish citizens, migrants and their families. The organisation provides three tiers of support to migrants; our primary support is a helpline which provides over-the-phone advice on all immigration queries, which took more than 4,000 calls in 2016. The second tier of support is when a telephone call is deemed insufficient and we need a face-to-face meeting to provide a deeper level of support. The third and most in-depth support is provided by the lawyers in our Independent Law Centre, who take between 50 and 100 cases per year. In addition to our service provision the organisation also undertakes substantial research and activity in the areas of anti-trafficking and integration.



Mission

The Immigrant Council of Ireland is a human rights organisation and law centre. We support and advocate for the rights of immigrants and their families and act as a catalyst for public debate, legal and policy change.

Vision

Our vision in the Immigrant Council of Ireland is of a society that is fair, respects human rights and diversity and is committed to everyone, including people from a migrant background, having the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Values

The values which inform and drive the work of the Immigrant Council are:

- We are rights based, supporting justice and equality for all.
- We respect and support the empowerment of migrants, works in solidarity.
- We embrace and promote diversity and inclusion.
- Gender equality is central to our work
- We work in partnership and collaboration to achieve our goals.
- We are innovative in our approaches and value an evidence based approach
- We practice good governance.

What we do



We defend.

We campaign.

We research.

We educate.

We empower.

We work together.

Service provision



Over 16 years the Immigrant Council's Information and Advice services has dealt with more than 100,000 queries. It dealt with 4,410 callers in 2016 alone. Leave to remain queries are by far the largest percentage of current queries, with citizenship, family reunification and various visa and work permits next. Asylum, deportation and racism related queries demonstrate the variety and complex nature of the responses the Immigrant Council supports.

Arising from this service contact the Immigrant Council's Legal Services take on strategic casework, providing essential, free legal support to migrants with nowhere else to turn. In 2016 42 new client files were

opened. Legal advice, support and advocacy was provided in a further 104 miscellaneous cases where formal legal representation was not required. Cases taken by the organisation can also arise from its participation in various legal and policy fora. This case work gives the Immigrant Council high standing in the wider legal community and among other advocacy and legal service stakeholders. Successful direct casework outcomes on key issues during the last strategic plan period include:

- The first Declaration of Statelessness issued in Ireland in the absence of a formal stateless determination procedure
- Positive identification of a

'historic' victim of trafficking otherwise excluded from identification under the administrative arrangements as trafficking pre-dated the Criminal Justice Act 2008

- Backdating of Child Benefit payments to victim of trafficking who had initially been refused such payments on grounds that she was deemed not 'habitually resident' in Ireland at the time she was being exploited
- Retention of residence entitlement of parents of EU citizen children following relationship breakdown
- Successfully representing a woman with a disability to make a successful application for citizenship where previously she had been deemed not to have capacity to take an oath

Anti-trafficking



The Immigrant Council of Ireland has developed an expertise in the area of anti-trafficking from its individual case work with victims of trafficking and participation in numerous research projects. The driving force of our work is to examine the impact and challenge the causes of human trafficking. In this work the Immigrant Council will continue to lead and partner on a number of EU projects on anti-trafficking, examining international best practice

and opportunities to refine and improve our own response. Domestic advocacy will focus on effective implementation of the National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking in Ireland, which includes many of the organisation's specific recommendations. We will be seeking improved identification procedures, the delivery of appropriate protection and assistance measures for all victims in Ireland, appropriate provision of services to victim

and maintain our call for appropriate compensation procedures and the installation of an independent National Rapporteur. In addition, as a core partner in the Turn Off the Red Light Campaign which culminated in the passing of the Sexual Offences Act in early 2017, the Immigrant Council of Ireland will continue to campaign for effective implementation of the legislation, including delivering training to An Garda Síochána on anti-trafficking.

Integration



Promoting the effective integration of people from a migrant background into Irish society is a cross-cutting theme underpinning all the Immigrant Council's work. We will continue to research, debate and deliver key recommendations to the State, recognising we play a vital role in keeping the people of Ireland aware and sensitive to the needs of migrants in this country and elsewhere through the establishment of an Integration Hub. We will continue to build on the body of research we have

produced on the incidence of racism in Ireland by chronicling individual incidents of racism to inform our focus. In recent years this has led to specific reports on racism within social housing and associated training programmes and putting Islamophobia on the agenda in Ireland. A focus on transport led to the annual national anti-racism campaign in conjunction with public transport providers (the largest anti-racism awareness campaign in the country). We

will support the Government to effectively implement its National Migrant Integration Strategy. Our specialised team will refine and deliver training on anti-racism and diversity in the workplace. Partnerships are at the core of our integration work and we look forward to continuing to build relationships with migrant communities in our efforts to promote political participation, provide media training and engender greater community involvement.

Immigrant Council of Ireland Strategic Goals 2017-21

1

The Immigrant Council will work to ensure that migrants and their families get clear, accessible information and advice which will provide them with greater access to justice and inclusion.

How?



We will use our 3 tiers of frontline service provision; the helpline, face-to-face meetings and our independent law centre to ensure migrants and their families are given appropriate levels of information and support when they need it.

2

The Immigrant Council works to reform immigration legislation, immigration policy and systems managing migrants and migration flows to create fair, transparent, inclusive immigration law and policy.

How?



We will use the information gathered from our service provision work together with independent research and evidence to undertake strategic litigation. This work will also inform our national advocacy work calling for immigration reform.

3

The Immigrant Council is committed to attend to the needs of migrants and their families, paying attention to the vulnerable and most marginalised [with a focus on women and children] to ensure they too can live lives free from violence and oppression.

How?



We will continue to provide support to individual victims of domestic abuse and trafficking. We will combine our expert knowledge with evidenced research and call for improved protections and supports for these women, working closely with European partners. We will also seek improved clarity and support for children within Ireland's immigration system. We will apply a gendered lens to all of our work.

4

The Immigrant Council will enhance its role in shaping the narrative on migrant rights and will play a leading role in supporting integration in Ireland and combatting xenophobia and racism.

How?



Working to improve the integration of migrants within Irish society is a cross-cutting strategic goal. Specifically we will be seeking effective implementation of the State National Migrant Integration Strategy. We will be working to deliver focused localised activities including supporting local authorities to develop integration strategies and providing training on diversity, anti-racism and political participation. Tackling racism and supporting the call for effective Hate Crime legislation are important elements.

5

The Immigrant Council will maintain good governance as an organisation, ensuring its continued sustainability and compliance with the Governance Code.

How?



We will regularly monitor our policies to ensure they are in line with the highest standards and ensure the organisation remains a sustainable entity by accessing suitable funding streams.



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