



# Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2023: Ireland

DERVLA POTTER, KEIRE MURPHY, ANNE SHERIDAN AND  
YAZMIN DE BARRA



# ANNUAL REPORT ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM 2023: IRELAND

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**January 2025**

ESRI SURVEY AND STATISTICAL REPORT SERIES  
NUMBER 127

Study completed by the Irish National Contact Point of the European Migration Network (EMN), which is financially supported by the European Union and the Irish Department of Justice. The EMN was established via Council Decision 2008/381/EC.

Available to download from [www.emn.ie](http://www.emn.ie)

<https://doi.org/10.26504/sustat127>

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Whitaker Square, Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Dublin 2



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The European Migration Network (EMN) provides up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum of third-country nationals and supports policymaking in the European Union (EU), its Member States and Observer Countries, as well as informing the wider public. The EMN comprises the EMN National Contact Points (EMN NCPs) in EMN Member (EU Member States except Denmark) and Observer Countries (Norway, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Montenegro, Armenia and Serbia) and the European Commission. The Irish National Contact Point of the European Migration Network, EMN Ireland, sits within the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and the Department of Justice. EMN Ireland is funded by the European Union and co-funded by the Department of Justice.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors want to thank the following for their input into the report: staff members of the International Protection Office; officials of the Department of Justice; officials of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment; officials of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; officials of the Department of Education; officials of the Department of the Taoiseach; staff members of the Department of Social Protection; Hilka Becker (Chairperson) of the International Protection Appeals Tribunal; staff members of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science; staff members of the Department of Health; staff members of Tusla Child and Family Agency; staff members of the Department of Foreign Affairs; staff members of An Garda Síochána; staff members of the Local Government Management Agency; staff members of UNHCR Ireland; staff members of Crosscare Refugee and Migrant Project and staff members of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

We would like to thank Emily Cunniffe for preparing case law summaries and analyses of significant legal occurrences.

We would also like to acknowledge the comments and assistance of our colleague Emma Quinn, Head of EMN Ireland, and Liza Costello for copy-editing the report.

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

This EMN study, compiled according to commonly agreed specifications, provides an overview of migration, asylum trends and policy developments for 2023. The report consists of information gathered primarily for the EU-level synthesis report of the EMN, *Annual report on migration and asylum 2023*. All reports are available at: [www.ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-publications/emn-annual-reports\\_en](http://www.ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-publications/emn-annual-reports_en).

*This report has been accepted for publication by the Institute, which does not itself take institutional policy positions. The report has been peer reviewed prior to publication. The authors are solely responsible for the content and the views expressed do not represent the position of the Economic and Social Research Institute, the Department of Justice, or the European Commission, Directorate-General Migration and Home Affairs.*

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND IRISH TERMS

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AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
An Garda Síochána	Irish national police force
AROPE	At risk of poverty and social exclusion
AWS	Atypical Working Scheme
BoTP	Beneficiary of temporary protection
CCMA	County and City Management Association
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CSOL	Critical Skills Occupations List
CYPSC	Children and Young Peoples' Services Committee
Dáil	Irish parliament, lower house
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
DETE	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
DHLGH	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
EEA	European Economic Area
EMN	European Migration Network
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
EU	European Union
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
FGM	Female genital mutilation
GNIB	Garda National Immigration Bureau
GNPSB	Garda National Protective Services Bureau
GRETA	Group of Experts Against Trafficking in Human Beings
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
HIQA	Health Information and Quality Authority
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICI	Immigrant Council of Ireland

ICOS	Irish Council for International Students
IHREC	Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
IOL	Ineligible Occupations List
IOM	International Organization for Migration
INAR	Irish Network Against Racism
IPA	International protection applicant
IPAS	International Protection Accommodation Services
IPAT	International Protection Appeals Tribunal
IPO	International Protection Office
IPS	Irish Prison Service
IRC	Irish Refugee Council
IRPP	Irish Refugee Protection Programme
ISD	Immigration Service Delivery
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MRCI	Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
NCP	National Contact Point
NFQ	National Framework for Qualifications
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
OCO	Ombudsman for Children's Office
Oireachtas	Irish parliament, both houses
OPW	Office of Public Works
PPSN	Personal public service number
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
REALT	Regional Education and Language Teams
SCSIP	Separated children seeking international protection
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal (of the UN)
SICAP	Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme
Seanad	Irish parliament, upper house
SUSI	Student Universal Support Ireland
Tánaiste	Deputy prime minister
Taoiseach	Prime minister
TCN	Third-country national

TD	Teachta Dála (member of the Dáil)
Tusla	Child and Family Agency
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCAT	United Nations Convention Against Torture
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VNR	Voluntary National Review
VR	Voluntary return
WRC	Workplace Relations Commission

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The *Annual report on migration and asylum 2023: Ireland* provides a detailed overview of the key developments in migration and asylum in Ireland in 2023. It includes statistics, significant policy developments and debates, research and notable case law on a comprehensive range of migration-related topics. It is the 20th report in the series and complements the European Migration Network's (EMN) series of European annual reports, which give an overview of developments across EMN Member and Observer Countries.

While Ireland's migration and asylum landscape is constantly changing, significant developments occurred in 2023. Ireland's population continues to rise, with an estimated population of 5.38 million in 2024, a 1.9% increase from the previous year. Immigration and emigration both increased in the 12 months to April 2024 according to the Central Statistics Office (CSO), although immigration was still slightly lower than the peak in 2007. During this time, Ireland welcomed arrivals from Ukraine following the continued Russian invasion, albeit in lower numbers than in 2022, and experienced continued high levels of people seeking international protection in Ireland. This report is also set against a backdrop of other social, economic and political developments such as increased costs of living, a housing crisis and increase in anti-migrant sentiment. While not all of these are covered in the report, they are relevant to understanding the context at the time.

Policy and legislative changes were also prominent in 2023, spanning various aspects of migration and asylum such as labour migration, international protection, temporary protection, integration, human trafficking, irregular migration, visas and return. Developments also occurred at multiple levels, from the national to European and international levels.

This report serves as a comprehensive resource, providing detailed statistics, policy and legislative changes, summaries of recent research and significant case law. It is intended to be a reliable reference for readers seeking to understand these elements for the year of the report.

Chapter 1 introduces the report and its methodology, and documents the structures governing migration and asylum in Ireland.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of migration in 2023, highlighting overarching and international developments such as the Department of Justice's 2023 Justice Plan, and various international and United Nations (UN) reports and reviews of Ireland in 2023, such as state reports submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and

to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, as well as a voluntary review of the Sustainable Development Goals. It also outlines Ireland's pledges at the Global Refugee Forum.

Chapter 3 gives an overview of legal migration in 2023. It presents statistics on residence and employment permits and other legal migration pathways, and notes developments such as the expansion of Ireland's occupation lists and changes to employment permits, including the introduction of a salary roadmap for employment permit holders and the expansion of the eligibility criteria to allow some non-European Economic Area (EEA) migrants to work in the civil service. It also notes the closure of the Immigrant Investor Programme. Research is summarised covering migrant labour market experiences and international students' experiences of accommodation.

Chapter 4 gives an overview of international protection in 2023. It highlights key statistics on applications, decisions, secondary movement, labour market access and resettlement. The chapter highlights continued significant developments in international protection, such as pressure on the international protection system (both processing and reception) and criticism by nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) relating to the inability to accommodate an increasing number of new international protection applicants. It also outlines two significant court decisions in relation to this. Chapter 4 summarises a significant body of research published in 2023 on international protection, including a focus on the experiences of homeless international protection applicants, the labour market integration of applicants, experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people and families and children in Direct Provision, as well as family reunification for young beneficiaries of international protection. In addition, it highlights some notable case law in addition to the cases above, with cases decided on remedies under the Dublin III Regulation, international protection applications and considerations of criminality, and revocation of refugee status as well as credibility and assessment of documents.

Chapter 5 covers the response to arrivals from Ukraine. It includes statistics on arrivals, accommodation, education and employment. It also covers developments such as the extension of the Temporary Protection Directive to 2026 and significant changes to accommodation and social welfare supports that took place in 2023, and were planned for 2024, among other changes as the Government announced a move from an emergency response to a more mainstreamed approach to accommodating arrivals and supporting their integration. Research includes a policy brief on lessons from the Ukraine hosting response for refugee sponsorship programmes.

Chapter 6 provides an overview of statistics and developments relating to unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable groups, including the Council of Europe Group of Experts baseline report on Ireland and the *Domestic, Sexual and Gender-*

*Based Violence Agency Bill*, which was signed into law. Research included a study on migrants' experience of domestic abuse.

Citizenship and statelessness statistics and developments are presented in Chapter 7. This chapter highlights amendments to the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956* and the moving of the citizenship application process online. It also notes Ireland's pledge to explore a stateless determination procedure at the Global Refugee Forum and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) publication of their latest report on mapping statelessness in Ireland. A summary is provided of a case on citizenship for a child born through surrogacy.

Chapter 8 covers integration and inclusion. It presents new statistics comparing migrant integration indicators over time, in areas such as education, labour, social inclusion and active citizenship. It also highlights notable developments including the publication of the National Action Plan Against Racism, the development of local authority integration teams, and a public consultation on the next Migrant Integration Strategy. Research summarised includes the eighth *Monitoring report on integration*, a comparison of migrant integration and attitudes in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, as well as refugee and migrant children's experience of education in Ireland, and migrant experiences of local authority integration efforts.

Chapter 9 presents human trafficking statistics and developments, including the launch of the third National Action Plan on Human Trafficking and newly opened specialised accommodation for female trafficking victims. It also provides an outline of the *Criminal Justice (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Bill 2022*, which contains provisions for the National Referral Mechanism, and which passed Committee stage in the Dáil in 2023. It also summarises two reports published in 2023: the IHREC's second evaluation of the implementation of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive and the latest US State Department's *Trafficking in persons* report.

Lastly, Chapter 10 provides an overview of statistics and developments relating to irregular migration, visas, borders and return. It notes the further suspension of visa free travel for refugees from other Council of Europe countries, a legal amendment to allow for the serving of immigration notices by electronic means, and the establishment of a new Voluntary Returns Unit in the Department of Justice's Repatriation Unit. It also summarises a policy brief on once-off and continuous regularisation schemes and cases relating to deportation orders and the constitutional rights of children, and the rights of the child in visa applications for family reunification.

The report includes an annex that gives a detailed overview of migration and asylum governance structures, and the legal framework relating to migration in Ireland. Another annex provides a list of EMN and EMN Ireland publications in 2023.

## CHAPTER 1

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### Introduction

The *Annual report on migration and asylum 2023: Ireland* is the 20th in a series of annual reports on developments in the fields of migration and asylum in Ireland. The series provides an annual overview of migration and asylum trends and policy developments in Ireland.

In accordance with Council Decision 2008/381/EC establishing the European Migration Network (EMN), the EMN National Contact Points (NCPs) in each European Union (EU) Member State (except Denmark) are tasked with providing an annual report detailing the migration and asylum situation in their Member State, including policy developments and statistical data. EMN Observer Countries may also produce an annual report.<sup>1</sup> NCPs gather information according to a common template and a comparative EMN synthesis report of developments in the EMN Member and Observer Countries is compiled, which places the main findings from the templates within an EU perspective.

NCPs also publish national-level reports. The purpose of the national-level reports is to provide an insight into the most significant political and legislative developments at state level, practical developments as well as public debates in migration and asylum.

The *EMN annual report on migration and asylum 2023: Ireland* covers the period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023.

#### 1.1 METHODOLOGY

As in previous years, NCPs filled in a common questionnaire to inform the EU-level *Annual report on migration and asylum 2023*. NCPs were asked to report on key developments (legislative policy and, to a limited extent, practice) during 2023. NCPs then adapt these questionnaires to develop national-level reports. EMN Ireland therefore developed on the original submission with an expanded definition of developments. In this report, we include:

- all legislative developments;
- major institutional developments;
- major debates in parliament;
- government statements;
- media and civil society debates;

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<sup>1</sup> The Observer Countries are: Armenia, Georgia, Macedonia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Ukraine.

- items of scale that are discussed outside a particular sector and as such are considered newsworthy while not being within the Dáil remit; and
- academic research.

Statistics, where available, were taken from published first-source material such as government or other annual reports, and statistics from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and Eurostat. Where noted, and where it was not possible to access original statistical sources, data may be taken from secondary sources. Where possible, verified data has been used; where provisional data has been included, this has been highlighted.

The report is based on extensive desk research. To provide a comprehensive and reflective overview of national legislative and other debates, stakeholders were contacted with regard to input on a draft report:

- An Garda Síochána;
- Department of the Taoiseach;
- Crosscare Refugee Service and Crosscare Migrant Project;
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE);
- Department of Justice;
- Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY);
- Department of Education;
- Department of Foreign Affairs;
- Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science;
- Department of Health;
- Department of Social Protection;
- Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC);
- International Protection Office (IPO);
- International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT);
- Local Government Management Agency;
- Tusla Child and Family Agency; and
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Ireland.



All definitions of technical terms or concepts used in the study are as per the *EMN migration and asylum glossary 9.0*.<sup>2</sup>

## 1.2 STRUCTURE OF MIGRATION AND ASYLUM POLICY

Figures 1.1 and 1.2 provide an outline of the governance structure for migration and asylum policy as of 31 December 2023. For more information on the respective roles within migration and asylum policy in Ireland and the legislative framework, see Annex A.

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<sup>2</sup> Available at [www.emn.ie](http://www.emn.ie) and [www.home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary\\_en](http://www.home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary_en).

**FIGURE 1.1 GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS IN IRELAND WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR ASYLUM AND MIGRATION, 2023**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Department of Foreign Affairs</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Minister of Foreign Affairs</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Micheál Martin</p> <p>Network of diplomatic and consular missions overseas. Limited role in issuance of visas overseas.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Minister of State for Overseas Development Aid and Diaspora</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Seán Fleming</p> <p>Network of diplomatic and consular missions overseas. Limited role in issuance of visas overseas under guidance from Department of Justice.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Department of Justice</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Minister for Justice</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Simon Harris (maternity cover)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Helen McEntee (maternity leave)</p> <p>The Minister for Justice has responsibility for immigration matters in the State including residence permissions, international protection, visas, border control and repatriation/removal.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Simon Coveney</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Neale Richmond</p> <p>DETE’s Economic Migration Policy Unit and Employment Permits Section administer and deliver on the employment permit system, which allows Ireland to fill labour market needs by recruiting non- nationals.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Department of Children, Equality, Integration, Disability and Youth (DCEDIY)</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Minister for Children, Disability, Equality, Integration and Youth</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Roderic O’Gorman</p> <p>Policy responsibility for children, including unaccompanied minors arriving in the State who are in the care of Tusla. The Minister for Children, Disability, Equality and Integration also has responsibility for integration, resettlement and the provision of accommodation and other supports to applicants for international protection.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Minister of State with special responsibility for Integration</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Joe O’Brien</p>

**FIGURE 1.2 INSTITUTIONS IN IRELAND WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR ASYLUM AND MIGRATION ON 31 DECEMBER 2023**



## CHAPTER 2

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### Migration overview

#### 2.1 STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

As mentioned in the 2022 annual report, a census of the population was conducted in April 2022. According to this census, the population of Ireland was 5.184 million in April 2022, a 7.6% increase since Census 2016 and the highest population on record since 1841.<sup>3</sup> In April 2024, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) estimated that the population was 5.38 million, a 1.9% increase from the previous year.<sup>4</sup>

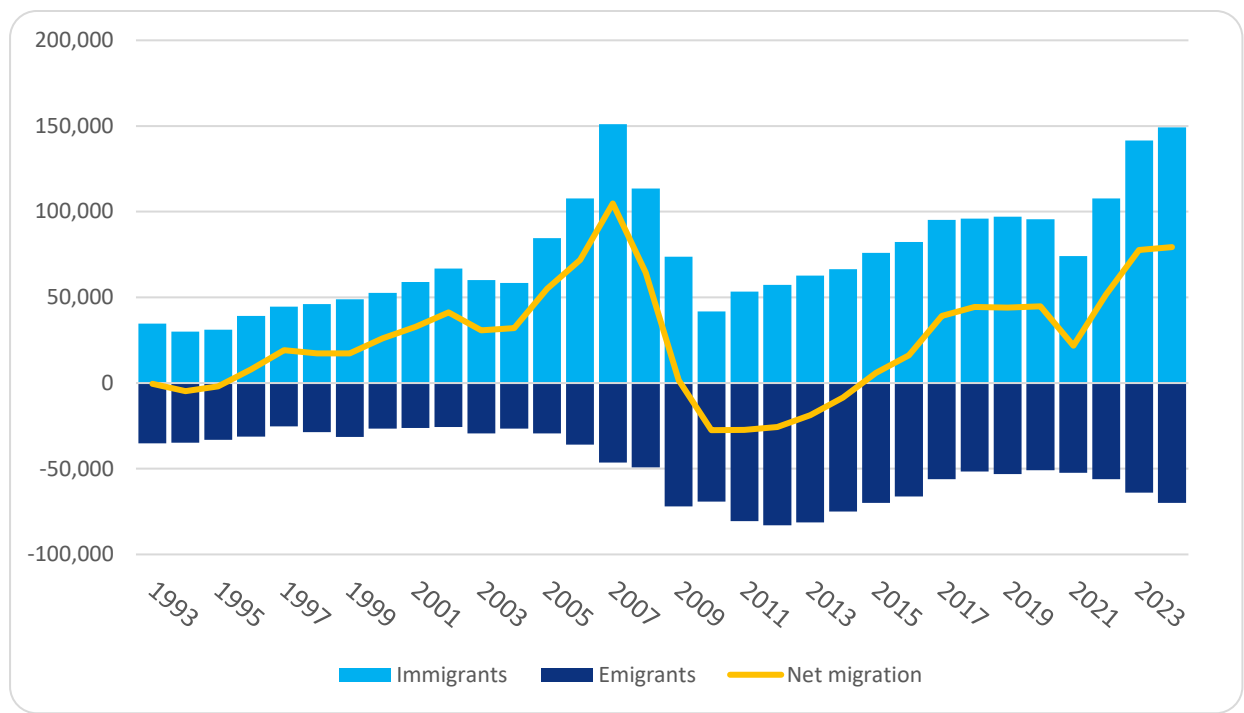
Figure 2.1 shows that immigration increased slightly in the year to April 2024, to 149,200 immigrants, a 5% increase from the year to April 2023 – a much smaller increase than seen in the year to April 2023. This was the third consecutive 12-month period where over 100,000 people immigrated to Ireland and the highest since 2007, although it is still slightly lower than the peak in 2007. Emigration also continued to increase, with 69,900 emigrants in the year to April 2024, a 9% increase from the previous year. Net migration (immigration minus emigration) was 79,300, a 2% increase from the previous year.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> CSO (2022). 'Census of population 2022 – Preliminary results', 23 June.

<sup>4</sup> CSO (2024). 'Population and migration estimates, April 2024', 27 August.

<sup>5</sup> CSO (2024). 'Population and migration estimates, April 2024', 27 August.

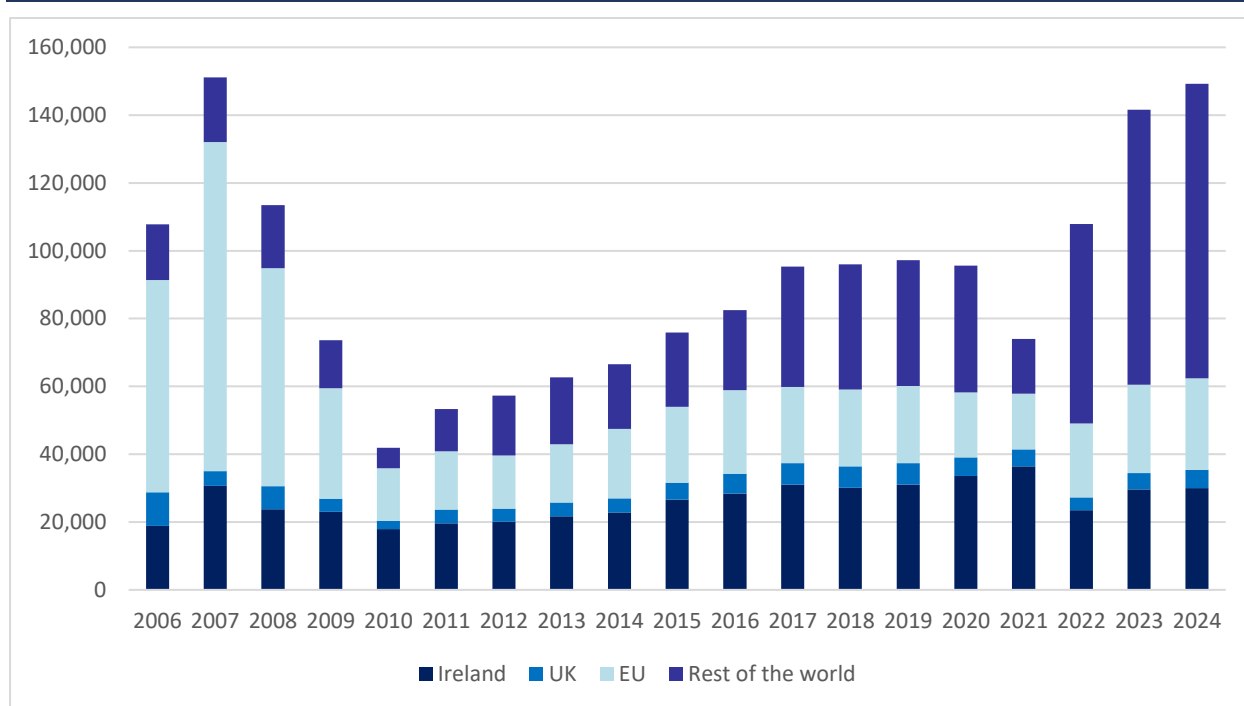
**FIGURE 2.1 GROSS AND NET MIGRATION IN IRELAND, 1993–2024**

Source: CSO (2024). 'Population and migration estimates, April 2024', extracted 27 August 2024.

As shown in Figure 2.2, immigration to Ireland increased by 5% in the year to April 2024, to a total of 149,200. This increase, while smaller than previous increases, made this the third successive 12-month period where over 100,000 people immigrated to Ireland.<sup>6</sup> Of those immigrants, 20% were returning Irish citizens (30,000), 18% were other European Union (EU) citizens (27,000) and 4% were United Kingdom (UK) citizens (5,400). The remaining 58% were citizens of other countries (86,800), including Ukraine. Each of these categories experienced an increase when compared with the previous 12-month period (to April 2023) and, as with previous years, the largest increase (7% increase) occurred in the 'rest of the world' category.<sup>7</sup>

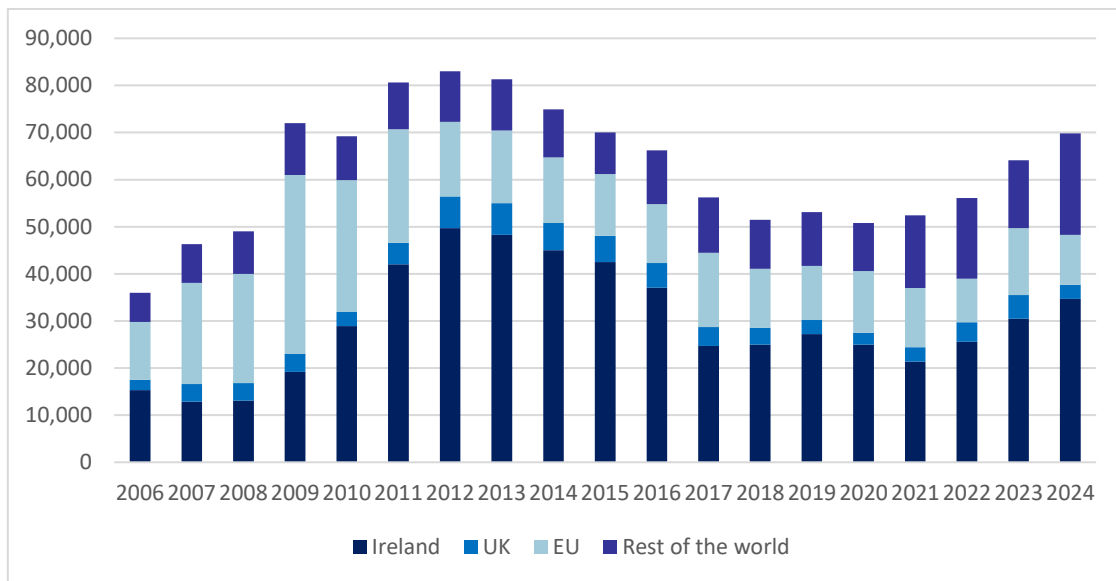
<sup>6</sup> CSO (2024). 'Population and migration estimates, April 2024', 27 August.

<sup>7</sup> CSO (2024). 'Population and migration estimates, April 2024', 27 August.

**FIGURE 2.2 ESTIMATED IMMIGRATION TO IRELAND, 2006–2024**

Source: CSO (2024). 'Population and migration estimates, April 2024, extracted 27 August 2024'.

Figure 2.3 highlights that emigration has also increased, with a 9% increase in the year to April 2024, to 69,900, the highest since the last peak in 2015. This is the sixth consecutive year where the number of emigrants from Ireland has increased. The largest category continues to be Irish nationals (representing 50% of emigrants), a small increase from the 48% of emigrants in 2023. EU and UK emigration decreased in 2023, by 40% and 25% respectively, a change in direction from the increases experienced the previous year. Emigrants from the 'rest of the world' category increased by 33%, following a decrease in the previous year.

**FIGURE 2.3 ESTIMATED EMIGRATION FROM IRELAND, 2006–2024**

Source: CSO (2023). 'Population and migration estimates, April 2024', extracted 27 August 2024.

## 2.2 OVERARCHING DEVELOPMENTS

This section presents developments that are not directly migration related but that impact migration, or that are migration related but have overarching impacts with relevance beyond a single category of migration.

### 2.2.1 Justice Plan 2023

As reported for previous years, the Department of Justice published its statement of strategy 2021–2023 in February 2021.<sup>8</sup> The Justice Plan 2023, setting out plans and objectives for 2023, was published in April 2023. Goal 4 of the statement of strategy is to 'deliver a "fair immigration system for a digital age"' (see the 2021 report in this series for further details).<sup>9</sup>

The 2023 plan continued to focus on modernisation (including implementation of the Immigration Service Delivery (ISD) modernisation strategy) and increasing case processing capacity. It also outlined aims, including:

- reviewing the policy of holding immigration detainees in prisons;
- assessing the impact of the Catherine Day programme in relation to international protection;
- finalising the strategic plan for international protection modernisation (see Section 4.2.3);

<sup>8</sup> Department of Justice (2021). *A safe, fair and inclusive Ireland: Statement of Strategy 2021 – 2023*, February.

<sup>9</sup> Department of Justice (2021). *A safe, fair and inclusive Ireland Statement of Strategy 2021 – 2023*, February, p. 19.

- implementing actions to ensure a fair and balanced, rules-based international protection system, including processing accelerated cases within three months, introducing an expanded quality assurance process for first instance international protection decisions, ensuring a continued focus on removals and voluntary return, and identifying additional measures to prevent travel by those with no right to enter Ireland;
- providing quality advice in relation to and participating in the negotiation of EU measures, in particular the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum;
- advising on an opt-in position to the recast Single Permit Directive, including the establishment of an interdepartmental working group and the preparation of an implementation plan for consideration by Government; and
- implementing recommendations to transfer remaining immigration duties from the Garda National Immigration Bureau to the Department of Justice.

### **2.3 LEGISLATION**

*Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023*, Act No. 18 of 2023.

*Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency Act 2023*, Act No. 31 of 2023.

*European Communities (Reception Conditions) (Amendment) Regulations 2023* [S.I. No. 649/2023].

*Employment Permits (Amendment) Regulations 2023* [S.I. No. 439/2023].

*Employment Permits (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2023* [S.I. No. 439/2023].

*Employment Permits (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2023* [S.I. No. 680 of 2023].

*Immigration Act 2004 (Visas) (Amendment) Regulations 2023* [S.I. No. 442/2023].

*Irish Nationality and Citizenship Regulations 2023* [S.I. No. 498/2023].

*Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) (Amendment) (No. 7) (One Parent Family Payment) Regulations 2023* [S.I. No. 355/2023].

### **2.4 COURTS: JUDICIAL REVIEW**

In 2023, 779 applications for judicial review were made on the ‘asylum’ list to the High Court. This is more than double the number of applications made in 2022 (336



applications).<sup>10</sup> This list covers asylum-related cases as well as judicial review of ministerial decisions in other immigration-related matters.

In 2023, 406 judicial review cases were resolved by the High Court, a slight increase on the 349 cases resolved in 2022. No cases were resolved out of court in 2022, which appears to be a decrease from previous years (20 in 2022 and 251 in 2021). This is a result of a change of definition in this category.<sup>11</sup> The average length of proceedings for first instance courts for asylum matters was 203 days in 2023, compared to 175 days in 2022.

The Court of Appeal received 15 appeals from the asylum list in 2023, resolving 10 cases in court.

Waiting times significantly increased for the pre-leave application stage on the asylum list in 2023, with a waiting time of nine weeks compared to two weeks in 2022. Post-leave application stage waiting times was further reduced in 2023 to one week, from one month in 2022.<sup>12</sup>

## 2.5 UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

### 2.5.1 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

As reported for 2022, Ireland submitted its fifth and sixth state reports under the Convention on the Rights of the Child to the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva. The periodic state report responds to a list of issues provided by the UN Committee to Ireland in November 2020. The UN Committee held the oral examination hearings in January 2023 and published its concluding observations in February 2023.<sup>13</sup> The Committee made the following concluding observations in relation to migration and asylum, which were welcomed by the Government:<sup>14</sup>

- Review the effectiveness of existing mechanisms for facilitating inter-agency coordination on activities affecting children and identify measures to strengthen the monitoring and coordination of all activities related to the implementation of the Convention across all sectors;
- Ensure that the legal framework on discrimination adequately protects children from discrimination and that children effectively know how to report cases of

<sup>10</sup> Courts Service (2024). *Courts Service annual report 2023*.

<sup>11</sup> In a change from 2022 to ensure consistent counting across the High Court, 'resolved out of court' now only relates to matters that are withdrawn or discontinued, according to *Courts Service annual report 2023*.

<sup>12</sup> Courts Service (2024) *Courts Service annual report 2023*.

<sup>13</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2023). *Concluding Observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Ireland*.

<sup>14</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child publishes its Concluding Observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Ireland', press release, 9 February.

discrimination, and that cases of discrimination against children are fully investigated;

- Ensure that the principle of the best interests of the child is consistently applied in all programmes and legislative, administrative and judicial proceedings involving children;
- Remove legal barriers and strengthen legal pathways for all children to acquire a nationality;
- Collect and analyse data disaggregated on attendance and completion rates, educational outcomes, use of reduced timetables and participation in afterschool activities to inform policies and programmes aimed at ensuring the equal access of children in disadvantaged groups to quality education;
- Ensure that parents of refugee children have information on how to register their children in school and that such children have access to quality multilingual and intercultural education;
- Prioritise measures to phase out the Direct Provision system by 2024, including through clearly defined targets, timelines and sufficient resources, in line with the recommendations of the Advisory Group on Direct Provision;
- Assess the impact of the visa requirement for refugees arriving from outside the EU, with a view to lifting the requirement;
- Amend the *International Protection Act 2015* to allow for multidisciplinary assessments of unaccompanied persons' maturity and level of development to determine their age;
- Develop national guidelines on ensuring the rights of unaccompanied children; and
- Review the system of family reunification involving unaccompanied children, with a view to broadening the definition of 'family member', simplifying application procedures and ensuring that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in all related decisions.

### **2.5.2 Second Voluntary National Review of the Sustainable Development Goals**

Ireland presented its second Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2023.<sup>15</sup> This report reviewed Ireland's progress towards achieving the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the 17 SDGs.

The VNR is a country-led review involving multiple stakeholders, through which countries assess and present their progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda and

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<sup>15</sup> Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (2023). 'Sustainable Development Goals: Voluntary National Review 2023', press release, 23 January.

the SDGs. It aims to: facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned; strengthen policies; and mobilise multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of the SDGs. Ireland's 2023 VNR report was developed around the theme of 'building back better while leaving no one behind'.

In preparing the VNR report, an online public consultation was held in 2023 to inform the report. A specific youth consultation process was also held, as well as two SDG national stakeholder forum meetings. In addition, some key national stakeholder groups, representing a variety of sectors, were invited to contribute a chapter for inclusion in the report. Contributions were not edited. Notably, this report also represented the first time a country report contained a standalone chapter on youth that was written by young people. Stakeholders such as the IHREC, Cork Migrant Centre and Coalition 2030 raised concerns that while Ireland has made progress on the SDGs, some groups such as international protection applicants and refugees risk being left behind, particularly in the goals of reducing inequalities (SDG 10) and decent work (SDG 8).<sup>16</sup>

### **2.5.3 Ireland's eighth periodic report under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women examines Ireland's compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In November 2024, Ireland was due to submit its eighth state report to the Committee. In 2023, submissions were made by the National Women's Council, Plan International Ireland and IHREC in advance of its 88th Pre-Sessional Working Group, to inform the Committee's List of Issues, which was to be examined during its meeting with the Irish Government in 2024. In relation to migration and asylum, recommendations were made, such as: pursuing the adoption of a targeted national action plan to combat female genital mutilation (FGM);<sup>17</sup> improving data collection regarding the sexual exploitation and trafficking of migrant women; ensuring that migrant women are considered as part of an intersectional approach under the Migrant Integration Strategy and Zero Tolerance, the third national strategy on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence;<sup>18</sup> and addressing policies and programmes to ensure equal access to quality and inclusive education at all levels for migrant, asylum seeking and refugee women and girls.<sup>19</sup> The report also

<sup>16</sup> Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (2023). 'Sustainable Development Goals: Voluntary National Review 2023', press release, 23 January.

<sup>17</sup> National Women's Council (2023). 'Submission to the 88th Pre-Sessional Working Group of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.'

<sup>18</sup> Plan International (2023). 'Alternative report submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.'

<sup>19</sup> IHREC (2023). 'Ireland and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for the List of Issues prior to reporting on Ireland's 8th periodic cycle.'

suggests lines of enquiry that the Committee should follow during the reporting process. IHREC recommended that the Committee should ask the State about measures it is taking to ensure non-discrimination in access to maternal health services for migrant women, and to ask the State what measures it is taking to prevent new and emerging forms of exploitation and trafficking that mainly affect vulnerable migrant women. It also raised concerns regarding access to decent work for migrant women and expressed significant concern regarding the exploitation of domestic workers, many of whom are migrant women.<sup>20</sup>

In November 2023, the Committee published its list of issues and questions prior to the submission of Ireland's eighth periodic report.<sup>21</sup> In advance of submitting the periodic report, the Irish State has been requested to provide information on a range of policy and legislative measures to ensure compliance with the CEDAW. Specifically, in relation to migration and asylum, the Committee requested information on:

- plans to create a comprehensive statistical database containing data on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence;
- how the state party will implement the recommendations in the *Baseline evaluation report of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*;<sup>22</sup>
- information on policies, action plans and statistics relating to trafficking and exploitation of women and girls; and
- steps taken to overcome low levels of education attainment among girls belonging to linguistic and ethnic minority groups.

#### 2.5.4 Ireland's pledges at the Global Refugee Forum

Ireland made a number of pledges at the Global Refugee Forum in 2023 around the themes of gender, education, quality funding, climate action and localisation.<sup>23</sup> The Global Refugee Forum is held every four years and is the world's largest international gathering on refugees. The Government of Ireland made pledges in relation to addressing the root causes of forced displacement,<sup>24</sup> supporting food systems and food security in developing countries,<sup>25</sup> and supporting climate finance in developing countries.<sup>26</sup> It also pledged to support global peacebuilding initiatives,<sup>27</sup> and continued

<sup>20</sup> IHREC (2023). 'Ireland and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for the List of Issues prior to reporting on Ireland's 8th periodic cycle.'

<sup>21</sup> Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (2023). *List of Issues and questions prior to the submission of the eighth periodic report of Ireland*, United Nations.

<sup>22</sup> For more information on this, see Section 6.2.1.

<sup>23</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs (2023). 'Minister Fleming attends the Global Refugee Forum', press release, 13 December.

<sup>24</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs (2023). 'Minister Fleming attends the Global Refugee Forum', press release, 13 December.

<sup>25</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs (2023). 'Minister Fleming attends the Global Refugee Forum', press release, 13 December.

<sup>26</sup> Pledge ID GRF 08472 made on 11 December 2023.

<sup>27</sup> Pledge ID GRF 08481 made on 11 December 2023.

support for the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)<sup>28</sup> and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).<sup>29</sup> Other pledges were made in relation to statelessness (see Section 7.2.3), and resettlement and community sponsorship initiatives (see Section 4.2.12.1).

The Global Refugee Forum is a key component of the Global Compact on Refugees, which was affirmed by the UN General Assembly in 2018 to put in place a new comprehensive refugee model.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Pledge ID 08470 made on 11 December 2023.

<sup>29</sup> Pledge ID 08474 made on 11 December 2023.

<sup>30</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs (2023). 'Minister Fleming attends the Global Refugee Forum', press release, 13 December.

## CHAPTER 3

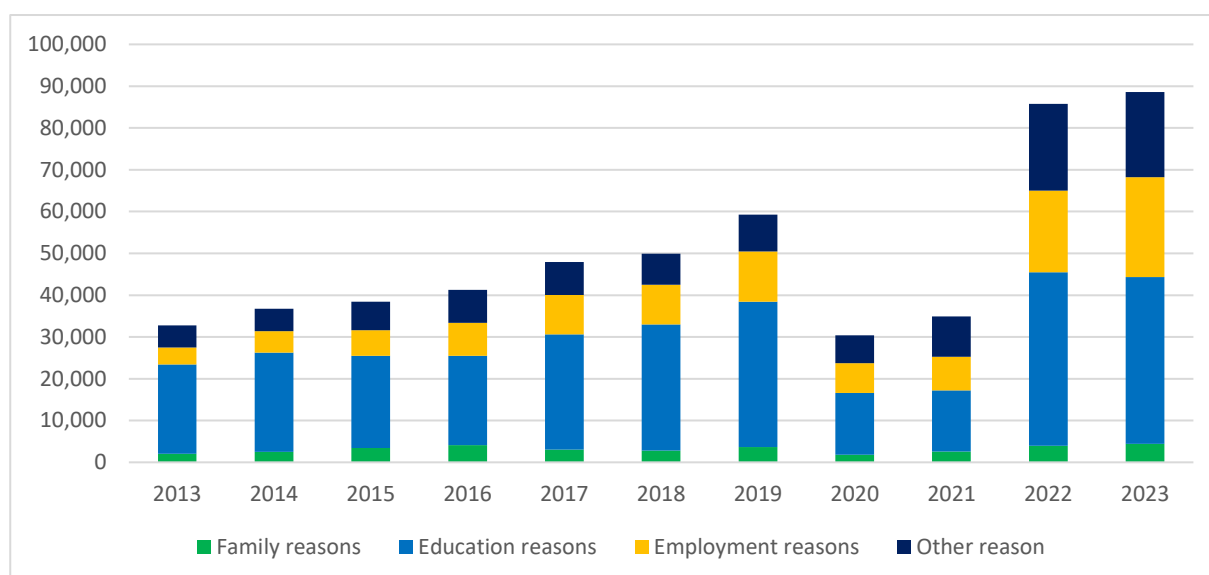
### Legal migration

#### 3.1 STATISTICS

##### 3.1.1 Residence

Figure 3.1 illustrates first residence permits issued to non-European Economic Area (EEA) citizens by reason from 2013 to 2023. There were 88,595 residence permits issued in 2023.<sup>31</sup> This was a 3% increase from 2022 (85,793), and a significant increase since the last peak in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic. Similar to 2022, education was the most common reason for issuing a residence permit (45%), followed by employment (27%), other reasons (23%) and family (5%). Note that registrations of temporary protection are not included in these statistics.<sup>32</sup>

**FIGURE 3.1 FIRST RESIDENCE PERMITS IN IRELAND BY REASON, 2013–2023**



Source: Eurostat (2024). 'First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship', extracted 22 July 2024.

The most common country of citizenship of those issued with first residence permits was India (25%), followed by Brazil (15%), China (7%) and the United States (5%). Just under half of the first residence permits issued were valid for between 6 and 11 months (49%), while 42% were valid for over 12 months, and 9% were valid for between 3 and 5 months, according to Eurostat.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Eurostat use 'residence permit' while 'residence permission' is the terminology generally used in Ireland.

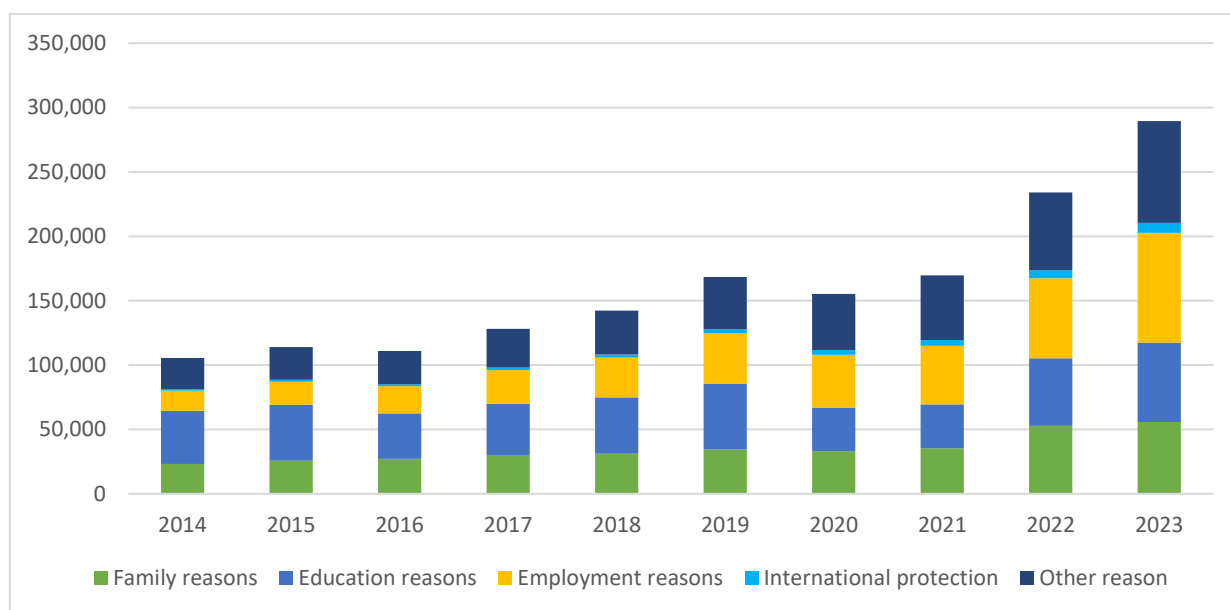
<sup>32</sup> Correspondence with the Department of Justice, October 2024.

<sup>33</sup> Eurostat (2024). 'First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship', extracted 28 August 2024.

Across the European Union (EU), 3.741 million first residence permits were granted, a 5% increase on 2022 figures and the largest number of first residence permits granted in the EU since 2014. First residence permits in Ireland represented 2.37% of the EU total, a slight drop from 2022. First residence permits in Ireland represented 7.45% of the EU total for education reasons, 0.45% for family reasons and 1.89% for employment reasons.<sup>34</sup>

Figure 3.2 shows all valid residence permits at the end of each year between 2014 and 2023. It shows a 24% increase in the number of valid permits at the end of 2023 compared with 2022, with 289,432 residence permits valid at year end, the highest in 10 years. There was an increase across all categories, although particularly in employment and other reasons. Proportions were similar to previous years, with 30% given for employment reasons, 21% for education reasons, 19% for family reasons, 27% for other reasons, and 3% for international protection (refugee and subsidiary protection status). The most common nationality of residence permit holders was Indian (26%), followed by Brazilian (14%), Chinese (7%) and US American (4%), similar to previous years.

**FIGURE 3.2 ALL VALID RESIDENCE PERMITS IN IRELAND AS OF 31 DECEMBER, 2014–2023**



Source: Eurostat (2024). 'All valid permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship on 31 December of each year', extracted 23 August 2024.

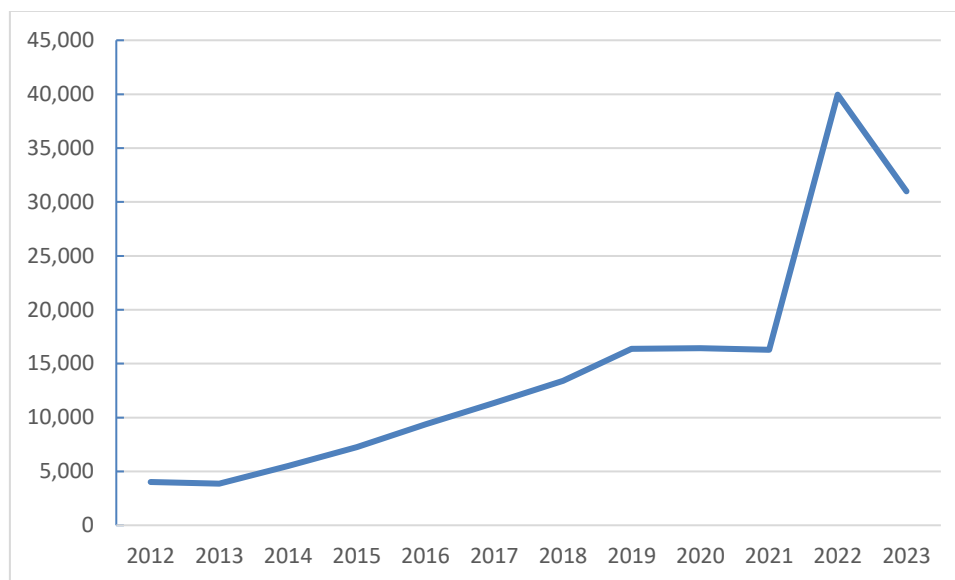
### 3.1.2 Employment permits

In total, 30,981 employment permits were issued in 2023. This was a 29% decrease from 2022 (39,995) but this still represents an increase relative to the last 10 years, as

<sup>34</sup> Eurostat (2024). 'First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship', extracted 28 August 2024.

shown in Figure 3.3. This relative increase is likely in part due to the fact that occupations and sectors eligible for employment permits were widened in 2021, 2022 and 2023 (see European Migration Network (EMN) Ireland annual reports on migration and asylum for 2021 and 2022).

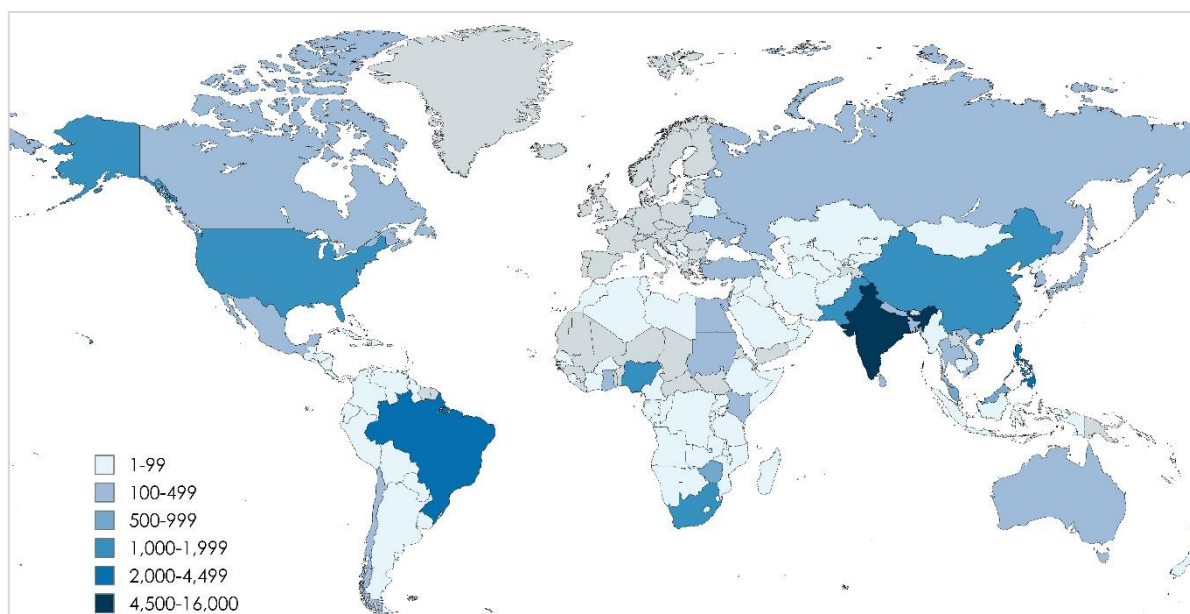
**FIGURE 3.3 EMPLOYMENT PERMIT GRANTS, 2012–2023**



Source: DETE (2024). 'Employment permit statistics 2023'.

As seen in Figure 3.4, a wide range of nationalities is represented among those who received employment permits in 2023. India remains the largest nationality group, with 11,893 (38%) employment permits issued to Indian applicants. Other top countries of origin include the Philippines (2,634, 9%), Brazil (2,632, 8%), Pakistan (1,533, 5%) and China (1,488, 5%). The top five origin countries remained the same for 2023 as in 2022. Most of the top nationalities declined in absolute numbers relative to 2022, apart from the Philippines, which increased by 20%. The largest decrease was in employment permits issued to Brazilians, which decreased by 39% compared with 2022.



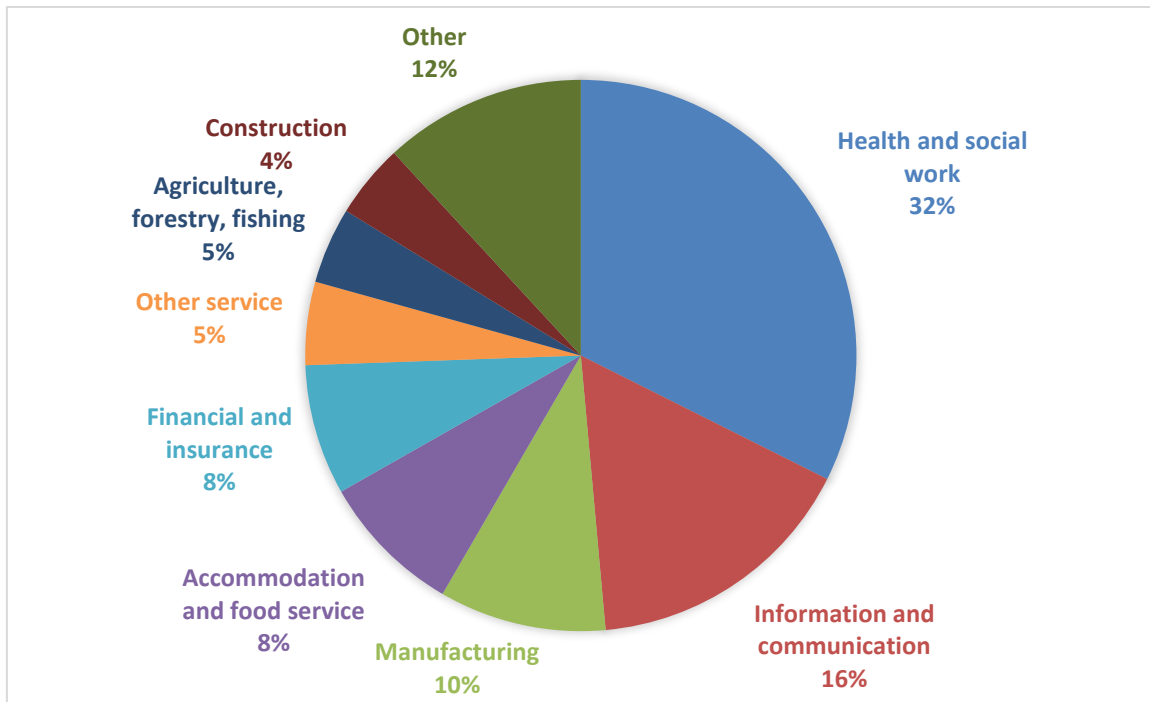
**FIGURE 3.4 COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN FOR THOSE ISSUED EMPLOYMENT PERMITS, 2023**

Source: DETE (2024). 'Employment permit statistics 2023: Permits by nationality, 2023'.

Figure 3.5 and Table 3.1 show the sectors in which employment permits were issued. Health and social work comprised the largest sector, with 10,037 permits (32%). This is a return to its previous standing in 2021 as the largest sector to be granted employment permits,<sup>35</sup> and represents a slight increase in absolute numbers from 2022, unlike the case for many other sectors. Conversely, the category with the highest number of employment permits in 2022 – the information and communication sector – experienced a 54% decline in 2023. Other sectors also experienced a decrease: agriculture, forestry and fishing by 68%; financial and insurance activities by 29%; professional, scientific and technical activities by 27%; and construction by 8%. By contrast, some sectors saw an increase, including various manufacturing sectors (including pharmaceuticals and computers/electronics): utilities such as electricity and gas supply (by 78%); water supply and sewerage waste management (by 248%); transport and storage (by 77%); and education (by 19%). Therefore, there seems to be an overall decline when compared with 2022, though we still find an increase overall when compared with years prior to 2022, and even an increase in some sectors in 2023, as outlined above.

<sup>35</sup> DETE (2022). 'Employment permit statistics 2021: Permits by sector 2021'.

**FIGURE 3.5 SECTORS IN WHICH EMPLOYMENT PERMITS WERE ISSUED, 2023**



Source: DETE (2024). 'Employment permit statistics 2023: Permits by sector 2023'.

**TABLE 3.1 EMPLOYMENT PERMITS BY SECTOR, 2022–2023, AND PERCENTAGE INCREASE/DECREASE**

Sector	2022	2023	% increase
A – Agriculture, forestry and fishing	4,311	1,385	-67.87%
B – Mining and quarrying	15	30	100.00%
C – All other manufacturing	701	766	9.27%
C – Manufacture of chemicals and pharmaceuticals	682	877	28.59%
C – Manufacture of computers, electronics and optical products	610	845	38.52%
C – Manufacture of food, drink and tobacco	357	268	-24.93%
C – Manufacture of medical devices	312	281	-9.94%
D – Electricity and gas and air conditioning supply	209	371	77.51%
E – Water supply – Sewerage waste management and remediation activities	25	87	248.00%
F – Construction	1,474	1,349	-8.48%
G – Wholesale and retail trade	324	294	-9.26%
H – Transport and storage	512	907	77.15%
I – Accommodation and food services activities	2,720	2,606	-4.19%
J – Information and communication activities	10,832	5,009	-53.76%
K – Financial and insurance activities	3,351	2,373	-29.19%
L – Real estate activities	21	14	-33.33%
M – All other professional, scientific and technical	1,072	1,010	-5.78%
M – Professional, scientific and technical Activities	388	283	-27.06%
N – Administrative and support service activities	86	80	-6.98%
O – Public administration and defence	41	15	-63.41%
P – Education	207	246	18.84%
Q – Health and social work activities	9,791	10,037	2.51%
R – Arts, entertainment and recreation	340	336	-1.18%
S – Other service activities	1,572	1,511	-3.88%
T – Domestic – Activities of households as employer	2	1	-50.00%
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>39,955</b>	<b>30,981</b>	<b>-22.46%</b>

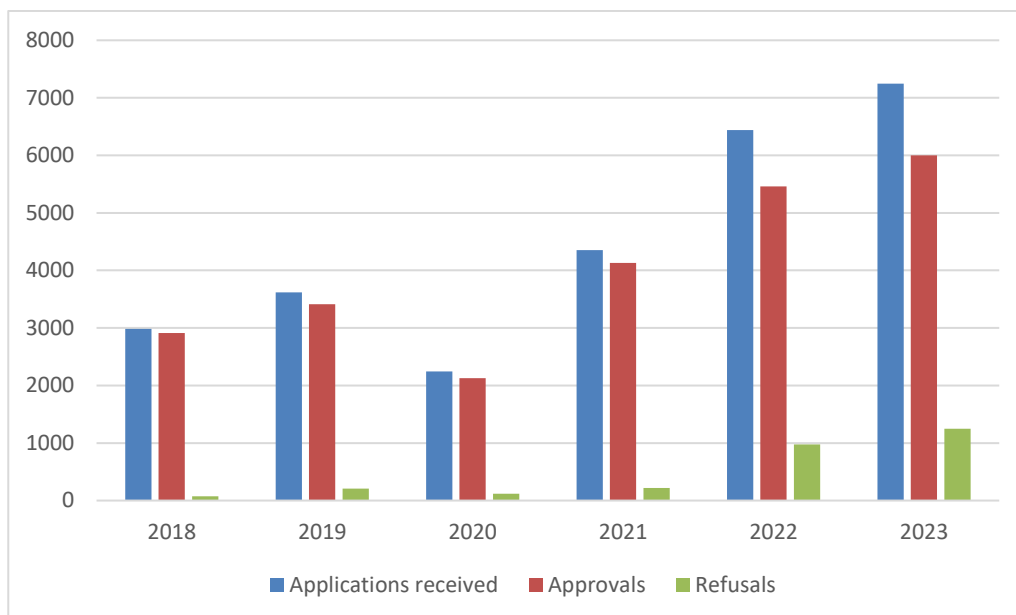
Source: DETE (2024). 'Employment permit statistics 2023: Permits by sector 2023'.

### 3.1.3 Atypical Working Scheme

Figure 3.6 shows a 13% increase in applications for the Atypical Working Scheme (AWS) in 2023, to 7,249, and an increase in both refusals and approvals. The increase is in spite of the removal of fishers from the scheme (now managed under the employment permit system administered by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and

Employment (DETE), who made up 5% of applications in 2022 (see *Annual report on migration and asylum 2022: Ireland*).

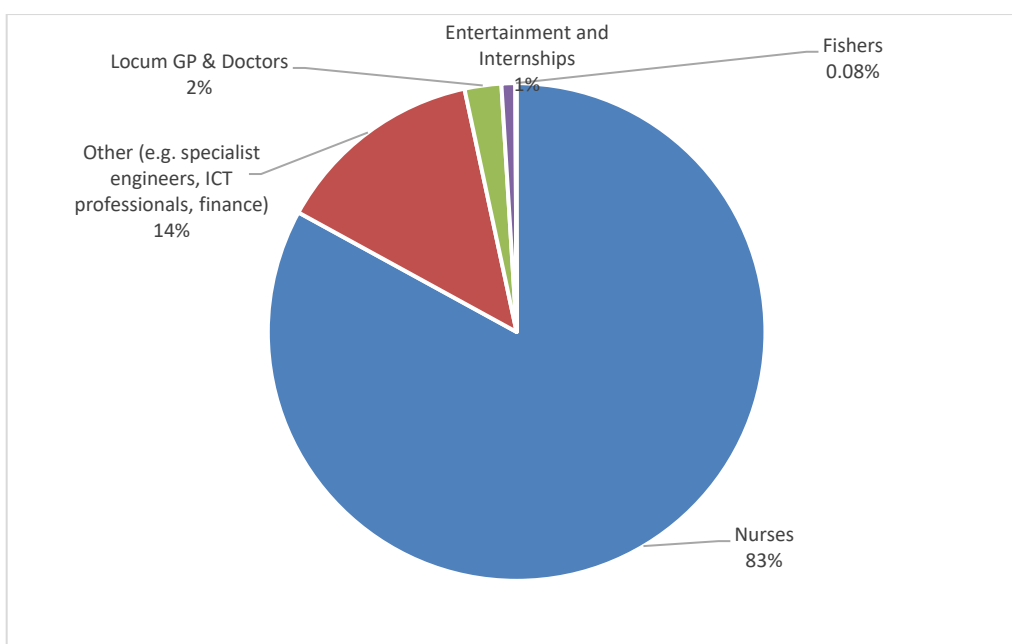
**FIGURE 3.6 ATYPICAL WORKING SCHEME APPLICATIONS, APPROVALS AND REFUSALS, 2018–2023**



Source: Correspondence with the Department of Justice, November 2024.

Figure 3.7 shows that nurses continue to make up the majority of applicants for the AWS, with 83% of applications in 2023.

**FIGURE 3.7 SECTORAL BREAKDOWN OF APPLICATIONS FOR THE AWS, 2023 (AS % OF TOTAL APPLICATIONS)**

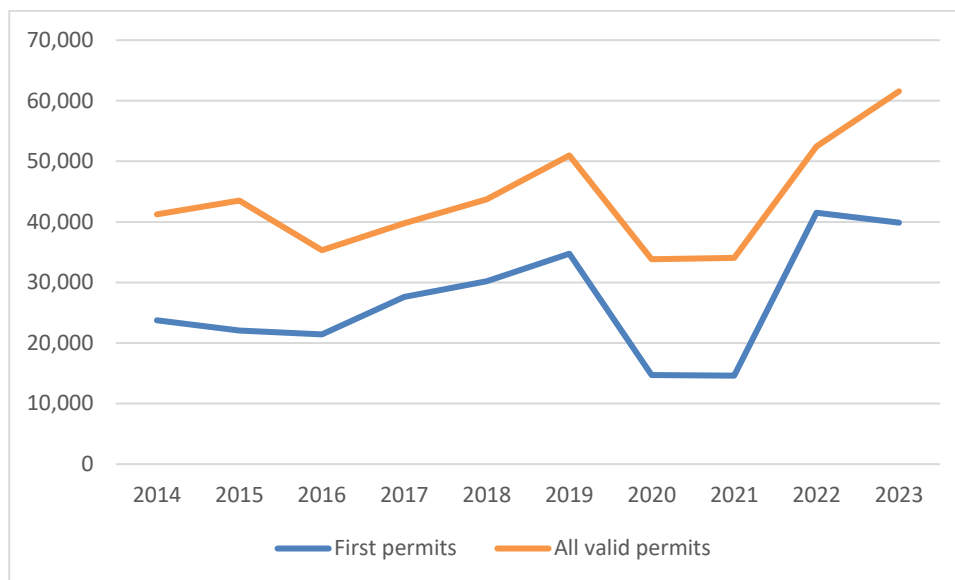


Source: Correspondence with the Department of Justice, November 2024.

### 3.1.4 International students

Figure 3.8 shows the first residence permits for education reasons and all valid residence permits for education reasons at the end of the year. It shows that first permits granted for education reasons have flatlined somewhat (-4% since 2022) since their initial recovery following the COVID-19 travel restrictions. Meanwhile, all valid residence permits for education reasons increased by 17% in 2023.

**FIGURE 3.8 FIRST PERMITS AND ALL VALID PERMITS ON 31 DECEMBER FOR EDUCATION REASONS, 2014–2023**



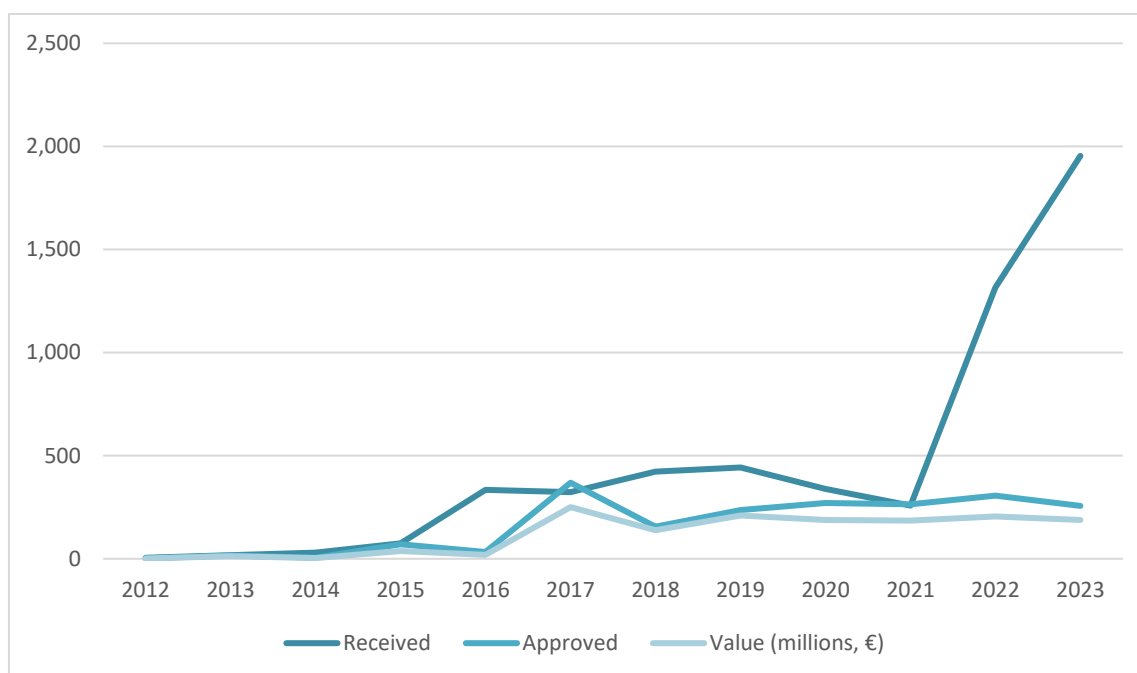
Source: Eurostat (2024). 'All valid permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship on 31 December of each year', extracted 23 August 2024; Eurostat (2024). 'First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship', extracted 22 July 2024.

### 3.1.5 Immigrant investors

Figure 3.9 shows the number of applications received for the Immigrant Investor Programme, as well as approvals and the value of the approved applications for the year. It shows that 1,954 applications were received in 2023, a 48% increase on the applications made in all of 2022, which was in itself an increase on previous years. It shows that 256 applications were approved in 2023, slightly lower than 2022, with a value of €188 million, also slightly lower than 2022.

As discussed below (Section 3.2.2) the Immigrant Investor Programme closed to further new applications relating to new investment projects in February 2023.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Department of Justice (2023). 'Minister Harris announces closure of the Immigrant Investor Programme', press release, 14 February.

**FIGURE 3.9 APPLICATIONS FOR THE IMMIGRANT INVESTOR PROGRAMME, 2012–2023**

Sources: Department of Justice (2023). 'Response to parliamentary questions 29630-29637/23'; Correspondence with the Department of Justice, November 2024.

## 3.2 DEVELOPMENTS

### 3.2.1 Changes to occupations lists and the employment permit system

Ireland manages employment permits through the operation of two lists. The first list outlines mainly professional roles with critical skills that are needed in the labour market (the Critical Skills Occupation List – CSOL). The second list outlines occupations that have sufficient levels of labour available and therefore are ineligible for employment permits (the Ineligible Occupations List – IOL). These lists are subject to periodic review. A full review was carried out in 2023, including a public consultation and extensive stakeholder engagement.<sup>37</sup> The consultation received a significantly larger number of submissions than the last review in 2021, which DETE attributed to the tight labour market.<sup>38</sup>

An occupation may be considered as eligible for an employment permit and appropriate for adding to the CSOL, or removing from the IOL, provided that:

- shortage exists across the occupation, despite attempts by industry to train, and there are no suitable Irish/European EEA nationals available to undertake the work;

<sup>37</sup> DETE (2023). 'Outcome of the Review of the Occupations Lists for Employment Permits: December 2023'.

<sup>38</sup> DETE (2023). 'Outcome of the Review of the Occupations Lists for Employment Permits: December 2023', p. 3.

- development opportunities for Irish/EEA nationals are not undermined;
- genuine skills shortage exists and that it is not a recruitment or retention problem; and
- the government education, training, employment and economic development policies are supported.

The review resulted in what was, according to DETE, the largest expansion of the employment permit system to date, in December 2023.<sup>39</sup> Eleven occupations were added to the CSOL,<sup>40</sup> and 32 removed from the IOL, making them eligible for a General Employment Permit. This was due to the identification of labour needs in areas including healthcare and the transport and mechanics industries.

New quotas were also introduced for some occupations that were removed from the IOL. Existing quotas were increased for certain occupations, including butchers/boners; dairy farm assistants; horticulture workers; meat processing operatives and vehicle roadworthiness testers.<sup>41</sup>

Quotas were extended for other occupations and skills throughout 2023. This included line workers to relieve pressure on the Electricity Supply Board's (ESB) overhead line framework contractors and vehicle road worthiness testers following engagement between DETE, the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications and ESB Networks.<sup>42</sup>

All General Employment Permit applications require a labour market needs test, which means that the vacancy must be advertised before submitting the employment permit application and the advertisement must meet specific conditions.<sup>43</sup>

Other changes to the permit scheme include a roadmap aimed at increasing the minimum annual remuneration threshold for General Employment Permits and Critical Skills Employment Permits.<sup>44</sup> This roadmap outlined a phased increase between January 2024 to January 2026, with the intention of maintaining wage growth with average earnings.<sup>45</sup> The roadmap introduced an increase to the salary threshold for a standard Critical Skills Employment Permit to €38,000 from €32,000,

<sup>39</sup> DETE (2023). 'Minister Richmond announces largest ever expansion to the employment permits system', 20 December.

<sup>40</sup> These were: professional forester; resource modelling, earth observation and data analyst; meteorologist; operational forecaster; chemical engineer; project engineer; BIM manager; optometrist; commercial manager; BIM coordinator/technician; and estimator. Employment Permits (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2023, S.I. No. 680 of 2023.

<sup>41</sup> Employment Permits (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2023, S.I. No. 680 of 2023.

<sup>42</sup> DETE (2023). 'Minister Richmond announces 100 employment permits for line workers,' press release, 7 September; Employment Permits (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2023, S.I. No. 439/2023; Employment Permits (Amendment) Regulations 2023, S.I. No. 346/2023.

<sup>43</sup> DETE (n.d). 'Labour Market Needs test'.

<sup>44</sup> Employment Permits (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2023, S.I. No. 680 of 2023.

<sup>45</sup> DETE (2023). 'Minister Richmond announces largest ever expansion to the employment permits system,' press release, 20 December.

for a standard General Employment Permit to €34,000 from €30,000. Exceptions to the standard General Employment Permit remuneration exist for certain roles, and the roadmap changed the minimum salary for meat processors and horticultural workers to €30,000 from January 2024 from €22,916. The roadmap also introduced an increase to the minimum annual remuneration threshold for an intra-company transfer permit (not a trainee) to €46,000 from €40,000 from January 2024.<sup>46</sup>

Additional changes included the relaxation of the need to provide copies of educational achievements with an application for the renewal of employment permits for healthcare assistants. Prior to this amendment, healthcare assistants needed to obtain a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Level 5 qualification after two years. Amendments will allow for equivalent health and social care qualification as agreed with QQI/NARIC Ireland to be accepted when renewing the general work permit. In this instance, the clinical lead in the place of employment must also verify that the individual has shown their technical ability, qualifications and general suitability.<sup>47</sup>

### 3.2.2 Closure of the Immigrant Investor Programme to new applicants

In 2023, the Immigrant Investor Programme was closed. The Immigrant Investor Programme was established in 2012 as a way for non-EEA nationals to acquire an immigration permission in Ireland, based on their long-term investment in a variety of areas as approved by the Government.

As reported in the 2022 report of this series, and in Section 3.1.5 of this report, the number of applications increased significantly in 2022.<sup>48</sup> As reported in previous years, the Immigrant Investor Programme came under increased scrutiny from 2018 from both the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as part of wider concerns about investor schemes generally.<sup>49</sup> The Department of Justice stated that the scheme had also fulfilled its initial purpose of attracting investment during a time of economic difficulty.<sup>50</sup> This also followed a two phase review conducted by Ernst and Young between 2019 and 2021, which was published in 2023 and which looked at both a social and economic analysis of the programme and the governance of the programme.<sup>51</sup> The review found that while the programme had socio-economic merit and potential, it was difficult to assess its success due to the lack of clear objectives, data and tracking mechanisms.<sup>52</sup> The review therefore recommended resetting the programme with a clear strategic purpose, and

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<sup>46</sup> The regulations provided for a minimum salary of €30,000 for healthcare assistants and home care support workers, but these remained at €27 000 from January 2024.

<sup>47</sup> DETE (2023). 'Renewal of an employment permit: Health care assistant.'

<sup>48</sup> See *Annual report on migration and asylum 2022: Ireland* for more information on this.

<sup>49</sup> See *Annual report on migration and asylum 2018: Ireland* for more information on this.

<sup>50</sup> Department of Justice (2024). 'FAQs – Closure of the Immigrant Investor Programme.'

<sup>51</sup> EY (2020). *Phase One review – Immigrant Investor Programme: Social and economic analysis*; EY (2020). *Phase Two review – Immigrant Investor Programme: Final report*.

<sup>52</sup> EY (2020). *Phase One review – Immigrant Investor Programme: Social and economic analysis*.



targeting particular locations and sectors in need of investment, among other recommendations. The review also highlighted governance issues such as staffing/resourcing, governance and risk management, as well as some actions taken to correct these during the review process.<sup>53</sup>

The Immigrant Investor Programme's closure did not affect already approved projects, which continued to be monitored by the Department of Justice to ensure their delivery and for compliance purposes. Applications on hand at close of business on 15 February 2023 would also continue to be processed.<sup>54</sup> In addition, where a project proposal had been significantly developed following contact with the Department prior to the closure of the programme, it was allowed a period of three months to finalise and submit applications.<sup>55</sup> According to a FAQ document published following the closure of the scheme, it is expected to take a number of years to process the remaining applications and the independent evaluation committee, which assesses Immigrant Investor Programme applications, is exploring ways to potentially expedite the examination of project applications and reduce waiting times.<sup>56</sup>

### 3.2.3 Eligibility of non-EEA nationals for civil service

In October 2023, the civil service eligibility criteria was expanded to include non-EEA individuals holding Stamp 4 residence permissions. Previously, only Irish or EEA citizens were eligible to work for the civil service. The expansion of the eligibility criteria comes following research undertaken by the Public Appointment Service and a government interdepartmental working group seeking to increase diversity across the civil service. However, there are some roles for which only Irish citizens are eligible, such as roles in the diplomatic stream of the Department of Foreign Affairs.<sup>57</sup>

### 3.2.4 Ireland Fellows Programme

The Ireland Fellows Programme, which marked its 50th anniversary in 2024, provides opportunities for students from Ireland's partner countries to study in Ireland. For the academic year 2023/2024, 206 students from 42 partner countries across Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East and the Pacific Islands were awarded fellowships under the Irish Aid funded programme to complete a master's or doctoral degree, across 17 higher education institutions in Ireland. This was an increase from almost 200 in 2022. Students undertaking a master's degree do so in a field aligned

<sup>53</sup> EY (2020). *Phase Two review – Immigrant Investor Programme: Final report*.

<sup>54</sup> Department of Justice (2023). 'Minister Harris announces closure of the Immigrant Investor Programme', 14 February.

<sup>55</sup> Department of Justice (2023). 'Minister Harris announces closure of the Immigrant Investor Programme', 14 February.

<sup>56</sup> Department of Justice (2024). 'Processing of IIP applications on hand following the closure of the programme.'

<sup>57</sup> Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform (2023). 'Minister Donohoe announces expanded eligibility requirements to promote greater diversity in the Irish Civil Service', press release, 23 October .

with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in either an Irish university or institute of technology.<sup>58</sup>

### 3.2.5 Other developments

In November 2023, changes were made to the process for applying for Stamp 4 immigration permission. Previously, DETE issued support letters for applicants evidencing their employment history. From November 2023, DETE and the Department of Justice agreed that such support letters were no longer required, and announced that the application for Stamp 4 immigration permission could now be completed directly with the Department of Justice, with documentation to show the applicant's employment history – such as copies of employment permits, letters from employers, and employment detail summaries from their Revenue accounts – accepted instead.<sup>59</sup>

Changes were also made to section 18 of the *Immigration Act 2004*, via section 48 of the *Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023*.<sup>60</sup> This amendment now means that, commencing in July 2023, notices under the Act can be served by electronic means, including email or electronic correspondence.<sup>61</sup> These provisions did not replace other means to serve notices already provided in legislation. The objective of these changes was to support the modernisation of immigration services to allow customers more flexibility and to support the future introduction of a digital customer portal.<sup>62</sup>

In 2023, the Department of Justice also commenced work to establish the Digital Contact Centre. This centre is a self-service portal that will enable immigration customers to book and amend first-time registration appointments, replacing the need for them to call a contact centre to arrange such an appointment.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs, Irish Aid (2023). 'Over 200 students from around the world awarded Irish Aid Fellowships'; Correspondence with Department of Foreign Affairs, June 2024.

<sup>59</sup> Department of Justice (2023). 'Notice regarding Stamp 4 support letters issued by the Dept. of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.'

<sup>60</sup> *Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023*, Part 8.

<sup>61</sup> *Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023 (Commencement) Order 2023*, S.I. No. 389 of 2023.

<sup>62</sup> Department of Justice (2023). 'Minister McEntee commences majority of wide-ranging Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023,' press release, 1 August. Similar changes were made to the *Immigration Act 1999* (see section 10.2.2) and the *International Protection Act 2015* (see section 4.2.3).

<sup>63</sup> Department of Justice (2024). 'Minister McEntee announces the launch of new, online, immigration self-service portal,' press release, 24 October 2024.

### 3.3 RESEARCH

#### 3.3.1 How do migrants fare in the labour market?

Research published in the *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies* analysed the factors affecting labour market integration of migrants in Ireland.<sup>64</sup> The research reviewed the effects of country of origin, gender, asylum and ethnicity on migrants' labour integration, using microdata from the 2016 Census. This research found that gaining employment, and the quality of that employment, differed across these variables. It found that eastern EEA nationals have high employment rates but are overrepresented in low-skilled employment, while people from Asia and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) show high unemployment rates, though when employed are more likely to have high occupational attainment. A second important finding was the impact of the international protection system on migrants' labour market outcomes. Migrants who had likely experienced the international protection system had poorer labour market outcomes. This was especially significant for men. These outcomes are understood to occur regardless of the length of time they have spent in Ireland, English language skills, human capital or ethnicity. They also found that black men and women have worse labour market outcomes than white men or women. Asian men and women did not differ from white men or women with regards to unemployment or high skilled work. Finally, with regards to gender, this research found that EEA women had rates of unemployment and highly skilled employment that were similar to those of their male counterparts. Migrant women from MENA and South Asia can experience higher levels of unemployment when compared to men. However, when these women are employed, they show high rates of highly skilled work.<sup>65</sup>

#### 3.3.2 Migrant fishers' experiences of hyper-precarity and hyper-dependency

In 2023, Clíodhna Murphy et al. published a paper in the journal *Social and Legal Studies* exploring migrant workers' experiences of immigration and employment law, particularly under the AWS. This research was undertaken through qualitative interviews with non-EEA fishers, most of whom were working under the AWS. Other interviewees were undocumented or had been granted other employment permits. The researchers found that non-EEA fishers under the AWS experienced hyper-dependency and hyper-precarity in their work conditions. Hyper-dependency was the result of needing to renew their permit annually under the AWS and difficulties involved in changing employer, but it also related to the fact that it was not possible for them to enforce their employment rights. This uncertainty allowed for an

<sup>64</sup> Privalko, I., F. McGinnity, S. Currigan and S. Enright (2023). *How do migrants fare in the Irish labour market? Country of origin, gender, asylum and ethnicity effect*, Dublin: ESRI.

<sup>65</sup> Privalko, I., F. McGinnity, S. Currigan and S. Enright (2023). *How do migrants fare in the Irish labour market? Country of origin, gender, asylum and ethnicity effect*, Dublin: ESRI.

unbalanced relation of power between employers and employees, and resulted in differential pay and working conditions for non-EEA workers under the scheme. The hyper-precarity of AWS-permission holders was similarly linked to their perceived non-eligibility for secure, long-term residency and differences in working time rules. The participants identified the AWS as resulting in unequal pay and as a barrier to employment redress.<sup>66</sup>

### 3.3.3 Wages and working conditions of non-Irish nationals in Ireland

Research published by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) in 2023, on the wages and working conditions of non-Irish nationals compared to Irish nationals, found that, as a whole, non-Irish nationals are generally more likely to be found in lower quality jobs. For example, they are less likely to work in professional/managerial occupations (33% compared to 44% of Irish nationals) and are less likely to have supervisory responsibilities in their role (27% compared to 33% of Irish nationals). They are also more likely to be in shift work (28% compared to 16%). Non-Irish nationals are much less likely to be members of trade unions or staff associations (13% compared to 34%). The report also found that a 'migrant wage gap' exists in Ireland. In the period 2011–2018, non-Irish nationals earned, on average, 22% less per hour than Irish nationals – for every €1 an Irish worker earned, a non-Irish worker earned 78 cents. However, this gap in earnings differs significantly, depending on country of origin. Non-Irish women experience a double earnings penalty: for being female and for being migrant. Non-Irish women earn 11% less than non-Irish men, and non-Irish men earn 18% less than Irish nationals. In fact, non-Irish women earn 30% less than Irish men. This study highlights how some non-Irish national groups are experiencing a wage penalty, in some cases a substantial one, and that this is persisting over time. One potential driver of this finding may be that the educational qualifications of those concerned do not receive equal recognition by employers in Ireland. Specifically, it may be that the recognition of qualifications is more framed in the context of the Irish educational system as opposed to the labour market; the study suggests that a detailed analysis of over-education among migrants in Ireland could inform any such changes.<sup>67</sup>

### 3.3.4 Accommodation survey of international students

The Irish Council for International Students (ICOS), an independent advocacy organisation that aims to protect the rights of international students in Ireland, published a follow up report in 2023, building on a 2022 report that highlighted issues students encounter in relation to their accommodation. Results of the 2023 report detailed that 57% of respondents felt their student experience had been negatively

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<sup>66</sup> Murphy, C., D.M. Doyle and S. Thompson (2023). 'Worker's perspectives on state constructed vulnerability to labour exploitation: Experiences of migrant fishers in Ireland', *Social and Legal Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 4.

<sup>67</sup> Laurence, J., E. Kelly, F. McGinnity and S. Curristan (2023). *Wages and working conditions of non-Irish nationals in Ireland*, Dublin: ESRI.

affected by difficulties in finding accommodation. A further 55% felt their mental health had suffered due to these difficulties. Less than half of international students have a lease agreement (46%), indicating the precarity of many students' living situations. It also found that many international students were living in sub-standard accommodation that did not meet minimum standards. Within the category of international student, 56% of English language students reported that their experience had suffered because of the accommodation crisis in Ireland, compared to 33% of international students studying in higher education (33%). More than one in ten of respondents said that they had been a victim of an accommodation scam while in Ireland, with just a small minority of these reporting the incident. ICOS observed that the number of international students who said they had their own bedroom decreased from 57% in 2022 to 42% in 2023; conversely, the number of people sharing a room with two people or more rose from 20% to 27% in the same period, suggesting that an increasing number of students are relying on renting shared rooms with one or many people. Based on the research, ICOS developed a series of recommendations, including the establishment of a steering group to oversee the implementation of a new student accommodation strategy, increased provision of affordable student accommodation, and increasing safeguards to protect renters from sub-standard and exploitative conditions and to increase student's awareness of accommodation rights.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Irish Council for International Students (2023). *Accommodation survey of international students in Ireland 2023*.

## CHAPTER 4

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### International protection

#### 4.1 STATISTICS

This section outlines statistics relating to international protection in Ireland. These statistics do not include beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine, who are covered by a different legal framework (see Chapter 5).

##### 4.1.1 Applications

A total of 13,277 applications for international protection were made in Ireland in 2023, according to the International Protection Office (IPO).<sup>69</sup> Of these, 64% were males and 22% were under 18, according to rounded Eurostat data.<sup>70</sup> This was a 3% decrease from 2022, but still a significant increase from previous years (see Figure 4.1).

Applications for international protection in Ireland accounted for 1.17% of the European Union (EU) total of 1,129,800, a decrease from 2022 (1.3%).<sup>71</sup> EU applications increased by 18% in 2023, to their highest level since 2015.

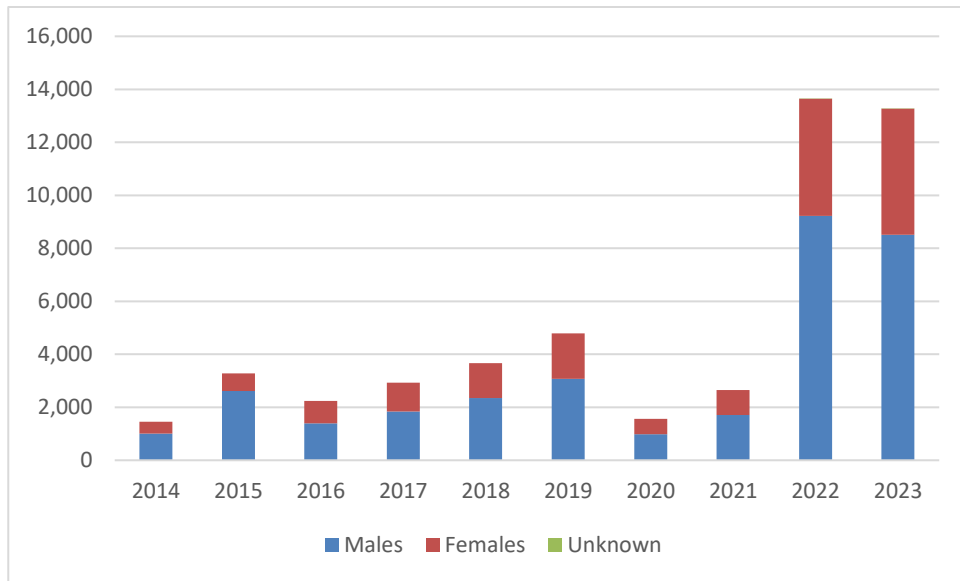
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<sup>69</sup> IPO (2023). 'Monthly statistical report: December 2023'.

<sup>70</sup> Eurostat (2024). 'Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex – Annual aggregated data', extracted 27 June 2024.

<sup>71</sup> Eurostat (2024). 'Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex – Annual aggregated data', extracted 27 June 2024.

**FIGURE 4.1 ASYLUM APPLICATIONS BY GENDER, 2014–2023**

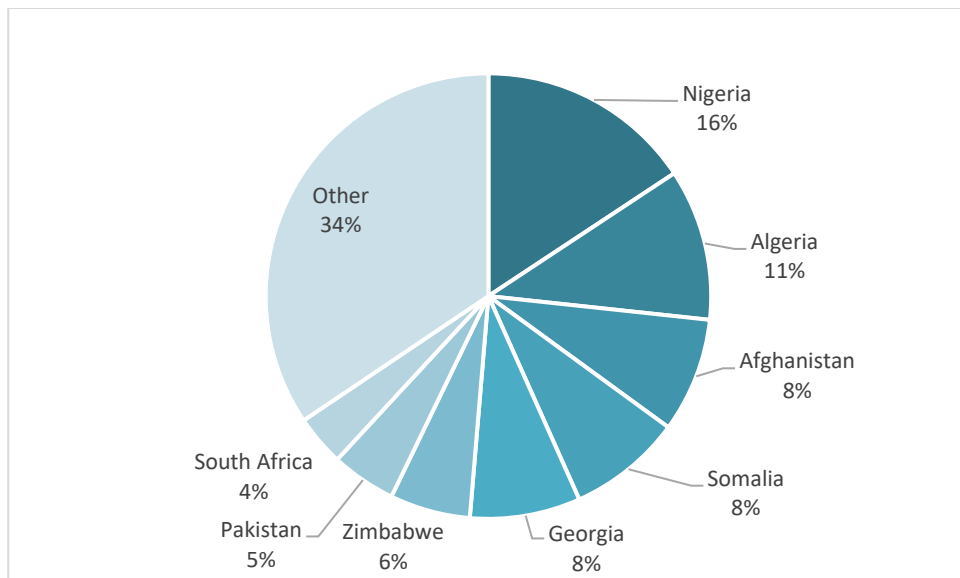


*Source:* Eurostat (2024). ‘Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex – Annual aggregated data’, extracted 26 June 2024.

*Note:* The ‘Unknown’ category accounts for 10 applications in 2022 and 10 applications in 2023.

Figure 4.2 shows the main countries of origin of international protection applicants in Ireland in 2023: Nigeria, Algeria and Afghanistan were the top three countries of origin. Applicants from Georgia, which was the largest country of origin in 2022, dropped by 61% compared with that year.

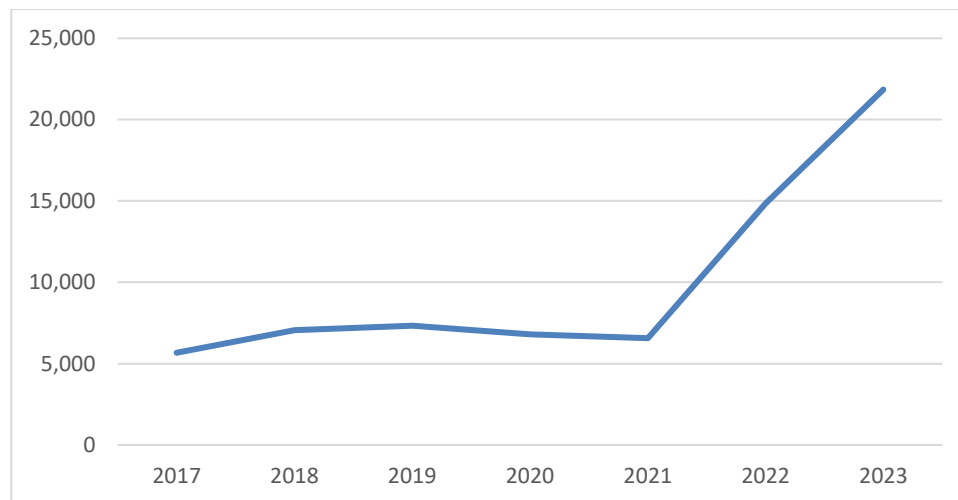
**FIGURE 4.2 NATIONALITY OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION APPLICANTS IN IRELAND, 2023**



*Source:* Eurostat (2024). ‘Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex – Annual aggregated data’, extracted 26 June 2024.

Figure 4.3 shows the number of asylum applications pending at the end of each year. It shows that from 2021 on there was a significant increase in the number of these pending applications. There were 21,850 asylum applications pending at the end of 2023, according to Eurostat.

**FIGURE 4.3 PERSONS SUBJECT OF ASYLUM APPLICATIONS PENDING AT YEAR END, 2017–2023**



*Source:* Eurostat (2024). 'Persons subject of asylum applications pending at the end of the month by citizenship, age and sex – Monthly data', extracted 26 June 2024.



**Box 4.1 Guide to international protection decisions data**

To support understanding of the data on decisions that is presented in this chapter, the graphic below shows a simplified version of the international protection process and how it relates to decision-making data as reported in Eurostat. Data on each of the four stages is shown in the figures that follow.

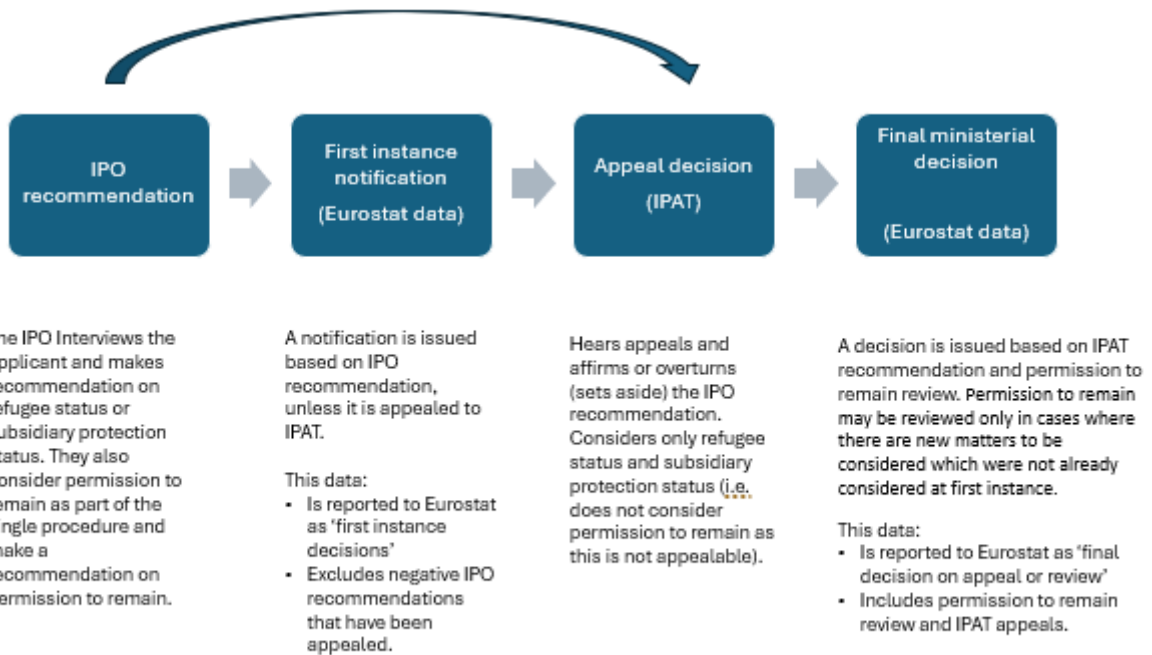
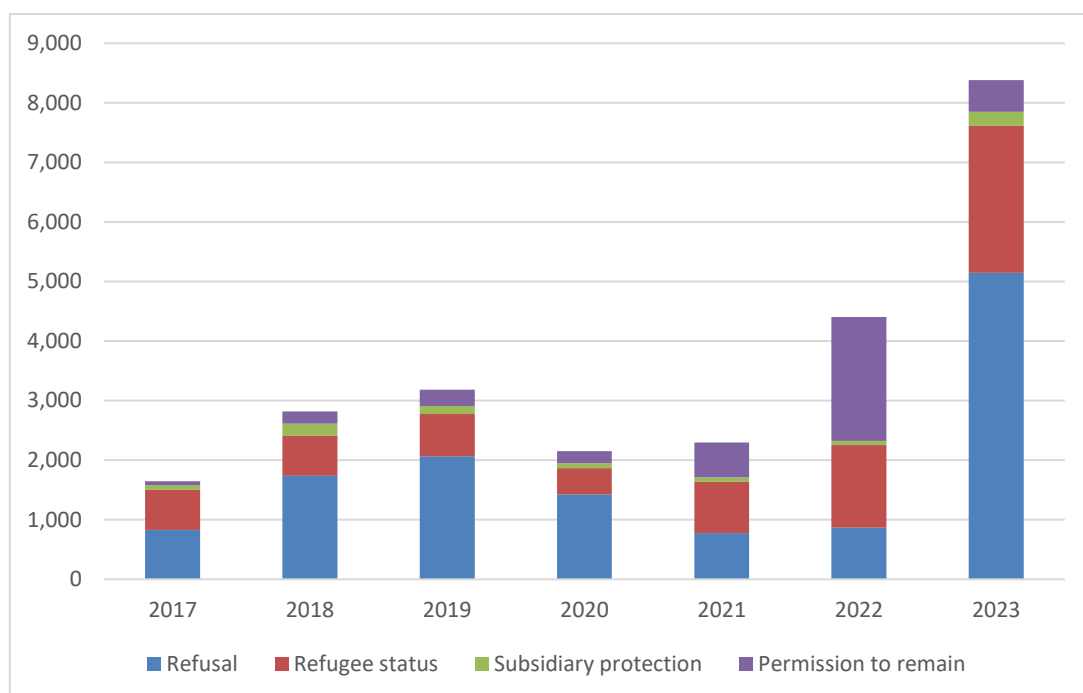
**4.1.2 Decisions****4.1.2.1 IPO recommendations**

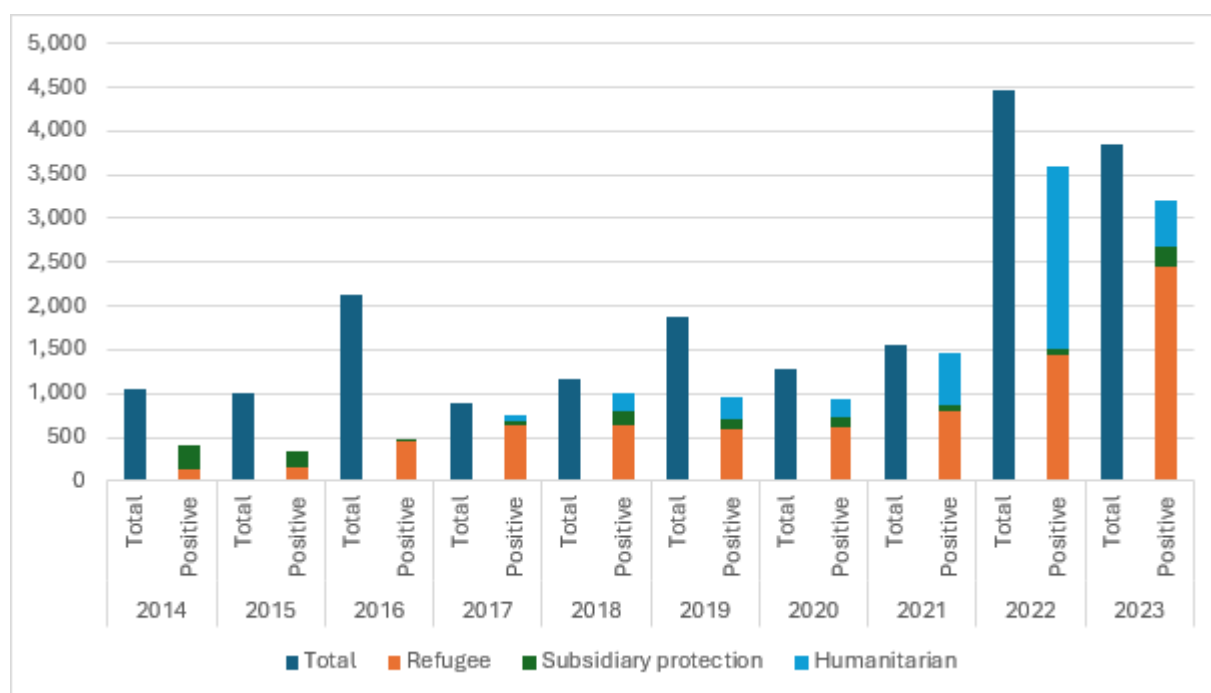
Figure 4.4 shows the numbers of IPO recommendations made and outcomes. It shows a 90% increase in the number of IPO recommendations made in 2023, with 8,380 recommendations made that year. Of these, 61% were refusals, which may reflect the acceleration of cases from safe countries of origin in 2023. Of the positive recommendations, the majority (76%) were for refugee status.

**FIGURE 4.4 IPO RECOMMENDATIONS, 2017–2023**

Source: Correspondence with the IPO, November 2024.

#### 4.1.2.2 First instance notifications

According to Eurostat, a total of 3,845 first instance notifications (which Eurostat refers to as first instance decisions) were made in 2023, of which 83% were positive. This was a 14% decrease on the number of first instance notifications made in 2022, with a similar positive rate (80% in 2022). However, it should be noted that this data does not include negative IPO recommendations that are then appealed (see Box 4.1 above). The difference between data reported in Figure 4.4 and Figure 4.5 indicates that a significant proportion of negative recommendations are appealed – as 8,380 IPO recommendations were made in 2023, compared with 3,845 first instance notifications. As shown in Figure 4.6 below, IPAT received 4,775 appeals in 2023. As the data in Figure 4.5 reflects IPO recommendations, refugee status is also shown as the most common positive status awarded at first instance, with 77% of positive decisions receiving this status. Approximately 17% of positive decisions were for humanitarian status and 7% for subsidiary protection.

**FIGURE 4.5 FIRST INSTANCE NOTIFICATIONS ON INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION APPLICATIONS AND STATUSES AWARDED, 2014–2023**

Source: Eurostat (2024). 'First instance decisions on applications by citizenship, age and sex – Annual aggregated data', extracted 1 March 2024.

Note: Humanitarian status refers to permission to remain, granted under section 49 of the *International Protection Act 2015*. Note that this data does not include negative recommendations from the IPO that were appealed to IPAT (see text above).

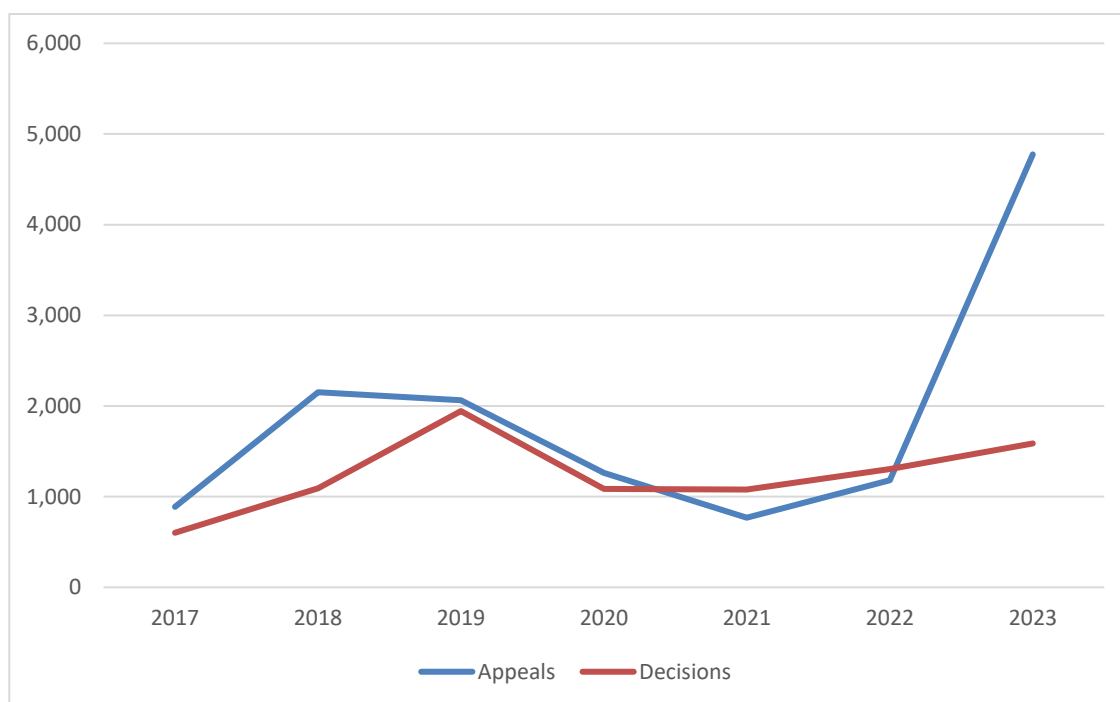
#### 4.1.2.3 Appeals

A total of 4,775 appeals were made to IPAT in 2023, a 305% increase on 2022 and the highest number since the foundation of the tribunal (see Figure 4.6). At the end of 2023, 3,908 applications were on hand,<sup>72</sup> a 359% increase on the number of applications on hand at the end of 2022. In 2023, 1,588 decisions were made, a 22% increase from 2022.<sup>73</sup> Note that these refer not only to appeals made following a negative IPO recommendation, but also to appeals of Dublin III decisions, inadmissibility and reception conditions, among others.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> IPAT (2024). *International Protection Appeals Tribunal annual report 2023*.

<sup>73</sup> IPAT (2024). *International Protection Appeals Tribunal annual report 2023*; IPAT (2023). *International Protection Appeals Tribunal annual report 2022*.

<sup>74</sup> Correspondence with IPAT, November 2024.

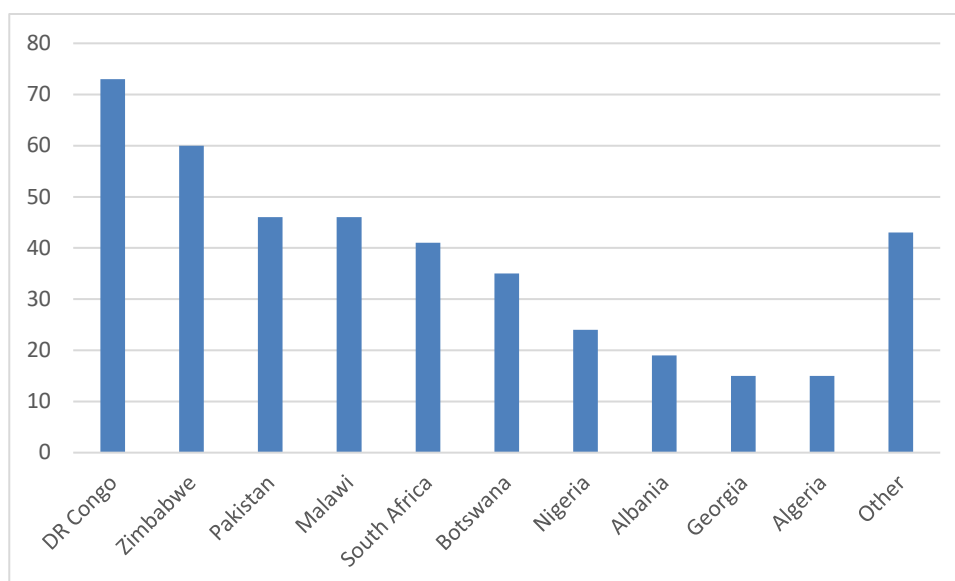
**FIGURE 4.6 IPAT APPEALS AND DECISIONS, 2017–2023**

Source: IPAT annual reports 2017–2023.

Seventy per cent of international protection appeals affirmed the first instance IPO recommendation in 2023.<sup>75</sup> However, this rate varies significantly depending on the country of origin of the applicant (see Figure 4.7). For example, 73% of appeals relating to Congolese applicants resulted in the setting aside of the first instance IPO recommendation, compared with 15% for Georgian or Algerian applicants.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>75</sup> IPAT (2024). *International Protection Appeals Tribunal annual report 2023*, p. 37.

<sup>76</sup> IPAT (2024). *International Protection Appeals Tribunal annual report 2023*, p. 38.

**FIGURE 4.7 PERCENTAGE OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION APPEALS SET ASIDE BY IPAT BY NATIONALITY, 2023**

Source: IPAT (2024). *International Protection Appeals Tribunal annual report 2023*.

Note: This shows only the ten most common nationalities among decisions set aside, which does not necessarily indicate the highest or lowest grant rates.

#### 4.1.2.4 Final ministerial decisions

According to Eurostat, a total of 1,270 final ministerial decisions were made on appeal or review in 2023.<sup>77</sup> Of these, 73% were positive, an increase from 2022 (59% positive). This represents a 45% decrease in decision making from 2022, according to this data. It should be noted that as a direct result of the lifting of a moratorium on the issuing of negative decisions in July 2022 (due to the COVID-19 pandemic – see previous reports in this series), the Ministerial Decisions Unit (which issues final decisions) experienced an increase in cases that had previously been on hold during the pandemic. In light of this, measures were implemented for a period in 2022 to process the backlog, while ensuring limited impact on business as usual, which explains the increase in cases processed in 2022 compared to 2023.<sup>78</sup>

This data (Figure 4.8) refers to decisions issued by the Ministerial Decisions Unit following an appeal to IPAT, or following a review of permission to remain under section 49(7) of the *International Protection Act 2015*. This review of permission to remain is only triggered where an applicant had an unsuccessful international protection appeal outcome, and where there are new matters to be considered that were not already considered at first instance.

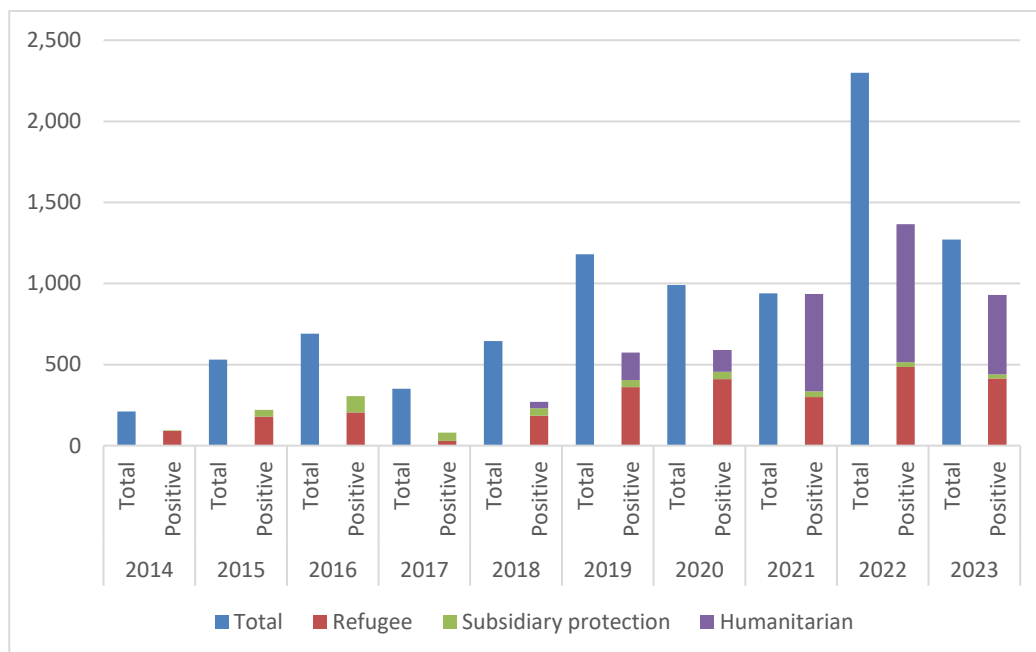
For 2023, the higher concentration of permission to remain review grants can be accounted for by grants in line with other Immigration Service Delivery (ISD)

<sup>77</sup> Eurostat (2024). 'Final decisions in appeal or review on applications by citizenship, age and sex – Annual data', extracted 26 June 2024.

<sup>78</sup> Correspondence with the IPO, November 2024.

permissions, as well as legacy cases carried over from the COVID-19 period. While there is a slight drop from the 2022 figures, this can be attributed to the normalisation of case processing, as the IPO finalised many cases in 2022 that could not be decided due to the pandemic.<sup>79</sup> It should be noted that capacity constraints in IPAT (see Figure 4.6) likely distort the proportion of positive ministerial notifications.

**FIGURE 4.8 FINAL MINISTERIAL DECISIONS IN APPEAL OR REVIEW, 2014–2023**



*Source:* Eurostat (2024). 'Final decisions in appeal or review on applications by citizenship, age and sex – Annual data', extracted 26 June 2024.

*Note:* Humanitarian status refers to permission to remain under section 49 of the *International Protection Act 2015*.

Humanitarian status was the most common status awarded at final decisions in appeal or review (53% of positive decisions), followed by Geneva Convention status (45% of positive decisions) and subsidiary protection (3%).<sup>80</sup>

### 4.1.3 Processing times

The median processing time for all cases processed to completion in the IPO in 2023 was 11 months, down from 18 months in 2022. The median processing time for cases dealt with under accelerated procedures was 11 weeks, while the processing times for prioritised cases has increased, going from 11 months in 2022 to 12 months in 2023.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Correspondence with the IPO, November 2024.

<sup>80</sup> Eurostat (2024). 'Final decisions in appeal or review on applications by citizenship, age and sex – Annual data', extracted 26 June 2024.

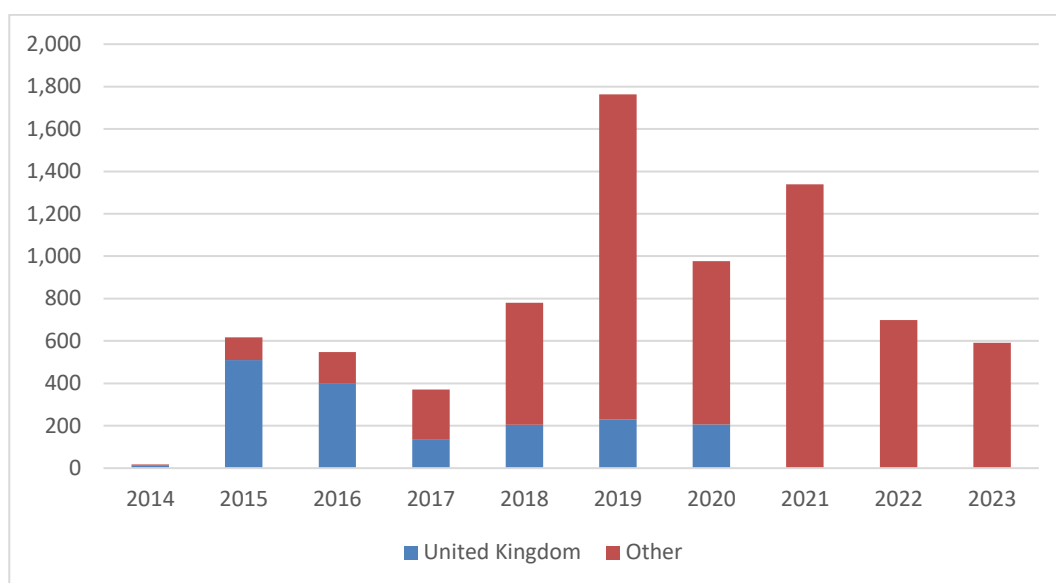
<sup>81</sup> Correspondence with the IPO, November 2024.

The median processing time in IPAT for decisions issued in 2023 was 5.5 months. This is a reduction from the 10.2 month median processing time in 2022.

#### 4.1.4 Secondary movements

Outgoing Dublin III requests fell once again in 2023, with 592 outgoing requests made, a 15% decrease from 2022 (see Figure 4.9). This refers to international protection applicants who were first fingerprinted in another country, and then travelled to Ireland.

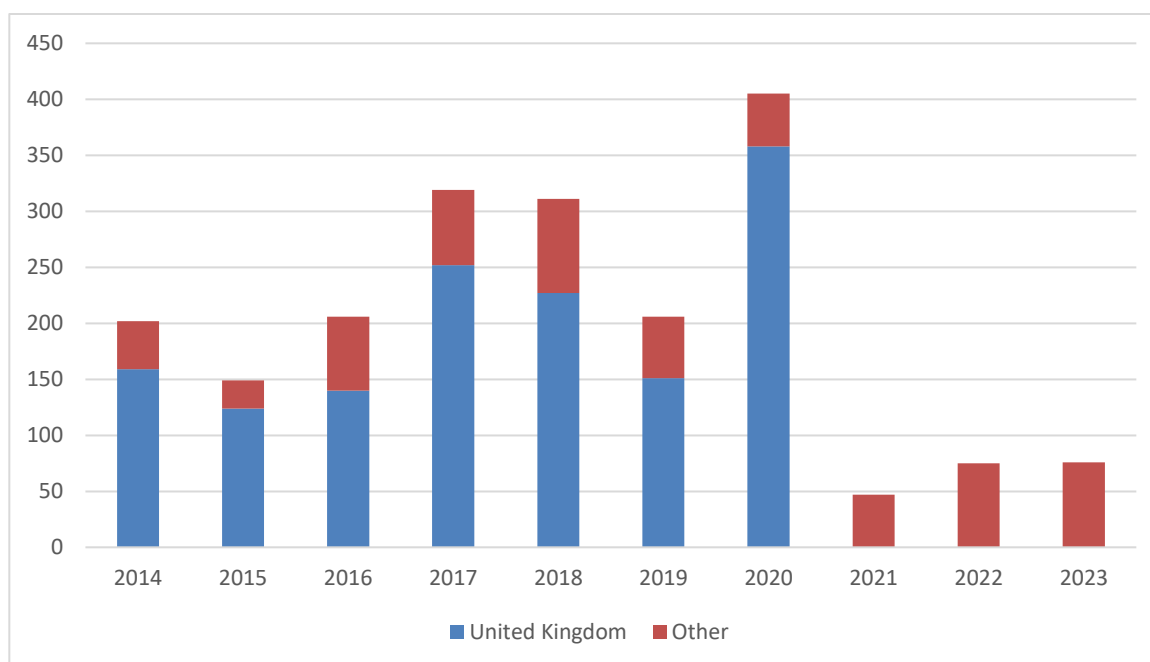
**FIGURE 4.9 OUTGOING DUBLIN REQUESTS, 2014–2023**



*Source:* Eurostat (2024). 'Outgoing "Dublin" requests by submitting country (PARTNER), type of request, legal provision, sex and type of applicant', extracted 27 June 2024.

*Note:* The UK was no longer part of the Dublin Regulation from 2020.

There were 76 incoming Dublin requests received in 2023, almost the same as in 2022 (Figure 4.10). This continues to represent a significant decrease since the United Kingdom (UK), previously the main source of incoming Dublin requests to Ireland, left the Dublin Regulation. Incoming Dublin requests relate to international protection applicants who were first fingerprinted in Ireland before travelling to another country.

**FIGURE 4.10 INCOMING DUBLIN REQUESTS, 2014–2023**

*Source:* Eurostat (2024). ‘Incoming “Dublin” requests by submitting country (PARTNER), type of request, legal provision, sex and type of applicant’, extracted 26 June 2024.

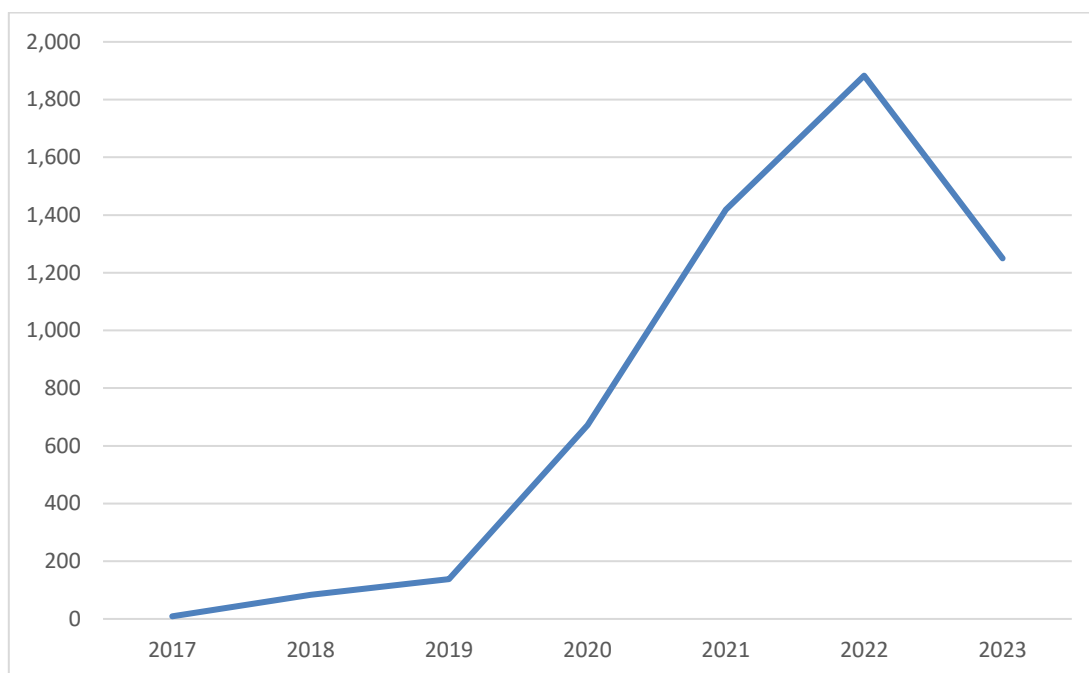
*Note:* This refers to international protection applicants who were first fingerprinted in Ireland, and then moved on to another country.

Figure 4.11 shows the number of Eurodac hits<sup>82</sup> for people who have been marked as having international protection in other EU countries, an indicator of secondary movements of beneficiaries of international protection. It shows a decrease of 33% in secondary movements from other EU countries since 2022, although the level remains higher than pre-2020. Greece, Germany and France were the top three countries of origin.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Eurodac is an information system that collects, transmits and compares fingerprints of asylum applicants to assist in determining which Member State is responsible for examining their application under the Dublin Regulation.

<sup>83</sup> EU-LISA (2024). Eurodac 2023 statistics, p. 23.



**FIGURE 4.11 NUMBER OF EURODAC HITS IN IRELAND FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN MARKED AS HAVING INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN OTHER EU COUNTRIES, 2017–2023**

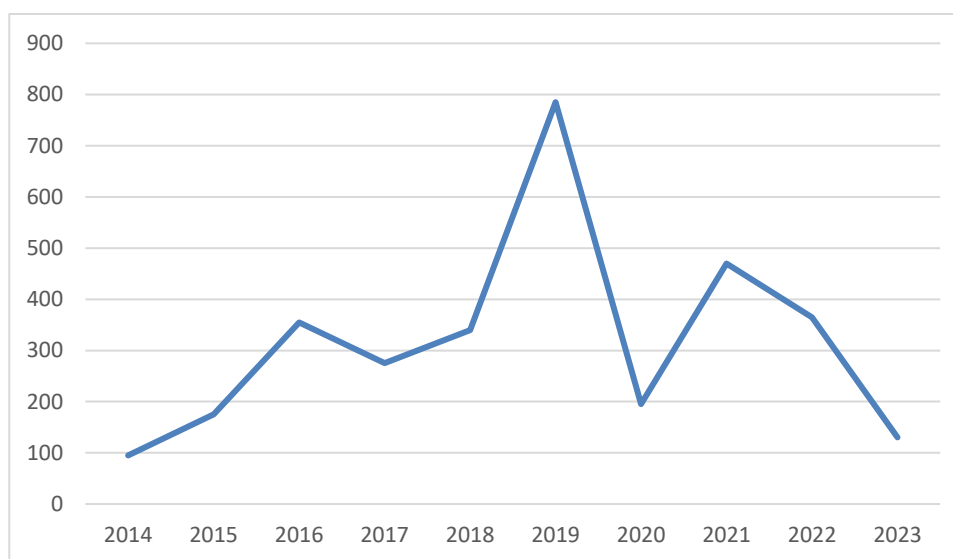
Source: Cunniffe et al. (2022). *Explaining recent trends in international protection applications in Ireland*, Dublin: ESRI; EU-LISA (2023). *Eurodac 2022 statistics*, p. 27; EU-LISA (2024). *Eurodac 2023 statistics*, p. 23.

#### 4.1.5 Resettlement

There were 130 people resettled to Ireland in 2023, a 64% decrease from 2022, and the lowest number since 2014 (see Figure 4.12). All of those resettled were Syrian and 46% were under 18 years.<sup>84</sup> The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) noted that challenges such as a lack of reception capacity, housing shortages and an increase in the number of international protection applications, as well as the hosting of arrivals from Ukraine, affected the ability to reach resettlement targets in 2023.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Eurostat (2024). 'Resettled persons by age, sex and citizenship – Annual data (migr\_asyresa)', extracted 27 June 2024.

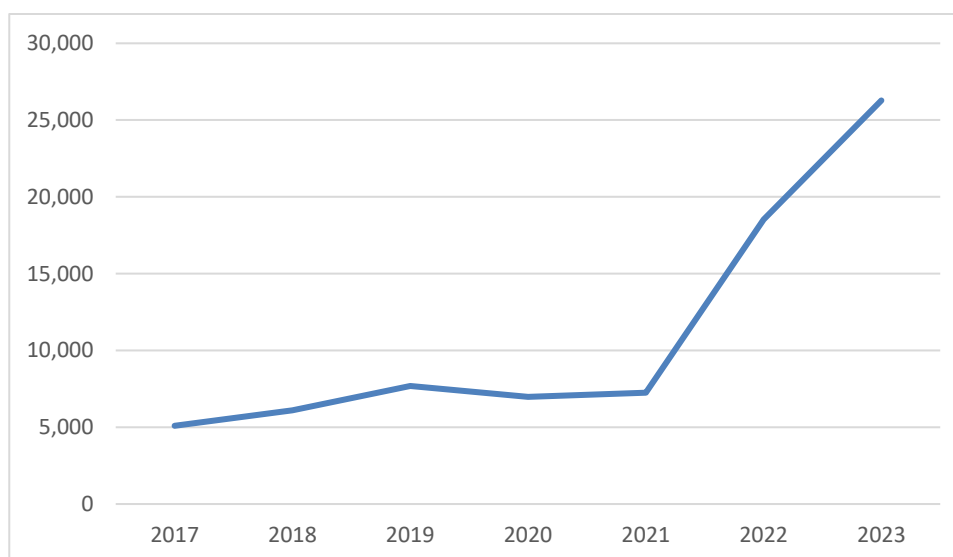
<sup>85</sup> Correspondence with DCEDIY, October 2024.

**FIGURE 4.12 RESETTLED PERSONS TO IRELAND, 2014–2023**

Source: Eurostat (2024). 'Resettled persons by age, sex and citizenship – Annual data (migr\_asyresa)', extracted 27 June 2024.

#### 4.1.6 Reception accommodation

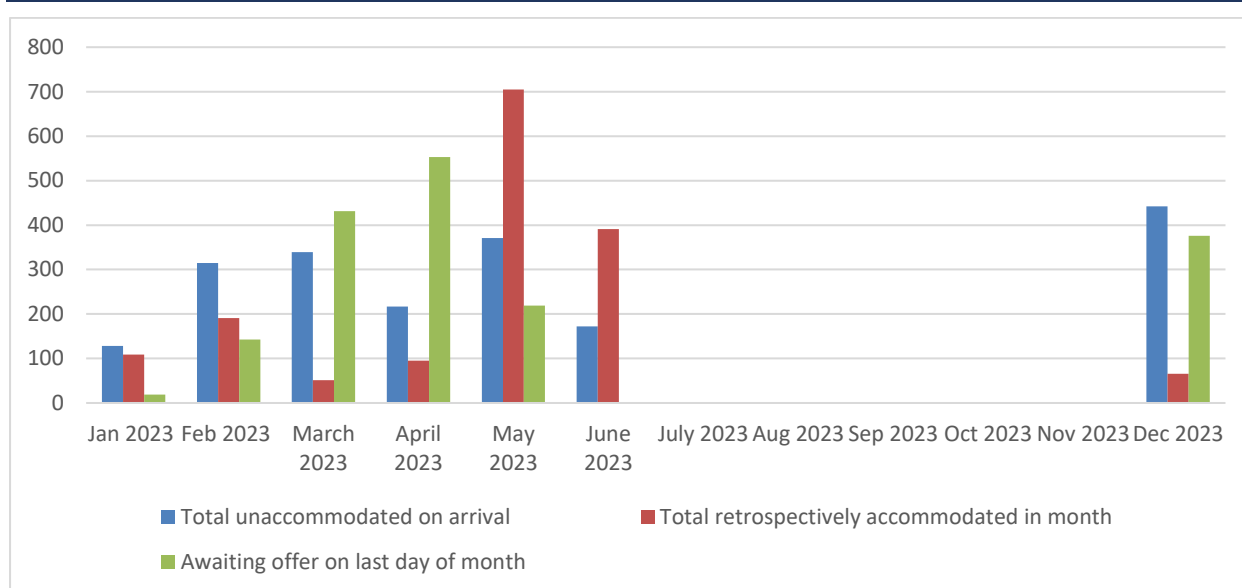
International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS) occupancy rates continued to increase in 2023. This was due to continued high applications for international protection, as well as barriers faced by beneficiaries of international protection leaving IPAS in terms of accessing accommodation (see Murphy and Stapleton, 2024). At the end of December 2023, there were 26,279 people accommodated in IPAS accommodation, a 42% increase from December 2022 (Figure 4.13).

**FIGURE 4.13 IPAS ACCOMMODATION OCCUPANCY AT YEAR END, 2017–2023**

Source: DCEDIY (2023). 'IPAS weekly accommodation and arrival statistics 31/12/2023'.

In 2023, the increase in international protection applications placed significant pressure on the international protection system (see Section 4.2.1). Figure 4.14 shows the number of international protection applicants not offered accommodation on arrival in 2023. Between January and June, a total of 1,542 applicants were not offered accommodation on arrival, with the majority of these being single males.<sup>86</sup> By mid-June 2023, all applicants who were not initially offered reception accommodation on arrival were subsequently offered accommodation. Between July and November 2023, all applicants were offered accommodation on arrival until December 2023, when 500 applicants were initially unaccommodated (the highest figure in 2023). At the end of 2023, 376 applicants remained unaccommodated.<sup>87</sup>

**FIGURE 4.14 NUMBER OF APPLICANTS NOT OFFERED ACCOMMODATION ON ARRIVAL, 2023**



Source: Correspondence with DCEDIY, November 2024.

#### 4.1.7 Labour market access applications

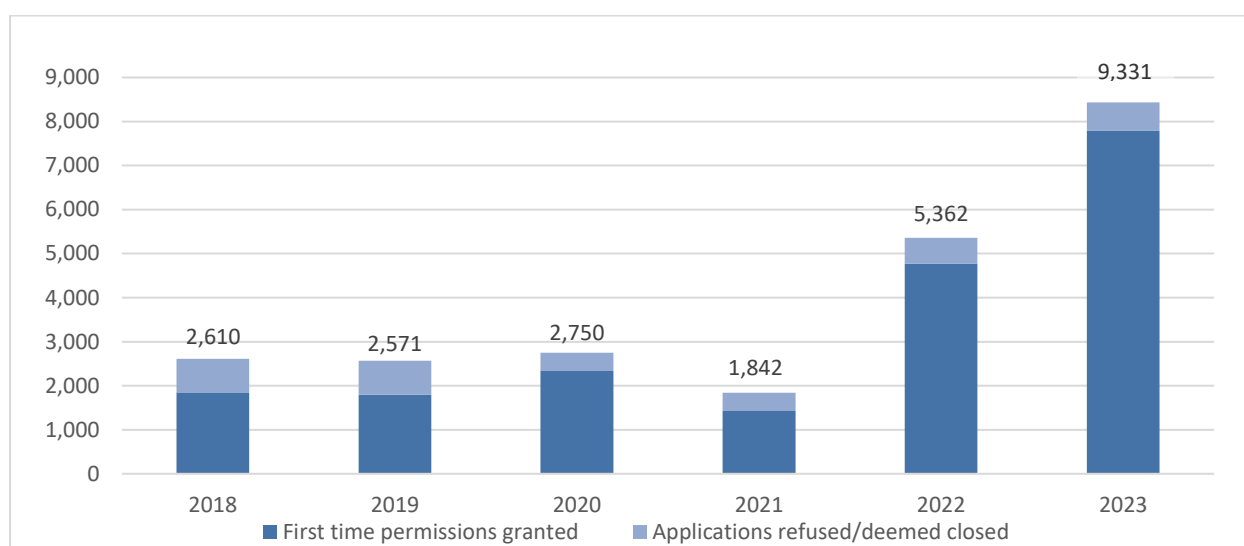
As outlined in Figure 4.15, 9,331 first time applications for labour market access permissions were made by international protection applicants in 2023. This is the highest number since applicants were first provided access to the labour market in 2018. In 2023, 7,784 first permissions were granted, and 651 refusals were issued, a grant rate of 92%. The increase over the last two years likely reflects the higher number of applications lodged for international protection in Ireland in 2022 and 2023, as well as a decrease in labour market activity during the COVID-19, alongside other

<sup>86</sup> Correspondence with DCEDIY, November 2024.

<sup>87</sup> Correspondence with DCEDIY, November 2024.

factors.<sup>88</sup> In 2023, there were 2,923 applications for renewal of labour market access permissions, of which 2,211 were granted.

**FIGURE 4.15 FIRST TIME LABOUR MARKET ACCESS PERMISSIONS: APPLICATIONS AND NUMBER GRANTED, JUNE 2018 – DECEMBER 2023**



Source: Polakowski, M. and E. Cunniffe (2023). *Labour market integration of international protection applicants in Ireland*, Dublin: ESRI; Correspondence with the IPO, November 2024.

## 4.2 DEVELOPMENTS

### 4.2.1 Pressure on the international protection reception system and responses

The increase in international protection applications in 2022 and 2023 created significant pressure in the international protection system (both reception and processing).

In January 2023, DCEDIY paused emergency accommodation arrangements for international protection applicants at the Citywest transit hub.<sup>89</sup> Due to the nationwide shortage of accommodation, particularly for single male international protection applicants, the Citywest transit hub had been offering emergency shelter while applicants waited to be assigned accommodation. This service was paused for adults in January, but the transit hub continued to provide other services, including the processing of accommodation for beneficiaries of temporary protection. IPAS continued to provide accommodation for international protection applicant families

<sup>88</sup> Polakowski, M. and E. Cunniffe (2023). *Labour market integration of international protection applicants in Ireland*, Dublin: ESRI.

<sup>89</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'Citywest Transit Hub to pause entry of new International Protection arrivals to its emergency accommodation area', press release, 24 January.

with children. Applicants who were not assigned accommodation on arrival had their details taken and were contacted once accommodation became available.

Between January and June, IPAS was unable to provide accommodation to all international protection applicants, particularly single male adults. In this timeframe, a total of 1,542 applicants were not initially offered accommodation. Retrospective offers of accommodation, when available, were made on a regular basis during this period until mid-June 2023, when IPAS was in a position to provide accommodation to all international protection applicants until early December, at which point capacity for single males was once again exhausted.<sup>90</sup> All international protection applicants presenting at the IPO were assessed by IPAS and the Health Service Executive (HSE) to identify significant vulnerabilities with accommodation provided immediately in such cases. Where no vulnerabilities were identified, single male applicants were not prioritised for accommodation initially. The shortage from December 2023 only affected single male applicants; all single female applicants and families were accommodated.<sup>91</sup>

Up until December 2023, the Daily Expenses Allowance was only available to those residents in accommodation provided by IPAS.<sup>92</sup> From December 2023, an increase to this allowance was introduced, for applicants not offered accommodation, of €75 per week, bringing the total for these applicants to €113.80 per week.<sup>93</sup>

Pressure on IPAS accommodation, homelessness among international protection applicants and government response to the problem received extensive media attention throughout 2023, and these issues were subject to significant nongovernmental organisation (NGO) criticism.<sup>94</sup> The Irish Refugee Council (IRC) published an emergency briefing in December 2023, which highlighted concerns about the risk of serious harm and threat to life faced by those concerned, and the a lack of identification of vulnerable applicants, and made extensive recommendations to improve the response.<sup>95</sup> The IRC also published a research report on the crisis and the experience of homeless international protection applicants in June 2023 (see Section 4.3.1).<sup>96</sup> Doras also raised concerns about the use of tented accommodation,<sup>97</sup> and Nasc indicated that the increase in the Daily Expenses Allowance was insufficient to

<sup>90</sup> Correspondence with DCEDIY and UNHCR Ireland, November 2024.

<sup>91</sup> DCEDIY (2024). 'Response to parliamentary question 1810/24', 17 January.

<sup>92</sup> Correspondence with DCEDIY, November 2024.

<sup>93</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'Statistics on international protection applicants not offered accommodation', 12 December.

<sup>94</sup> See IRC (2023). 'Emergency briefing to Government: Preventing international protection applicant homelessness'; IRC (2023). '*Now I live on the road: The experience of homeless international protection applicants in Ireland*'; Nasc (2023). 'Increase to Daily Expenses Allowance insufficient: "Those without accommodation are being put under extreme pressure"'; Doras (2023). 'Concerns that hundreds of refugees may face homelessness'; Doras (2023). 'Statement from Doras on the return to tented accommodation for international protection applicants'.

<sup>95</sup> IRC (2023). 'Emergency briefing to Government: Preventing international protection applicant homelessness'.

<sup>96</sup> IRC (2023). 'Emergency briefing to Government: Preventing international protection applicant homelessness'.

<sup>97</sup> Doras (2023) 'Statement from Doras on the return to tented accommodation for international protection applicants'.

keep applicants safe.<sup>98</sup> The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) also made multiple statements, and wrote to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to express its view that Ireland is in clear breach of international obligations.<sup>99</sup>

In April 2023, a High Court judgment decided that the support provided to homeless international protection applicants – a supermarket voucher and direction to private charities, as the applicant arrived prior to the above-mentioned changes to the Daily Expenses Allowance – ‘did not come remotely close to what was required by law’. It also found that the failure to adequately provide for the applicant violated their right to human dignity under Article 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (see Section 4.4.1 for a full summary).<sup>100</sup> This was heard as a lead case for numerous applicants in similar circumstances. IHREC joined the case as *amicus curiae* and made submissions.<sup>101</sup> The ruling was welcomed by IHREC and the IRC.<sup>102</sup> A second case on damages, relating to 2 individuals, was heard in December 2023 as 2 test cases from a pool of around 50 arising from similar circumstances (see Section 4.4.2 for full summary).<sup>103</sup> In this case, the State accepted that it did not meet applicants’ entitlements and that a declaration of a breach of rights was appropriate, but the claim of damages was opposed by the State, which argued that the breach arose from force majeure circumstances. The High Court referred the case to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) to clarify the parameters of this defence for inviolable rights.

In December 2023, the IHREC brought proceedings before the High Court in its own name in relation to the State’s failure to provide for the basic needs of homeless international protection applicants. It was the first time since IHREC’s establishment that it used this legal power, under section 10(1) of the *Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014*, which, it stated, was due to the gravity of the situation and the nature of the destitution and risk faced by applicants.<sup>104</sup> The legal action seeks to compel the State to fulfil its legal obligations to provide for the basic needs of international protection applicants.

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<sup>98</sup> Nasc (2023). ‘Increase to Daily Expenses Allowance insufficient: “Those without accommodation are being put under extreme pressure”’.

<sup>99</sup> IHREC (2023). ‘State in clear breach of human rights obligations to international protection applicants’, press release, 27 January.

<sup>100</sup> *S.Y. v. Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and others* [2023] IEHC 187, 11.

<sup>101</sup> IHREC (2023). ‘Commission to assist High Court in cases involving State’s duty to International Protection applicants’, press release, 27 March.

<sup>102</sup> IHREC (2023). ‘Commission welcomes important ruling in international protection case’, press release, 21 April; IRC (2024). ‘Irish Refugee Council welcomes important judgment of High Court on homeless applicant’, press release, 1 August.

<sup>103</sup> *S.A and R.J v. Minister of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Ireland and the Attorney General* [2023] IEHC 717, 2.

<sup>104</sup> IHREC (2023). ‘Commission granted leave by the High Court, seeking to compel the State to fulfil its international protection obligations’.

## 4.2.2 White Paper implementation

As reported in previous reports in this series, due to significant increases in international protection applications in 2022 and 2023, the White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a New International Protection Support Service was re-examined. While the review was initially due in Quarter 2 2023,<sup>105</sup> by December 2023 it was still due to go to Cabinet.<sup>106</sup> The timelines and targets for the scale of the White Paper were under review; however, progress was made on a number of fronts under the principles of the White Paper.<sup>107</sup> Those that were progressed in 2023 are outlined in this section.

### 4.2.2.1 HIQA inspections of IPAS accommodation centres

The Health Information and Quality Authority's (HIQA) role in inspecting permanent IPAS accommodation centres for their compliance with the national standards for accommodation offered to people in the international protection process was given a statutory basis in 2023.<sup>108</sup> The Regulation came into force in 2024.<sup>109</sup> The national standards address a range of issues relating to: accommodation; food and catering; individual, community and family life; health and wellbeing; governance; and meeting the special reception needs of applicants seeking international protection. Compliance with the National Standards can only be adequately measured through onsite assessment.

It should be noted that HIQA only has responsibility for inspecting permanent IPAS centres, but has no responsibility for emergency centres or other types of accommodation.<sup>110</sup>

### 4.2.2.2 Funding for Children and Young Peoples' Services Committees

The White Paper committed to support Children and Young Peoples' Services Committees (CYPSCs) around the country to support international protection applicants.<sup>111</sup> CYPSCs are county-level structures that bring together different agencies that work with children and young people in order to plan and improve coordination.<sup>112</sup> In June 2023, €1.3 million in funding was announced for CYPSCs to provide support to international protection applicants (€50,000 for each of the 27 CYPSCs).<sup>113</sup> The funding was intended to support initiatives, including the translation

<sup>105</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'Response to parliamentary questions 15740/23 and 15741/23', 30 March.

<sup>106</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'Response to parliamentary question 54315/23', 7 December.

<sup>107</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'Response to parliamentary question 54315/23', 7 December.

<sup>108</sup> DCEDIY (2021). 'National standards for accommodation offered to people in international protection'.

<sup>109</sup> S.I. No. 649/2023 – European Communities (Reception Conditions) (Amendment) Regulations 2023.

<sup>110</sup> HIQA (2024). 'HIQA publishes first inspection reports on International Protection Accommodation Service centres'. Section 4.5.

<sup>111</sup> See [www.cypsc.ie/about-us.8.html](http://www.cypsc.ie/about-us.8.html).

<sup>113</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'Minister O'Gorman announces new funding for children and young people's services to support international protection applicants', press release, 16 June.

of parenting support guides, the organisation of summer camps and projects, counselling support and therapy sessions for adolescents, and the delivery of culturally sensitive parenting programmes.<sup>114</sup>

#### 4.2.2.3 Local authority integration teams

Progress was made on the establishment of new local authority integration teams in each of Ireland’s local authorities in 2023, as part of the implementation of the White Paper to End Direct Provision. Recruitment began in mid-2023 with the aim of establishing a team of 4 in each of the 31 local authorities to support international protection applicants, and beneficiaries of international and temporary protection, including resettled refugees. The composition of the local authority integration teams includes one integration support coordinator, two integration support workers and one administrative support role. See Section 8.2.2 for further details.

#### 4.2.2.4 Family support practitioners

In August 2023, it was announced that 17 family support practitioners were being recruited to work with families and children working in IPAS accommodation nationally.<sup>115</sup> The practitioners will work directly with families to support them to access wider family support services. It was expected that all 17 roles would be filled by the end of 2023.

### 4.2.3 International Protection Modernisation Programme

In July 2023, the Department of Justice published the International Protection Modernisation Programme 2023–2024. This outlines progress against recommendations relating to the Department of Justice made by the 2020 Catherine Day report.<sup>116</sup> It also sets out a revised approach for 2023–2024 due to a changed context: the increase in international protection applications (see Section 4.1.1).

The report notes some recommendations from the Catherine Day report that have been implemented or progressed; for example, access to bank accounts and driving licences for applicants, reduction of the waiting period for labour market access, and legislation providing for an increased notification period for unsuccessful applicants to avail of voluntary return.<sup>117</sup> It also highlights actions that were taken during 2022 to address the increases in applications. This involved revisions to legislation,<sup>118</sup> as well

<sup>114</sup> DCEDIY (2023). ‘Minister O’Gorman announces new funding for children and young people’s services to support international protection applicants’, press release, 16 June.

<sup>115</sup> DCEDIY (2023). ‘Minister O’Gorman welcomes the initiation of two Tusla Family Support Projects, co-funded by the EU’, press release, 16 August.

<sup>116</sup> Department of Justice (2020). *Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process*.

<sup>117</sup> Department of Justice (2023). *International Protection Modernisation Programme 2023–2024*, section 3.

<sup>118</sup> *European Communities (International Protection Procedures) Regulations 2022*, S.I. 541/2022; *International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) (Amendment) Regulations 2022*, S.I. 542/2022.



as the introduction of an accelerated procedure for certain applicants, including applicants from safe countries of origin (see *Annual report on migration and asylum 2022: Ireland*).<sup>119</sup> A case study in the modernisation programme notes positive results from an early analysis of the new procedures, including a reduction in median processing time in the final quarter of 2022 – down to 10 months from 22–26 months earlier in the year.<sup>120</sup>

The report also proposes a revised approach and targets for 2023–2024. It gives details of a modernisation strategy that aims to increase decisions, accelerate certain categories of cases, and improve the quality of decision-making processes. The targets put in place are: finalising 1,000 cases per month in the first quarter of 2024; processing prioritised cases in less than three months by the third quarter of 2023; and establishing an enhanced quality control process, including effective feedback loops to decision makers by the fourth quarter of 2023.

The priority area identified for the IPO was that of increased staffing, for both the IPO and the case processing panel that conducts international protection interviews. Other actions identified were: enhancing learning and development supports; moving towards a paperless system; expanding the office space available to the IPO; and examining changes to the *International Protection Act 2015* to remove any obstacles to streamlining processes.

By December 2023, the IPO expected to have increased its staff to approximately 400 by year end, an increase of 95% over 2022, and to have made approximately 9,000 decisions, more than double the figure for in 2022.<sup>121</sup> The report highlights progress made to increase space, with a floor of a neighbouring building secured and a new interview hub launched in Tallaght. In September 2023, the IPO moved to a ‘digital first’ model, whereby all correspondence must be submitted by email only unless the IPO has specifically requested the submission of original copies of official documents by post.<sup>122</sup> In addition, the *International Protection Act 2015* was amended in 2023 so that notices under the Act could be served by electronic means.<sup>123</sup> The amendment specified that notices can be served to an email address provided by the applicant, or on an electronic interface if the applicant is registered on one. These provisions did not replace other means to serve notices already provided in legislation. This provision

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<sup>119</sup> At the time (November 2022), countries designated as safe countries of origin under the *International Protection Act 2015 (Safe Countries of Origin) Order 2018* were: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of North Macedonia, Georgia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Republic of Albania, Republic of Serbia and Republic of South Africa.

<sup>120</sup> Department of Justice (2023). *International Protection Modernisation Programme 2023–2024*, p. 20.

<sup>121</sup> Department of Justice (2023). ‘Response to parliamentary question 56114/23’, 14 December.

<sup>122</sup> IPO (n.d.). ‘Implementation of paperless procedure’.

<sup>123</sup> S. 69 of the *Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023*, amending s.5 of the *International Protection Act 2015*.

was commenced from 31 July 2023.<sup>124</sup> It is intended to also support the introduction of a digital customer portal over the coming years.<sup>125</sup>

To oversee the modernisation strategy, the report highlights that an International Protection Modernisation Programme Board will be established, to include representation from both the Department of Justice and external bodies. For implementation, it states that an International Protection Modernisation Implementation Board will be set up to manage the programme on a day-to-day basis. A new business modernisation team was also created in the IPO. Approximately €34 million additional funding was allocated in Budget 2024 to the IPO and IPAT to scale up processing.<sup>126</sup>

#### 4.2.4 European Union Asylum Agency participation

The Irish Government approved the participation of Ireland (opt-in) to the Regulation on the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) in 2022.<sup>127</sup> The Regulation replaces the earlier Regulation 439/2010 establishing the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), in which Ireland also participated.<sup>128</sup> The new Regulation builds on the mandate of EASO, turning it into an agency (EUAA). The enhanced mandate of EUAA includes increased operational and technical support to Member States, supported by an asylum reserve pool.<sup>129</sup> The European Commission confirmed Ireland's participation in July 2023.<sup>130</sup> The Commission decision also provides that Ireland shall make available eight experts to the asylum reserve pool.<sup>131</sup> Ireland became a fully-fledged member of the EUAA in August 2023.<sup>132</sup>

This process was required because Ireland does not automatically participate in measures adopted under Title V of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. However, Ireland may exercise the option to participate in these measures.<sup>133</sup> Government approval and approval of both houses of the Oireachtas is required to participate in a measure. Ireland then notifies the European Commission of Ireland's wish to participate, and the European Commission adopts a decision accepting Ireland's participation.

<sup>124</sup> *Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023 (Commencement) Order 2023*, S.I. No. 389 of 2023.

<sup>125</sup> Department of Justice (2023). 'Minister McEntee commences majority of wide-ranging Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023', press release, 1 August.

<sup>126</sup> Department of Justice (2024). 'Response to parliamentary question 27966/24', 2 July.

<sup>127</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/2303; Department of Justice (2022). 'Response to parliamentary question 52237/22', 19 October.

<sup>128</sup> Department of Justice (2022). 'Response to parliamentary question 52237/22', 19 October.

<sup>129</sup> Department of Justice (2022). 'Response to parliamentary question 52237/22', 19 October.

<sup>130</sup> Commission Decision (EU) 2023/1576 of 28 July 2023 confirming the participation of Ireland in *Regulation (EU) 2021/2303 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Union Agency for Asylum*.

<sup>131</sup> In accordance with Article 19(6) of Regulation EU 2021/2303.

<sup>132</sup> Department of Justice (2023). 'Response to parliamentary question 56114/23', 14 December.

<sup>133</sup> Protocol 21 to the Treaty on the European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

#### 4.2.5 Joint Committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth report on refugees and integration

Oireachtas committees advise the Houses of the Oireachtas on a range of specific areas. They receive submissions and presentations from various stakeholders in public meetings and they may publish reports on specific issues.<sup>134</sup>

In November 2023, the Joint Committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth published a report on refugees and integration.<sup>135</sup> In February 2023, the Joint Committee had been asked to report on IPO processing and staffing, accommodation of international protection applicants and refugees, combating the rise of misinformation, and an information campaign to inform communities of the housing of forced migrants (asylum seekers/refugees) in their area. The Committee added challenges facing refugee and migrant children in Ireland as an additional focus, and also looked at ending Direct Provision.<sup>136</sup>

The Committee met with a range of stakeholders to inform the report, including relevant government departments, NGOs, local groups, local authorities and healthcare professionals. The Committee made 96 recommendations. These included implementation of the following:

- amendments to the new process for safe countries of origin to create an opportunity for access to meaningful legal representation;
- a permanent regularisation scheme;
- immediate family reunification rights for all employment permit holders and right to work for family members of all employment permit holders;
- further resources and support from other government departments and the Cabinet allocated to DCEDIY and IPAS to cope with the increasing pressures being experienced, including a significant increase in capital spending to provide state-owned own door properties;
- additional resources to charities and NGOs assisting with the response, and long-term funding for the voluntary and community sector, including substantial increases in Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) funding;
- expansion of HIQA's mandate to all types of accommodation;
- a more even geographic spread of people seeking protection, and research on the availability of services in areas prior to accommodation centres being established,

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<sup>134</sup> See [www.oireachtas.ie/en/committees](http://www.oireachtas.ie/en/committees).

<sup>135</sup> Joint Committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2023). *Report on refugees and integration*, Houses of the Oireachtas.

<sup>136</sup> See p. 17.

as well as addressing the root causes of inadequate service provision in these areas;

- progress on the Department of the Taoiseach’s community engagement project (see Section 4.2.6);
- a zero tolerance approach to aggressive protests near accommodation centres and the engagement of community leaders to deliver information to communities;
- Public education on critical thinking and protection, and a national communications campaign;
- the establishment of a national lead to oversee logistics, contingency plans and coordination between departments, and to provide clear communication to the public and those coming to Ireland;
- addressing the placement crisis, and the recruitment and retention crisis, faced by Tusla, as well as the allocation of significant additional resources to Tusla;
- the improvement of health information and healthcare services for protection applicants and resolving barriers to follow-up due to relocations between health regions;
- urgent progression and resourcing of the White Paper and the Catherine Day report;
- introduction of the universal Child Benefit for international protection applicants and a review of the Direct Provision allowance in line with current inflation rates; and
- tasking the 17 family support workers (see Section 4.2.2.4) with holding centre managers to account and demanding improvements in living conditions and the facilitation of parenting in Direct Provision settings.

#### **4.2.6 Community engagement and community integration forums**

Throughout 2023, there were tensions and protests in some communities where new reception centres were being opened, in some cases leading to arson attacks on new centres or buildings rumoured to be designated as centres for international protection accommodation.<sup>137</sup> Following this, the Government took steps to improve community engagement.

A new team (the Community Engagement Team) was set up within DCEDIY in October 2023 to engage with local communities in advance of reception centres being opened. The team was set up to engage directly with elected representatives, local authorities,

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<sup>137</sup> Conneely, A. (2023). ‘Fire at vacant building in Dublin under investigation’, RTÉ, 13 January; McCarron, J., M. Coughlan and K. McDonald (2024). ‘Mapped: The fires linked to accommodation for migrants’, RTÉ, July 2024 ; Lally, C. (2023). ‘Galway hotel fire: Gardaí believe blaze at premises due to house 70 asylum seekers started deliberately’, *Irish Times*, 17 December.

local development companies and other stakeholders, where appropriate. The purpose of the team is to provide information to local communities that can help new arrivals to integrate.<sup>138</sup>

In addition, the Department of the Taoiseach led work on a communications strategy aimed at developing a national model to support communications with communities where accommodation centres are opening.<sup>139</sup> As part of this, in 2023, the Department of the Taoiseach procured support and advice in the development of effective public communication and community engagement strategies as part of the cross-government humanitarian response to people fleeing the war in Ukraine and people seeking international protection in Ireland.<sup>140</sup>

Community response forums were originally set up by local authorities to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. These forums consist of representatives of key stakeholder organisations and service providers at local level, and are chaired by the chief executive of each local authority. They were repurposed to respond to the arrival of beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine. In 2023, in line with the establishment of the local authority integration teams, a review was carried out to expand this forum to include integration supports to international protection applicants and beneficiaries of international protection.<sup>141</sup> Formal expansion of this forum was commenced in early 2024 and the forums were renamed community integration forums in line with this expanded remit.<sup>142</sup>

#### **4.2.7 Ombudsman for Children’s Office special report on safety and welfare of children in Direct Provision**

In October 2023, the Ombudsman for Children presented its first special report to both Houses of the Oireachtas.<sup>143</sup> Under the Act establishing the Ombudsman for Children, the Ombudsman can lay a special report before each House of the Oireachtas where they feel that measures taken in response to recommendations made as a result of an investigation are not satisfactory.<sup>144</sup> The special report highlighted three specific recommendations that IPAS committed to in April 2021 that the Ombudsman felt had stalled or regressed since the investigation. These were:

1. IPAS to cease the use of commercial hotels and plan for accommodation capacity pressures;

<sup>138</sup> DCEDIY (2023). ‘Response to parliamentary question 46971/23, 25 October.

<sup>139</sup> DCEDIY (2023). ‘Response to parliamentary question 26327/23, 30 May.

<sup>140</sup> DCEDIY (2023). ‘Response to parliamentary question 26327/23’, 30 May; Correspondence with Department of the Taoiseach, November 2024.

<sup>141</sup> Murphy, K. and A. Stapleton (2024). *Access to autonomous housing for beneficiaries of international protection*, Dublin: ESRI.

<sup>142</sup> Correspondence with the Local Government Management Agency, November 2024.

<sup>143</sup> Ombudsman for Children (2023). *Special report: Safety and welfare of children in Direct Provision*.

<sup>144</sup> Section 13(5), *Ombudsman for Children Act 2002*.

2. IPAS to put in place a robust quality assurance mechanism, including an independent inspectorate; and
3. IPAS to have regard to the vulnerability of children within the international protection process in the planning and provision of their accommodation needs.

During a parliamentary debate following the presentation of the report before the Houses of the Oireachtas, the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth said that an action plan to address the recommendations had been developed, although completion of some of the actions was significantly delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing numbers of international protection applicants from 2022 onwards.<sup>145</sup> The Minister further noted that since the report, a number of measures had been put in place to address concerns.

Responding to the first recommendation, the Minister noted that while the Department was working to cease the use of commercial hotels and private providers, a blended approach would be required due to the increased number of applicants arriving to Ireland. Regarding the second recommendation, the Minister highlighted that the national standards for accommodation offered to people in the international protection process was given a statutory basis in 2021 (see Section 4.2.2.1). Responding to the third recommendation, the Minister noted that since February 2021, the IPAS Residents Welfare Team identified 2,600 people as vulnerable, including 800 minors, among a total of 4,000 assessments. The Minister highlighted that while all children are deemed vulnerable by default, the pilot programme helps IPAS to identify children and young people with additional vulnerabilities earlier in the process and to address their accommodation and reception needs insofar as possible.<sup>146</sup>

The Minister also stated that IPAS monitors its centres' adherence with the requirements of the Tusla Child Safeguarding Statement Compliance Unit, and would continue to engage with Tusla in respect of the findings and recommendations of a child safeguarding compliance report published in August 2023. The Minister noted that in light of the expectation of further increases in numbers seeking international protection in Ireland, the necessary scaling up will have to be done not only in the Minister's department, but also across all government departments.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Houses of the Oireachtas (2023). 'Special Report by the Ombudsman for Children on Direct Provision: Motion', Dail Éireann debate, 30 November.

<sup>146</sup> Houses of the Oireachtas (2023). 'Special Report by the Ombudsman for Children on Direct Provision: Motion', Dail Éireann debate, 30 November.

<sup>147</sup> Correspondence with DCEDIY, November 2024.

#### 4.2.8 Community Recognition Fund

In 2023, the Community Recognition Fund was introduced to recognise the efforts made by communities in welcoming and supporting people coming to Ireland. The funding is targeted at projects located in cities, towns and villages that are hosting beneficiaries of temporary protection and/or international protection applicants. The funding aims to support the development of facilities that will be used in the future by all members of the community. Through the 2023 allocation, €50 million was approved for around 900 projects around the country. The funding is allocated between each local authority, based on the number of new arrivals located there. One of the requirements of the funding was that the proposal was developed based on direct engagement with impacted communities and in consultation with local stakeholder groups, and that the funding is targeted at communities where the highest level of new arrivals are located and where there is a clear need for investment identified. The projects to be funded had to be capital in nature, deliver tangible benefits for communities, and be capable of being delivered over the course of 2023 and 2024.<sup>148</sup>

#### 4.2.9 First HIQA inspection of Tusla’s service for separated children seeking international protection

The Separated Children Seeking International Protection (SCSIP) team takes care of unaccompanied minors in Ireland.<sup>149</sup>

HIQA undertook their first inspection of the SCSIP service between February and March 2023.<sup>150</sup> The aim of the inspection was to assess compliance with national standards related to management of child protection referrals. The inspection found that the SCSIP service was not compliant across a range of standards, with many risks rated as high. The inspection report found that governance of the SCSIP was poor and required significant improvement. The report also found that the service was orientated towards crisis responses, with the focus primarily on the unaccompanied children’s basic care needs and accommodation, and not on the wider, ongoing child protection and welfare needs of this group. However, the report acknowledged that the SCSIP team was under-resourced to undertake visits to see unaccompanied children in placements across Ireland, and that it had experienced an increase in referrals prior to the inspection period due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and increases in the number of people seeking international protection in Ireland. The report also acknowledged that, despite facing such resource and capacity challenges, Tusla had ensured that all unaccompanied children were seen by a social worker on the day of referral, at which an intake assessment was undertaken; however, as a

<sup>148</sup> Department of Rural and Community Development (2023). ‘Community Recognition Fund 2023: Scheme outline’.

<sup>149</sup> Young people who have been displaced by the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 are unaccompanied minors, and beneficiaries of the European Temporary Protection Directive. However, they fall under the remit of the SCSIP as they may need care and protection under the *Child Care Act 1991*.

<sup>150</sup> HIQA (2023). *Report of an inspection of a child protection and welfare service*.

result of under-resourcing, the team was overstretched and therefore struggled to meet all the needs and demands.<sup>151</sup>

#### 4.2.10 External advisory group report on ending Direct Provision

In 2021, an external advisory group was established to monitor progress on the White Paper to End Direct Provision.<sup>152</sup> The external advisory group consists of three independent experts appointed by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. The advisory group publishes reports periodically on the progress of the reforms, the most recent of which was published in July 2023.<sup>153</sup>

The report identified three areas that required immediate attention, as well as three that required attention in the medium term and two in the long term, with recommendations made for each one. These were identified as requiring immediate attention:

- stronger cross-government coordination, including the extension of the mandate of community response forums to international protection applicants and a coordinating role for the Department of the Taoiseach to ensure the delivery of the commitments in the White Paper to End Direct Provision;
- accommodation, including ending the use of private sector accommodation for new arrivals except for short-term emergency overflow, by delivering rapidly on the six reception and integration centres and using emergency powers to accelerate their development; and
- accommodation for those with leave to remain, through the development of a plan, with every local authority to house those concerned based on a distribution key, and their inclusion in the housing need and demand assessment of each local authority and relevant development plans.

Medium-term issues raised include:

- the need for provision of phase two accommodation through an annualised capital budget for the purchase/construction of sufficient supply of own-door or own-room accommodation;
- the need for a specialised accommodation agency, recommending that a state agency for the accommodation of asylum seekers be established and that departmental responsibility should be with the Department of Housing given the need for close liaison with local authorities; and
- the need for an information campaign explaining why people seek international protection and the positive benefits they bring to Ireland, and the provision of real

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<sup>151</sup> HIQA (2023). *Report of an inspection of a child protection and welfare service*.

<sup>152</sup> See EMN Ireland's annual report on migration and asylum for 2021 for more information on this.

<sup>153</sup> Day, C., D. Donoghue and L. Sirr (2023). *Report No. 2 from the External Advisory Group on Ending Direct Provision*.



incentives to local communities, in areas such as healthcare, schools and transport, to encourage active integration.

Long-term issues identified include:

- the need for an increased number of integration support workers (See section 4.2.2.3) in counties with larger number of international protection applicants, with a ratio of support worker to international protection applicants established; and
- the need for data, including a comprehensive overview of existing and missing data and establishing steps to fill the gaps, and the use of the data to make and support policy decisions.

#### **4.2.11 Additional ground for withdrawal or reduction of reception conditions**

In December 2023, an amendment was made to add an additional ground for the withdrawal or reduction of material reception conditions. The additional reason is ‘the recipient has abandoned the place of accommodation at which the material reception conditions are being provided.’<sup>154</sup> According to DCEDIY, this amendment was needed to ensure maximum bed occupancy in all IPAS accommodation in circumstances of a lack of availability for new international protection applicants, given observed absences from IPAS accommodation.<sup>155</sup>

#### **4.2.12 Resettlement and relocation**

##### **4.2.12.1 Global Refugee Forum 2023 pledges**

The Government of Ireland pledged to resettle 1,200 refugees, as well as welcoming an additional 100 under the humanitarian admissions programmes at the Global Refugee Forum 2023.<sup>156</sup> This pledge was also part of the collective EU pledge relating to the 2024–2025 EU resettlement and humanitarian admission scheme.<sup>157</sup> Ireland had pledged 800 resettlement places and 100 humanitarian admission places under the EU resettlement and humanitarian admission programme in the course of 2023.<sup>158</sup> DCEDIY noted that challenges such as a lack of reception capacity, housing shortages and an increase in the number of international protection applications, as well as the hosting of arrivals from Ukraine, affected the ability to reach resettlement targets in 2023.<sup>159</sup>

The Government of Ireland also pledged to further develop its community sponsorship programme at the forum. This programme was reviewed in 2023,<sup>160</sup> with a view to

<sup>154</sup> Section 4, *European Communities (Reception Conditions) (Amendment) Regulations 2023*, S.I. No. 649/2023.

<sup>155</sup> Correspondence with DCEDIY, November 2024.

<sup>156</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs (2023). ‘Minister Fleming attends the Global Refugee Forum’, press release, 13 December.

<sup>157</sup> Pledge GRF 08485 made on 11 December 2023.

<sup>158</sup> European Commission pledges submitted by the Member States (2023).

<sup>159</sup> Correspondence with DCEDIY, October 2024.

<sup>160</sup> DCEDIY (2023). ‘Response to parliamentary question 48628/23’, 7 November.

upscaling the programme into 2024 and beyond (see Section 4.2.12.4 for more information on community sponsorship). The pledge stated the intention to resettle up to 25 families per year under the Community Sponsorship Ireland initiative, as part of the overall resettlement programme.<sup>161</sup>

Ireland also pledged to continue providing support for the arrival of refugees under safe and legal complementary pathways, in particular through labour and education opportunities. In doing so, it committed to continuing to provide support for two initiatives: EU-Passworld and Displaced Talent for Europe (DT4E).<sup>162</sup> EU-Passworld is a three-year Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) funded project linking community sponsorship to labour and education pathways. The Irish partners are United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Ireland and Nasc. DT4E is a three-year AMIF funded project, led by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), to connect people in need of international protection in Jordan and Lebanon with employers in Belgium, Ireland, Portugal and the UK. In Ireland, DT4E enables high-skilled individuals and their families seeking international protection to seek a sustainable future by connecting these professionals with employers across diverse industries in Ireland, in both the public and private sectors.<sup>163</sup>

The Government also pledged continued support for UNHCR and IOM, and made pledges in relation to addressing the root causes of forced displacement.<sup>164</sup>

#### 4.2.12.2 Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism

Ireland signed the Declaration on Solidarity, along with 20 other European countries in June 2022. This declaration established the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism, which aims to respond to difficulties faced by Member States bordering the Mediterranean through the relocation of asylum seekers and refugees, as well as through financial contributions.<sup>165</sup> In June 2023, the Government decided to make a financial contribution under the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism for 2023, instead of undertaking relocations.<sup>166</sup> The decision to make a financial contribution in 2023, rather than relocations, was in part due to pressure on accommodation supply for international protection applicants and beneficiaries of temporary protection (BoTPs) in Ireland.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Pledge ID GRF 08492 made on 11 December 2023.

<sup>162</sup> Pledge ID GRF 08495 made on 12 December 2023.

<sup>163</sup> IOM Ireland (2023). 'DT4E quarterly update October', 20 December.

<sup>164</sup> See Department of Foreign Affairs (2023). 'Minister Fleming attends the Global Refugee Forum', press release, 13 December.

<sup>165</sup> See European Commission (n.d.). 'Relocation: EU solidarity in practice'.

<sup>166</sup> Oireachtas Library and Research Service (2023). *Refugees in Ireland, the EU and worldwide*, p. 14.

<sup>167</sup> Oireachtas Library and Research Service (2023). *Refugees in Ireland, the EU and worldwide*, p. 14; Correspondence with the Department of Justice, November 2024.

#### 4.2.12.3 Private sponsorship capacity-building project

Ireland leads an AMIF co-funded project that aims to build governmental and non-governmental stakeholders' capacity to conduct and scale up community sponsorship programmes for refugees. The Building Capacity for private Sponsorship in the European Union (CAPS-EU) project is run in partnership with Fedasil (Belgium) and Migration Policy Institute Europe.<sup>168</sup> Migration Policy Institute Europe published two research outputs under the programme in 2023. One was a policy brief, which explored approaches to matching refugees to host communities.<sup>169</sup> Another was a report exploring common challenges faced in regard to the recruitment and retention of sponsors, as well as strategies to address them, looking at experiences in Belgium, Germany and Ireland.<sup>170</sup>

#### 4.2.12.4 Review of Community Sponsorship Ireland project

Community Sponsorship Ireland was established in 2018 as a complementary integration and resettlement stream to the traditional state-centred model of resettlement.<sup>171</sup> In October 2023, the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) commissioned an evaluation of the Community Sponsorship Ireland programme to determine if any significant changes were needed in preparation for the next phase, starting in 2024.<sup>172</sup> The review was mainly based on interviews with key stakeholders, including regional support organisations, The Open Community, the UNHCR and community support groups. International community sponsorship initiatives, including those in Australia, Canada, Ireland and the UK, were also examined.<sup>173</sup> A national model, with local partners, was adopted as the preferred delivery model going forward.<sup>174</sup> The IRPP noted that this model would involve the further development of the National Support Organisation (NSO) into the primary organisation responsible for promotional strategy, training development and delivery and specialised support. In addition, they would be the central contact point for interested volunteers. The IRPP also noted that this model aims to provide strong central control and increase consistency and efficiency.<sup>175</sup>

<sup>168</sup> DCEDIY (2023). *CAPS-EU: Building capacity for private sponsorship in the European Union (CAPS-EU) project*.

<sup>169</sup> Smith, C.D. and E. Ugolini (2023). *Why matching matters: Improving outcomes in refugee sponsorship and complementary pathways*, MPI Europe Policy Brief.

<sup>170</sup> Zancuchi, M.B., N. Dumann, F. Tissot and A. Skodo (2023). *Attracting, retaining, and diversifying sponsors for refugees in community sponsorship programs*, MPI Europe.

<sup>171</sup> Community sponsorship is a community-led approach to resettlement, where individuals within a formed community sponsorship group take responsibility for providing a range of integration supports to an invited refugee or refugee family. See previous EMN Ireland annual reports for more information.

<sup>172</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'Response to parliamentary question 48628/23', 7 November 2023; Correspondence with IRPP, October 2024.

<sup>173</sup> Government of Ireland (2023). *Community Sponsorship Ireland Programme review*.

<sup>174</sup> Correspondence with IRPP, October 2024.

<sup>175</sup> Correspondence with IRPP, October 2024.

### 4.2.13 Other developments

A catch-up immunisation programme in line with the Irish Primary Childhood Immunisation Schedule, for children and young adults up to the age of 23 who are international protection applicants or BoTPs, was approved in February 2023. In addition, a catch-up HPV vaccine was made available to women up to 25 years and men up to 23 years until the end of 2023. It was also recommended in July 2023 that screening be offered for tuberculosis and certain blood borne viruses. All these interventions are targeted at both beneficiaries of temporary protection and international protection applicants.<sup>176</sup>

Section 52 of the *International Protection Act 2015* was amended in 2023. The amendment provides that an appeal to the Circuit Court in relation to revocation of a declaration of refugee or subsidiary protection status is final, save for appeal to the High Court on point of law.<sup>177</sup> This provision was not commenced in 2023.

A new information website on international protection was made available in June 2023. The website provides information in plain English explaining the international protection process, basic concepts like refugee status, subsidiary protection and temporary protection, what is meant by a safe country, as well as statistical information on international protection in Ireland. It also explains the procedures at the border for undocumented applicants, in relation to inadmissible applications and the Dublin procedure.<sup>178</sup> This website delivers on a commitment in the *Justice Plan 2023* to deliver a web portal with information on international protection and removals, and statistics, using plain language descriptions.<sup>179</sup>

In July 2023, the Government extended the suspension of visa-free travel for refugees when travelling to Ireland (see Section 10.2.2).

## 4.3 RESEARCH

### 4.3.1 ‘Now I live on the road’

In 2023, the Irish Refugee Council (IRC) published a report on homelessness among international protection applicants.<sup>180</sup> It provides an overview of homelessness figures, the legal provisions relating to reception, and also presents findings on the experience of homeless applicants and of NGOs and service providers. It focuses in particular on highlighting areas in which the IRC deem insufficient progress to have

<sup>176</sup> Written comments from the Department of Health in the context of the EMN Ireland national report, *The application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and good practices in 2023*, February 2024.

<sup>177</sup> Section 71, *Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023*.

<sup>178</sup> See [www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/304ba-international-protection](http://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/304ba-international-protection).

<sup>179</sup> Department of Justice (2023). *Justice Plan 2023 – Goal 4, Action 124.7*.

<sup>180</sup> IRC (2023). *Now I live on the road. The experience of homeless international protection applicants in Ireland*.

been made. The report highlights: significant safety concerns and experiences of assault and harassment; issues with access to medical care; and a lack of identification of vulnerabilities. The report made recommendations for immediate concern. These include: access to full social welfare entitlements for homeless applicants; ending the reliance on NGOs and homeless service providers; improved communication with NGOs and service providers; greater inter-departmental cooperation; giving homeless applicants the option of pausing their applications; vulnerability assessments; and guidance for local authorities to prevent rough sleeping. Medium-term recommendations include the use of local authority reset centres (earmarked for BoTPs from Ukraine), and that homelessness among applicants is prevented. Long-term recommendations focus on long-term, state-owned accommodation solutions, and a plan and resources to help people to move out of IPAS accommodation.

### **4.3.2 Labour market integration of international protection applicants**

EMN Ireland and the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) published research on the labour market integration of international protection applicants in Ireland.<sup>181</sup> The report outlines the policy and legal framework relating to labour market access, key policy debates, good practices and ongoing challenges in integration. It also highlights widespread take up of labour market access by international protection applicants, while drawing attention to a lack of data on the labour market situation of applicants, particularly their places of employment, and the nature of their employment and wages. The study found that the gap between Irish and African nationals' labour market outcomes had reduced between 2017 and 2021. Access to the labour market was viewed as a positive development by stakeholders to the research; however, gaps remain, such as a lack of a specific policy/strategy to support the labour market integration of third-country nationals or international protection applicants, and the absence of national governance structures to support the labour market integration of applicants as well as an absence of specific protocols or mechanisms to support labour market integration. Other challenges identified include the often remote location of IPAS centres, and the resultant scarcity of jobs, limited access to childcare, discrimination and underemployment of applicants who had qualifications that did not match their jobs.

### **4.3.3 Experiences of families and children in Direct Provision**

The Irish Refugee Council published research on the experiences of families and children in Direct Provision, focusing on people's experiences of residing in accommodation centres, their access to services/supports to meet basic needs, and financial challenges and adequacy of financial support provided.<sup>182</sup> The research

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<sup>181</sup> Polakowski, M. and E. Cunniffe (2023) *Labour market integration of international protection applicants in Ireland*, Dublin: ESRI.

<sup>182</sup> IRC (2023). *Living in international protection accommodation: Exploring the experiences of families and children in Direct Provision*.

reveals that these families face significant challenges, and that not receiving Child Benefit undermines children’s rights, as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Irish Constitution. The findings highlight the challenges participants face as residents of IPAS centres, particularly regarding access to basic amenities and services, including functional meals/food preparation arrangements, transportation, healthcare and leisure activities. As a result of these challenges, most families are forced to spend their Daily Expenses Allowance on essentials such as groceries, personal care items and transportation, leaving little to no funds for other expenses.

#### 4.3.4 Refugees in Ireland, the EU and worldwide

The Oireachtas Library and Research Service published a series of three reports on refugees in Ireland, the EU and worldwide. The first examines the protections afforded to refugees under international law, and discusses the global context with reference to statistics and trends.<sup>183</sup> The second provides an overview of the legal and policy framework governing the treatment of refugees in Ireland.<sup>184</sup> The third examines recent legal and policy developments at the EU level, including the Common European Asylum System, the Dublin Regulation, search and rescue obligations, responses to increases in international protection applicants and migrants arriving to Europe, the criminalisation of search and rescue efforts and the Pact on Migration and Asylum.<sup>185</sup>

#### 4.3.5 LGBTI+ people living in IPAS accommodation

LGBT Ireland published a report commissioned by DCEDIY, which set out recommendations to improve the support to international protection applicants who are members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI+) community.<sup>186</sup> The research reviewed law, policy and practice relating to support provided to LGBTI+ international protection applicants, and summarised practices in other EU countries, with a particular focus on the practices of Direct Provision centres and their role in supporting applicants. The study found that poor management and the existing complaints procedure cannot guarantee the safety of vulnerable residents. Many participants reported experiencing physical violence and harassment while residing in Direct Provision, and reported communal living to be quite difficult; this was particularly for those whose co-residents held homophobic and/or transphobic views. A lack of visible LGBTI+ acceptance and signals of inclusion within accommodation centres was found with an associated culture of homophobia and transphobia reported to have developed in centres; this led to many participants sharing feelings of isolation and loneliness. Better signposting and accessibility of

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<sup>183</sup> Houses of the Oireachtas Library and Research Service (2023). *Refugees in Ireland, the EU and worldwide (1)*.

<sup>184</sup> Houses of the Oireachtas Library and Research Service (2023). *Refugees in Ireland, the EU and worldwide (2)*.

<sup>185</sup> Houses of the Oireachtas Library and Research Service (2023). *Refugees in Ireland, the EU and worldwide (3)*.

<sup>186</sup> LGBT Ireland (2023). *LGBTI+ people living in International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS) accommodation: Best practices and lived experience*.

supports for LGBTI+ residents was recommended, with many participants discovering supports through their own research, or by chance.

#### **4.3.6 Family reunification with young international protection beneficiaries**

Karen Smith, Muireann Ní Raghallaigh and Derina Johnson published an article examining policy and supports in relation to family reunification for beneficiaries of international protection, particularly young people and children.<sup>187</sup> Drawing on interviews and focus groups with sponsors, reunited family members and service providers, the paper identifies various policy gaps and deficiencies that create difficulties for families in the period after reunification. The research found that there is a heavy burden of responsibility on sponsors preceding reunification and in the period immediately following reunification, especially on young sponsors; it also identified a significant risk of housing precarity and homelessness for family members admitted to Ireland to join them. The financial precarity experienced by sponsors and reunited families is linked to the lack of support in meeting the costs involved in reunification under the statutory reunification scheme, even for unaccompanied minors in receipt of aftercare provision, and the limited budget of some NGO programmes that assist with travel and related costs. Accommodation is identified as the most pressing policy issue in the context of family reunification due to the lack of available and affordable housing. The fact that applicants cannot apply for a housing subsidy appropriate to the needs of a larger family unit until their family members have physically arrived in Ireland and have met registration requirements was also identified as a pressing issue. In addition, the research discussed the reunification process and its impact on sponsors who are children or young people, noting that in the absence of adequate state support for people admitted under reunification, young sponsors may be forced to set aside their own needs and aspirations, with possible long-term implications for their future life chances, in order to facilitate and manage the reunification of family members.

## **4.4 CASE LAW**

### **4.4.1 Reception conditions: S.Y. v. Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth & ors**

The appellant was a 17-year-old Afghan national who applied for international protection in Ireland. He did not have documents to prove his age when he applied for international protection, and it was believed by authorities that he was an adult. When he applied, he was informed that there was no accommodation available. He was given a €28 voucher for Dunnes Stores and the address of the Capuchin Day Centre in

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<sup>187</sup> Smith, K., M. Ní Raghallaigh and D. Johnson (2025). 'Careless hospitality: Family reunification in Ireland involving children and young people of international protection background', *International Journal of Social Welfare*, Vol. 34, No. 1. (First published online in 2023.)

Dublin. For three weeks, the applicant had to sleep rough, resort to begging for food and did not have access to basic hygiene conditions, including a bathroom. He stated that while sleeping rough he felt constantly scared and in danger. The applicant applied to the High Court to seek a number of reliefs by way of judicial review. This application was one of many that concerned single males who had applied for international protection in Ireland and who were not provided with accommodation for a period of time thereafter.

First, on the question of mootness, Meenan J held that although accommodation had been found for the appellant after three weeks, it remained a live issue for other cases.

Meenan J then turned to the declarations sought: firstly, that the Minister failed to perform his public duty in providing the applicant with material reception conditions and secondly, that in doing so, breached the applicant's right to a dignified standard of living. While the Minister submitted that these declarations were unnecessary as the Minister had accepted failure to provide accommodation and was making efforts to do so, Meenan J. held that this would hold if accommodation was the only requirement on the Minister, but the Minister was also required to provide other material reception conditions, including food and basic hygiene facilities. Meenan J recognised that this lack of access deprived the applicant of the most basic standard of living. Meenan J held that regulations must be interpreted in a manner consistent with the EU directive that they transpose, which meant that the court must have regard to Article 35 of the recast Reception Conditions Directive and the reference to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (CFREU) therein.

With reference to the CJEU cases of *Haqbin* (C-233/80) and *Saciri* (C-79/13), it was recognised that even if accommodation facilities are full, alternative steps should have been taken by the Minister, such as providing a financial allowance or referring the applicant to the general public assistance system. Meenan J, with specific reference to Article 1 CFREU on human dignity, found that in the instant case, the Dunnes Stores voucher and direction to private charities did not come close to what was required by law.

The applicant was granted a declaration that the Minister unlawfully failed to provide him with material reception conditions as required under the *European Union (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018* and the Minister's failure to do so was in breach of the applicant's rights under Article 1 of the CFREU.



#### 4.4.2 Reception conditions and the defence of force majeure: *SA and RJ v Minister or Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Ireland and the Attorney General [2023] IEHC 717*

SA and RJ sought international protection in Ireland in mid-February and mid-March 2023. On lodging their applications, they were not provided with accommodation and they each spent over two months homeless. They were provided with vouchers, and charities provided food and access to sanitary facilities. At the end of March, the Daily Expenses Allowance (€38.80 for an adult) was made available to homeless applicants. The applicants could also obtain an Additional Needs Payment. In bringing this case, the applicants sought a claim for damages in the High Court. The two cases were test cases for a group of 50 similar cases.

The State accepted that it did not meet the applicants' entitlement to accommodation under the *European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018* and it accepted that a declaration of a breach of the applicants' rights was appropriate. However, the claims for damages was opposed by the State as the failure to provide accommodation arose from force majeure circumstances of saturation of available accommodation due to an unforeseeable and unexpected increase in Ukrainian refugees and international protection applicants.

The High Court, in assessing the claim for damages and the State's defence of force majeure, first examined the Francovich test. This test sets out the requirements for damages to be awarded against a state for a breach of EU law. The Court reviewed EU case law on situations of force majeure and highlighted how it is understood differently depending on the legal context in which it operates, with differing formulations of the parameters. The case law is nonetheless consistent in the requirement that force majeure can only arise in relation to an abnormal and unforeseeable circumstance outside the control of the party relying on the defence, with some differences in the limits of the defence. Generally, the CJEU has taken a strict approach to the availability of the defence.

The High Court recognised that the recast *Reception Conditions Directive 2013/33/EU* does not expressly provide for a defence of force majeure where the State has failed to provide material reception conditions, indeed, providing reception conditions is mandatory. Even where a force majeure defence could be available in principle, the question remained as to whether it could be used where inviolable rights under the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU are concerned, in this case, Article 1 on human dignity. Furthermore, that the parameters for such a defence are unclear. In this context, the High Court held that the situation was not *acte claire* in EU law and stayed proceedings. A preliminary reference was referred to the CJEU.

#### **4.4.3 Remedies under the Dublin III Regulation: RG v International Protection Appeals Tribunal & ors [2023] IEHC 742**

RG was a Georgian man who sought international protection in Ireland. It was found that he had previously applied for international protection in France. A transfer decision was issued under the Dublin III Regulation 604/2013. He applied to the High Court seeking an injunction restraining his transfer or to stay on the transfer decision, pending ongoing judicial review proceedings. Under Article 29 of the Dublin III Regulation, where a state does not transfer the individual within six months of the acceptance of responsibility of the second state, the responsibility for the application reverts to the first state. In this case, it would revert back to Ireland. The respondents argued that granting an injunction/stay effectively pushes that period beyond six months and therefore determines the outcome of the proceedings.

In the High Court, Hyland J held that if the Court were to place a stay on the transfer decision, this would not stop the six-month time limit from running from the date of the IPAT decision. Article 27 of the Dublin III Regulation provides for an effective remedy for applicants, and in Ireland, IPAT is the designated appeals authority. An appeal to IPAT has a suspensive effect on the transfer decision and the running of the clock on the six-month time limit. However, Hyland J found that Article 27 does not provide a right to the suspensive effect in a further remedy, such as the judicial review pursued in the instant case. Indeed, Articles 27 and 29 were considered a self-contained regime of a remedy and time limits. Once a final decision is issued by the body appointed for the appeal, the six-month time limit starts. While Member States can allow for judicial reviews, Hyland J held that a Member State cannot interfere with the self-contained regime of Articles 27 and 29 and the time limits therein. Hyland J recalled the purpose of the Dublin III Regulation, which is to provide a simple and prompt system for determining Member State responsibility.

Whereas the applicant submitted that the Minister failed to engage in the submitted medical evidence in the case, Hyland J held that the medical concerns were not of such a level as to put the applicant at risk of inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment on transfer to France and that there were no systemic concerns about France. It was held that the applicant could be transferred pending the outcome of judicial review proceedings. If the outcome of those proceedings were in favour of the applicant, they could then return to Ireland.

Hyland J refused the application for an injunction and/or stay on the transfer of the applicant to France under the Dublin III Regulation.

#### **4.4.4 International protection applications and considerations of criminality: *T (Russian Federation) v International Protection Appeals Tribunal [2023] IEHC 271***

The applicant was an adult male from the Caucasus region and was Muslim. He applied for international protection in Ireland on the basis that he was being targeted by the Federal Security Service ('FSB') of the Russian Federation and that the FSB had made false accusations of terrorism against him because of his failure to co-operate with them. In particular, the applicant alleged that he had been falsely accused of travelling to Syria and being a member of a terrorist group known as 'Imrat Kavkaz' or 'Imrat Caucasus'. The applicant further alleged that if he were returned to the Russian Federation, he would be sent to prison for a long time and that the FSB would engineer his death and report it as a suicide or a heart attack.

IPAT found that the applicant had a well-founded fear of persecution on the grounds of religion, imputed political opinion and membership of a particular social group, but then found that the applicant was excluded from refugee status on the basis that there was serious reason for considering that he had committed a serious non-political crime. The applicant challenged the decision of the Tribunal by way of judicial review.

The High Court (Simons J) concluded that the Tribunal failed to carry out the required individualised assessment in respect of the applicant and that its decision was therefore invalid. In particular, Simons J noted that the decision maker had failed to identify adequately the nature of the crime(s) the applicant was considered to have committed, which meant there had been no meaningful analysis of whether the crime was 'serious', 'non-political' or whether the applicant had personal responsibility for these crime(s). The decision of the International Protection Appeals Tribunal was quashed and the applicant's application for international protection was remitted for reconsideration.

#### **4.4.5 Revocation of refugee status: *TF v Minister for Justice [2023] IECA 183***

The appellant was a Romanian national of Roma ethnicity who arrived in Ireland in 2001 and was granted refugee status in 2004 on the basis that he had suffered persecution at the hands of the Romanian police on account of his ethnicity. He became a naturalised Irish citizen in 2015. In 2010, a European arrest warrant was issued by the Romanian authorities seeking the surrender of the appellant and his return to Romania to face serious criminal charges. However, the Minister did not seek to stand over the requested surrender at that time on the basis that the appellant's refugee status precluded his surrender to Romania. In 2018, a second European arrest warrant was issued by the Romanian authorities to serve a sentence of four years imprisonment, which had been imposed following a trial in absentia.

When the matter came before the High Court for hearing in 2020, the Minister accepted that the appellant's refugee status remained a bar to his surrender, albeit it was indicated to the court that revocation of the appellant's refugee status was being considered at that point. Subsequently the appellant was notified of the Minister's intention to revoke his refugee status under section 52 of the *International Protection Act 2015* on the basis of the change in circumstances in Romania since he had been granted asylum, including its accession to the EU in 2007. The Minister subsequently revoked the appellant's refugee status. The appellant filed an appeal to the Circuit Court against this decision and then issued judicial review proceedings challenging the lawfulness of the decision to revoke his refugee status on both procedural and substantive grounds. The High Court dismissed his application for judicial review and the appellant appealed to the Court of Appeal.

The Court of Appeal upheld the appellant's complaint that the Minister's decision to revoke his refugee status had failed to undertake the necessary individualised assessment. It was held that it was insufficient to point to reforms of the judiciary and improvements in both the human rights situation and economy in Romania in general, without also addressing the individual factors relied upon by the appellant at the time he was granted asylum, i.e. his Roma ethnicity and his treatment by the Romanian police in the context of the criminal justice system. The High Court therefore quashed the decision of the Minister to revoke the appellant's refugee status.

#### **4.4.6 Credibility and assessment of documents: *M.H. v International Protection Appeals Tribunal and the Minister for Justice and Equality [2023] IEHC 372***

The applicant was a Pakistani national from Kashmir. He fled Kashmir and applied for international protection in Ireland, initially under the *Refugee Act 1996* and then under the *International Protection Act 2015*. His application for refugee status was refused under the *Refugee Act 1996* and this was upheld by the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. Upon the commencement of the *International Protection Act 2015*, he applied for international protection. The IPO recommended that his application be refused, and this was upheld, on appeal, in the International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT).

The applicant sought judicial review in the High Court on two key issues. The first was whether the Tribunal failed to correctly apply Article 15(c) of the recast Qualification Directive 2011/95/EU and section 2 of the *International Protection Act 2015* in refusing to recommend international protection. The second was whether there was a structural failure in the treatment of documents the applicant submitted by examining credibility first and rejecting them on this ground, without assessing the documents themselves.

With regard to Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive, Phelan J first recognised that Ireland has not opted into the recast Directive 2011/95/EU, but does participate in the Qualification Directive 2004/83/EC. It was found there was no difference in the relevant provisions of the two directives. Article 15(c) concerns serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict. This relates to a person's eligibility for subsidiary protection. The equivalent is set out in section 2 of the *International Protection Act 2015*.

In relation to the case, Phelan J found that the International Protection Appeals Tribunal sufficiently assessed the Refugee Appeals Tribunal decision and adequately used updated country of origin information on the situation in Kashmir to re-assess his claim, including with regard to indiscriminate violence in Kashmir. Phelan J found that the Tribunal had examined a forward-looking test in examining improvements since the recommitment to a ceasefire in Kashmir.

On whether there was a structural failure in how the Tribunal treated documents submitted by the applicant in its credibility assessment, Phelan J made reference to relevant Irish and EU case law as well as the *EASO practical guide to evidence assessment*. Phelan J stated that there was a duty to consider documents submitted and not reject them outright on the basis that the account given is implausible or not believed. The decision maker may give less weight to the documents, but they must be considered. In the instant case, the Tribunal considered the contents of only some of the documents submitted. Phelan J found that the Tribunal therefore failed to properly assess the documentation.

The High Court quashed the Tribunal's decision, and the matter was remitted for new consideration by a different Tribunal member.

## CHAPTER 5

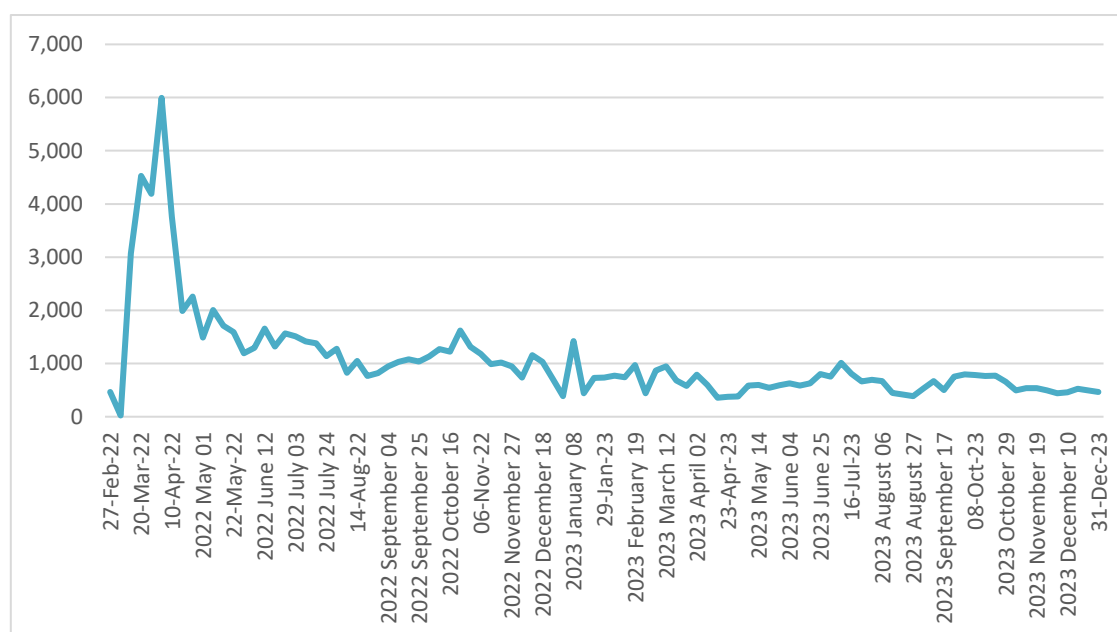
### Temporary protection of persons fleeing the war in Ukraine

#### 5.1 STATISTICS

##### 5.1.1 Arrivals

Figure 5.1 shows the number of arrivals from Ukraine throughout 2023. By 31 December 2023, 103,458 personal public service numbers (PPSNs) had been allocated to arrivals from Ukraine since February 2022.<sup>188</sup> Of these, 33,841 PPSNs were allocated in 2023. Figure 5.1 shows the timing of these arrivals since February 2022. Arrivals in 2023 fluctuated throughout the year, with a peak of over 1,000 arrivals in January and July, and with a continuous fluctuation throughout the year. Arrivals began to decline from October 2023.

**FIGURE 5.1 NUMBER OF WEEKLY PPSN ALLOCATIONS TO ARRIVALS FROM UKRAINE, 2023**



Source: CSO (2024). 'UA07 PPSN Registrations of Arrivals from Ukraine, extracted 10 September 2024.

It is important to note that these numbers may not be representative of the long-term population of arrivals from Ukraine in Ireland, as not all those who have been allocated PPSNs have remained in Ireland. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) estimated in February 2024 that 78% of arrivals at the time had activity in administrative data after 30 November.<sup>189</sup> Administrative activity includes, for example, employment earnings,

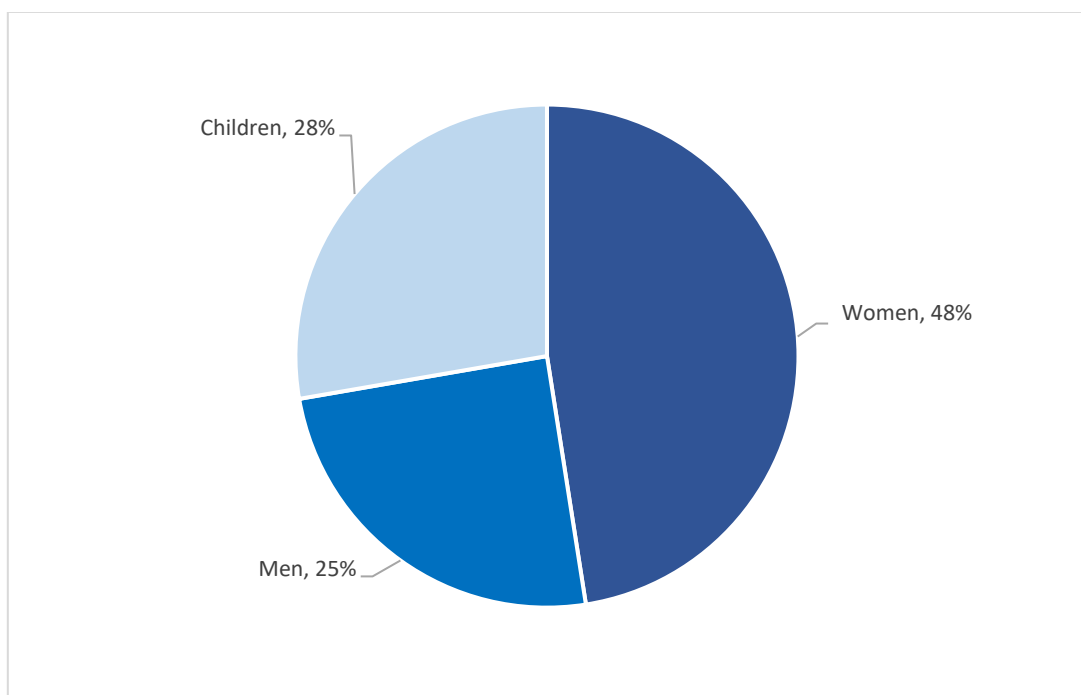
<sup>188</sup> CSO (2024). 'UA07 PPSN Registrations of Arrivals from Ukraine', extracted 10 September 2024.

<sup>189</sup> CSO (2024). *Arrivals from Ukraine*, Series 12.

receipt of a social assistance payment or attendance at a Public Employment Service (Intreo) course.<sup>190</sup>

As shown in Figure 5.2, 48% of arrivals were women. Children also make up a large share of arrivals (28%), with men constituting the remaining quarter of all arrivals.<sup>191</sup> These shares are similar to those from 2022.

**FIGURE 5.2 GENDER AND AGE BREAKDOWN OF ARRIVALS AS OF 20 DECEMBER, 2023**



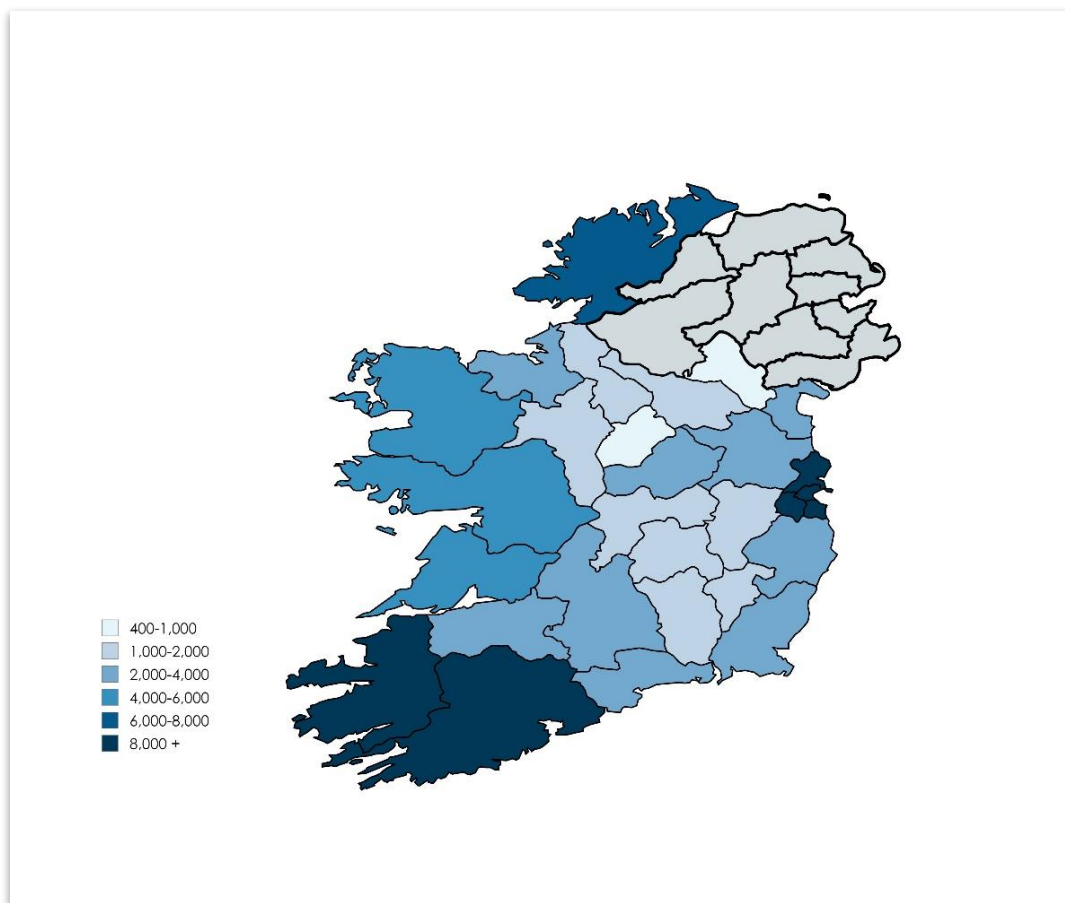
*Source:* CSO (2023). 'UA38 – PPSN allocations of arrivals from Ukraine', extracted 6 August 2024.

*Note:* Children are defined as those aged under 18 for the purposes of this dataset.

Figure 5.3 shows the number of arrivals from Ukraine by county. While beneficiaries of temporary protection (BoTPs) are dispersed throughout the country, there is a higher concentration in Dublin and along the west coast of Ireland, a similar pattern to 2022. While all counties have seen an increase in arrivals since 2022, arrivals increased the most in Tipperary (+124%), Sligo (+104%) and Offaly (+102%). Dublin, with the highest concentration of BoTPs, had the lowest increase (+19%).

<sup>190</sup> These figures are taken from the 'Arrivals from Ukraine in Ireland' frontier series. The CSO notes that 'particular care must be taken when interpreting the statistics as it may use new methods which are underdeveloped and/or data sources which may be incomplete'. It should be noted that the proportion of those remaining in Ireland is likely higher.

<sup>191</sup> CSO (2024). 'UA38: PPSN allocations of arrivals from Ukraine'.

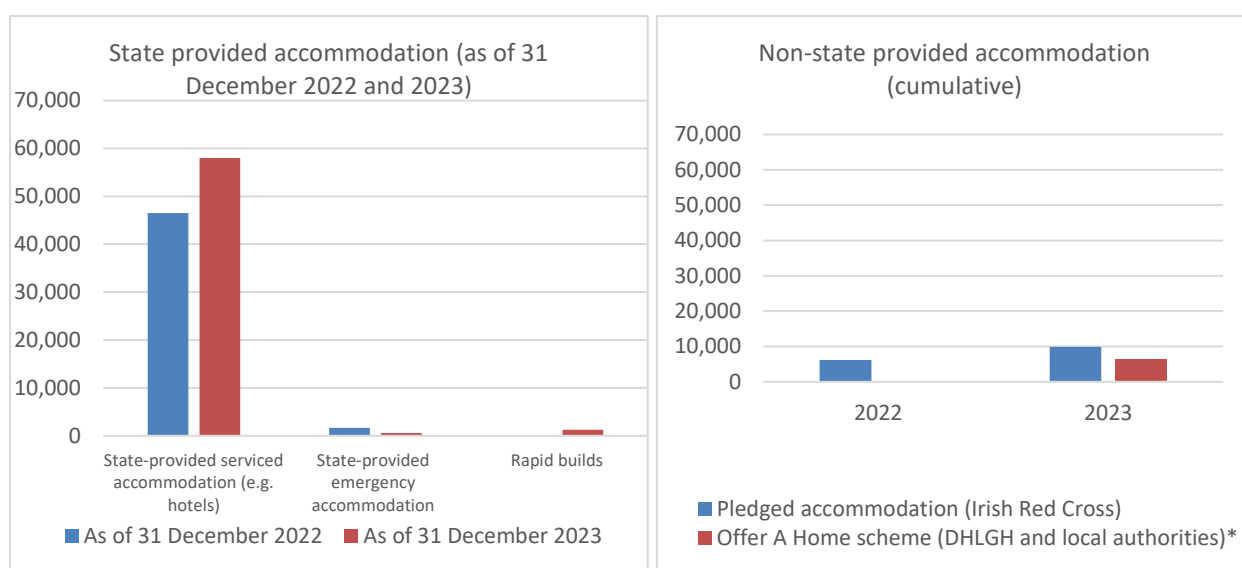
**FIGURE 5.3 NUMBER OF ARRIVALS FROM UKRAINE IN IRELAND PER COUNTY BASED ON PPSN ALLOCATIONS AS OF 9 OCTOBER 2023**

Source: CSO (2023). 'UA34 – Number and location (based on PPSN allocations data) of arrivals from Ukraine', extracted 6 August 2024.

### 5.1.2 Accommodation

Ireland has used a range of accommodation types to provide BoTPs with access to temporary state-supported accommodation since March 2022. BoTPs are also entitled to make their own private arrangements. Figure 5.4 outlines the number of BoTPs in each strand of temporary state-supported accommodation in 2022 and 2023.



**FIGURE 5.4 NUMBER OF BOTPS BY ACCOMMODATION STREAM, 2022–2023**

Source: Correspondence with DCEDIY, November 2024.

Note: While this figure notes the number of beneficiaries per accommodation stream, it is important to note that the figures for state-provided serviced accommodation are a 'point in time' figure, while the figures for non-state-provided accommodation are cumulative. \*No report is available for 2022.

As of 31 December 2023, there were 59,845 arrivals accommodated in state-provided serviced or emergency accommodation and modular housing. In total, over 16,000 arrivals have been accommodated through the pledged accommodation scheme and the Offer a Home scheme. The majority of BoTPs have been accommodated in state-provided serviced accommodation, such as hotels, in both 2022 (46,498) and in 2023 (58,007).

A total of 9,922 BoTPs had been placed in properties under the Irish Red Cross scheme from the start of the scheme to the end of 2023.<sup>192</sup> A total of 6,385 BoTPs had also been placed in the Offer a Home scheme managed by local authorities and overseen by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) to the end of 2023.<sup>193</sup> As of June 2023, 25% of arrivals from Ukraine living in Ireland were living in host accommodation and pledged properties, compared to 8–9% across the EU.<sup>194</sup> By 31 December 2023, 1,240 residents had moved into 310 rapid build/modular home units at seven locations around the country (see Section 5.2.2.5).

<sup>192</sup> Written comments from Irish Red Cross in the context of EMN Ireland's national report, *The application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and good practices in 2023*, September 2023. See Stapleton, A. and C. Dalton (2024). *The application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and good practices in 2023* (EMN Ireland/ESRI) for more information on the scheme.

<sup>193</sup> The Offer a Home scheme is a private accommodation initiative overseen by DHLGH and run by local authorities, introduced at the end of 2022. This scheme calls for the public to pledge stand-alone vacant properties to accommodate BoTPs. See *Annual Report on migration and asylum 2022: Ireland* for more information.

<sup>194</sup> Helping Irish Hosts (2024). 'Lessons learned from hosting: Host survey results and Oireachtas briefing'.

Private arrangements may also be made between hosts and BoTPs. Data from the CSO on the Accommodation Recognition Payment includes BoTPs accommodated through the Irish Red Cross appeal, the Offer a Home scheme and private arrangements, but these figures are not broken down by stream. As of 12 February 2023, a total of 4,807 hosts were in receipt of the Accommodation Recognition Payment, hosting 10,205 arrivals from Ukraine.<sup>195</sup> By 7 January 2024, this figure had risen to 20,642 BoTPs in 10,198 properties.<sup>196</sup> The Accommodation Recognition Payment of €800 is made per property and not per person hosted.

In December, the Government agreed to revise the supports for BoTPs arriving in Ireland. Under this new approach, newly arriving BoTPs who seek accommodation from the State will be provided with accommodation for a maximum of 90 days (see Section 5.2.2.5).

### 5.1.3 Education and employment

The percentage of arrivals as of October 2023 enrolled in education is shown below in Figure 5.5. This indicates that 11% (10,775) of arrivals were enrolled in primary school, 7% (6,7465) in secondary (post-primary) school and 13% (12,108) in further education and training.<sup>197</sup> The primary and post-primary enrolment figures were high when compared with figures from other countries across Europe. Data at EU level indicates that Ireland had one of the highest percentage of Ukraine enrolments for school-going children in the EU.<sup>198</sup> Among those in further education and training, 78% (9,435) are in English language courses.<sup>199</sup> These numbers are very similar to those from 2022. However, there was a slight reduction in the number of arrivals in primary education (-2 percentage points) and a decrease in the number of arrivals enrolled in further education (-7 percentage points).

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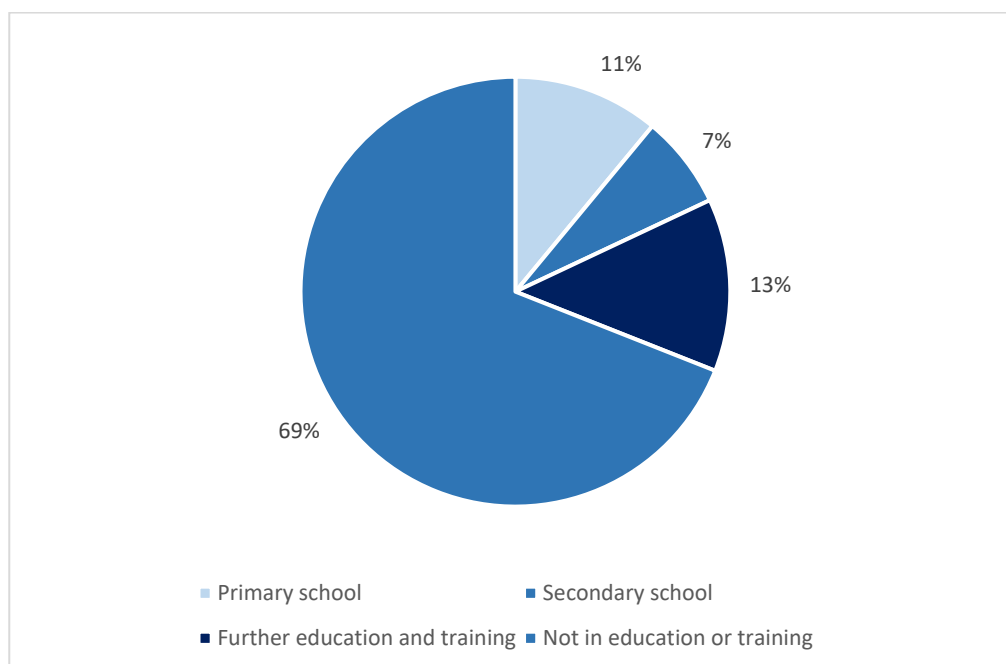
<sup>195</sup> CSO (2023). 'Arrivals from Ukraine in Ireland', Series 9.

<sup>196</sup> Correspondence with DCEDIY, November 2024. Note that this figure also includes BoTPs in ad hoc property arrangements outside of the two schemes.

<sup>197</sup> Correspondence with Department of Education, November 2024.

<sup>198</sup> European Commission Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2024). *The inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in EU education systems – 2023–2024*, Publications Office of the European Union.

<sup>199</sup> CSO (2024). 'Arrivals from Ukraine in Ireland', Series 11.

**FIGURE 5.5 ENROLMENTS IN PRIMARY, POST-PRIMARY AND FURTHER EDUCATION AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ARRIVALS AS OF 9 OCTOBER 2023**

*Source:* Correspondence with the Department of Education, November 2024.

*Note:* These statistics from the 9 October were used as they included the share of people in further and higher education. By 14 December 2023, the percentage of arrivals attending primary and post-primary schools remained the same, at 11% and 7% respectively.

## 5.2 Developments

### 5.2.1 Extension of the Temporary Protection Directive

In February 2023, following the decision to extend the Temporary Protection Directive at European level, the Government announced the extension of all temporary protection certificates to 4 March 2024.<sup>200</sup> Temporary protection is an exceptional measure to provide immediate and short-term protection in situations of a mass influx of displaced people who are unable to return to their country of origin. The Temporary Protection Directive was activated for the first time via Council Implementing Decision 2022/382 in 2022.<sup>201</sup> It provides immediate protection and several rights for beneficiaries. These rights include a residence permit for the duration of the protection, access to employment, suitable accommodation or, if necessary, the means to obtain housing, welfare, medical care, education and family reunification

<sup>200</sup> Department of Justice (2023). 'Minister for Justice announces extension of the Temporary Protection permissions granted to persons fleeing the war in Ukraine', press release, 16 February.

<sup>201</sup> Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC and having the effect of introducing temporary protection.

under specific circumstances.<sup>202</sup> The Directive has since been extended by the Council of the European Union until March 2026.<sup>203</sup>

## 5.2.2 Accommodation

### 5.2.2.1 Governance and coordination

A range of temporary accommodation for BoTPs continued to be utilised in 2023, including hotels, recreational facilities and privately pledged accommodation from the public.

The Senior Officials Accommodation Working Group was established by the Department of the Taoiseach in November 2022 to support and coordinate the work of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), DHLGH and the Office of Public Works (OPW) in the delivery of accommodation for BoTPs.<sup>204</sup> A technical working group was then established in March 2023, which works under the Senior Officials Accommodation Working Group to consider potential strands of accommodation offers for BoTPs (and international protection applicants) and determine a process for deciding on projects involving the refurbishment of buildings.<sup>205</sup> A significant portion of the work of both of the Senior Officials Accommodation Working Group and the Technical Working Group in 2023 concerned diversifying accommodation options available to the Government for BoTPs. This has included developing an MoU between DCEDIY, DHLGH and the City and County Management Association (CCMA). This MoU enables the Technical Working Group to identify and appraise potential properties for refurbishment. Through the MoU, properties are approved for use as temporary accommodation, appropriate contractual arrangements are confirmed, and prospective accommodation providers carry out the relevant refurbishment works at their own expense. The MoU provides for assessment and oversight of refurbishment projects to be completed by local authorities, thus assuring the Department that all regulatory and health and safety requirements are met.<sup>206</sup>

### 5.2.2.2 New accommodation contracts for commercial suppliers

Commercial contracts to provide state-funded accommodation to BoTPs were on a full-board basis in 2022. As temporary protection was granted initially for 12 months, accommodation providers were contracted for that same period. In December 2022,

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<sup>202</sup> Stapleton, A. and C. Dalton (2024). *The application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and good practices for Ireland*, Dublin: ESRI.

<sup>203</sup> Council of the EU (2024). 'Ukrainian Refugees: Council extends temporary protection until March 2026', press release, 25 June.

<sup>204</sup> Department of the Taoiseach (2023). *Accommodation strategy for people seeking protection in Ireland*.

<sup>205</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'Response to parliamentary question 26389/23', 30 May.

<sup>206</sup> Written comments from DCEDIY in the context of EMN Ireland's national report, *The application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and good practices in 2023*, September 2023.

renewal negotiations began with accommodation providers.<sup>207</sup> A revised model was introduced in January 2023, which required BoTPs to contribute towards their accommodation (see below). Just 7.5% of existing providers did not agree to the new contractual terms, in which case DCEDIY did not renew the contracts.<sup>208</sup> In addition, rates were renegotiated, aiming to provide better value for money and a saving for the Exchequer.<sup>209</sup> In 2023, new contracts were generally on a self-catering or bed-only basis.<sup>210</sup> However, the contractor had to be able to provide meals or self-catering facilities.<sup>211</sup> The cost of meals for the first two weeks in the accommodation is covered by DCEDIY, following which, the serviced accommodation contribution policy applies (see below). In addition, personal laundry is no longer included in accommodation contracts. Room cleaning and other standard ‘room only’ services continued to be provided.<sup>212</sup>

### 5.2.2.3 Serviced accommodation contribution policy

As reported in 2022, the Government announced that Ireland would move from an emergency response to a more mainstreamed approach to the arrivals from Ukraine, announcing a suite of measures (see Section 5.2.4 of *Annual report on migration and asylum 2022: Ireland* for further detail). One of the measures introduced in 2023 was a ‘serviced accommodation contribution policy’ for certain serviced accommodation (such as hotels, hostels and guesthouses) where self-catering options are not available. It requires BoTPs living in certain serviced accommodations, such as hotels, to cover their food and other expenses, using existing state supports or private income. BoTPs contribute to the costs of meals provided at a daily rate of €10 per adult and €5 per child.<sup>213</sup> The purchase of meals in serviced accommodation is compulsory.<sup>214</sup> BoTPs must pay this contribution directly to the accommodation providers, and they are notified of the start date two weeks in advance.

### 5.2.2.4 Pledged accommodation schemes

Two pledged accommodation schemes that commenced in 2022 continued to run in 2023. These were the original pledged accommodation scheme with the Irish Red Cross, which focused primarily on shared as well as vacant properties, and the scheme run by local authorities to allow property owners to pledge vacant properties (the

<sup>207</sup> DCEDIY (2023). ‘Response to parliamentary question 6162/23’, 9 February.

<sup>208</sup> Written comments from DCEDIY in the context of EMN Ireland’s national report, *The application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and good practices in 2023*, September 2023.

<sup>209</sup> Written comments from the DCEDIY in the context of EMN Ireland’s national report, *The application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and good practices in 2023*, September 2023.

<sup>210</sup> Procurement is currently paused. This information was provided via written comments from the DCEDIY in the context of EMN Ireland’s national report, *The Application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and good practices in 2023*, April 2024.

<sup>211</sup> DCEDIY (n.d). ‘Accommodation for Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BoTPs) of Ukraine’.

<sup>212</sup> DCEDIY (2022). ‘Serviced Accommodation Contribution Policy – Beneficiaries of temporary protection From Ukraine’.

<sup>213</sup> DCEDIY (2023). ‘Offers of commercial accommodation for beneficiaries of temporary protection (BoTPs) from Ukraine: Guidelines’.

<sup>214</sup> DCEDIY (2022). ‘Serviced Accommodation Contribution Policy – Beneficiaries of temporary protection From Ukraine’.

‘Offer a Home’ Scheme).<sup>215</sup> In April 2023, the Irish Red Cross, funded by DCEDIY, took responsibility for managing and coordinating the original pledge process across a consortium, which comprised implementing partners such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Helping Irish Hosts and the Peter McVerry Trust. Throughout 2023, DCEDIY provided increased funding to ensure that the Irish Red Cross had the capacity and supports to fulfil its role in maintaining and managing existing pledges and in activating new pledges.<sup>216</sup> In November 2023, the Irish Red Cross, the consortium and local authorities launched a joint appeal and awareness campaign for pledges. The campaign was jointly funded by DCEDIY and DHLGH.<sup>217</sup>

### 5.2.2.5 Changes to accommodation supports

In December 2023, the Government agreed to revise the supports for BoTPs arriving in Ireland. Under this new approach, newly arriving BoTPs who seek accommodation from the State will be provided with accommodation for a maximum of 90 days.<sup>218</sup> According to the Government, these changes are required to ensure Ireland can continue to meet its obligations towards BoTPs. The government decision provided that designated accommodation centres (DACs) for newly arrived BoTPs will be established as larger sites offering meals, laundry facilities, health assistance and a programme of activities for children and young people. According to the Government, the centres will also ‘provide information on entitlements and accommodation to help arrivals to find their own independent accommodation and to integrate with local communities’.<sup>219</sup> After the maximum of 90 days, no further state-supported accommodation will be provided, and BoTPs will be required to source their own accommodation or avail of pledged accommodation. The Government stated they will communicate these changes through various channels to ensure that BoTPs who are considering travelling to Ireland are fully aware of the level of assistance being offered and the need to find their own accommodation after 90 days.<sup>220</sup>

A change to social welfare rates for beneficiaries residing in state-provided accommodation was also announced in December 2023. New legislation brought this revised approach into effect from 14 March 2024.<sup>221</sup> (See Section 5.2.4 for more information.) Stakeholders, such as the Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI), criticised

<sup>215</sup> Correspondence with the Local Government Management Agency, November 2024.

<sup>216</sup> Written comments from the DCEDIY in the context of EMN Ireland’s national report, *The application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and good practices in 2023*, September 2023.

<sup>217</sup> See here for more information: [www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/32f0a-offer-a-home-offer-hope](http://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/32f0a-offer-a-home-offer-hope).

<sup>218</sup> Department of the Taoiseach (2023). ‘Accommodation strategy for people seeking protection in Ireland’.

<sup>219</sup> Department of the Taoiseach (2023). ‘Government approves changes to measures for those fleeing war in Ukraine’, press release, 12 December.

<sup>220</sup> Department of the Taoiseach (2023). ‘Government approves changes to measures for those fleeing war in Ukraine’, press release, 12 December.

<sup>221</sup> Section 60 (10) of the *International Protection Act 2015* was amended by Section 11 of the *Social Welfare and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2024*; DCEDIY (2024). ‘Changes to accommodation for people fleeing war in Ukraine’, press release, 13 March.

these changes, arguing that they could push people into poverty, increase housing insecurity and cause additional stress and anxiety among BoTPs.<sup>222</sup>

### 5.2.2.6 Rapid Build Housing Programme

In June 2022, the Government approved 500 modular/rapid build homes to develop housing capacity for BoTPs. The programme aims to provide short-term accommodation to BoTPs, beyond emergency and tourist accommodation options.<sup>223</sup> The target output was subsequently revised to 700 units following a government decision in July 2023.<sup>224</sup> The first phase of 10 sites was completed in 2023, with 2,312 people accommodated in modular housing.

A contribution model for families living in the homes has been developed whereby the rent contribution is a percentage of the resident's income. A 16% rate and a €40 flat rate utility charge has been applied.<sup>225</sup>

### 5.2.2.7 Absence protocol

In March 2023, the Government introduced an absence protocol for state-provided accommodation. According to this protocol, individuals are entitled to a maximum of seven non-cumulative days of absence within a six-month period before the accommodation is reassigned. In October, the procedure was revised and absences were only granted for medical or compassionate reasons. Under these revisions, a BoTP who relinquishes their accommodation due to an unapproved absence will lose their accommodation. However, they are eligible to reapply upon their return, if accommodation is available.<sup>226</sup>

### 5.2.2.8 Process for commercial accommodation offers

In January 2023, the Government announced a streamlined process for the submission of commercial accommodation offers. These offers must fall into certain categories and meet specific criteria. Examples of these categories include hotels, hostels, B&Bs, holiday villages and deregistered nursing homes. In line with this policy, since the beginning of the response to arrivals from Ukraine, accommodation set aside for social housing could not be considered. Other categories not considered for inclusion were: currently operating nursing homes, student accommodation during term time, and accommodation planned for use by other arms of Government. This process created

<sup>222</sup> ICI (2023). 'Statement regarding the significant diminution of support to People arriving from Ukraine', press release, 13 December.

<sup>223</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'Response to parliamentary question 6162/23', 9 February; DCEDIY (2024). 'Response to parliamentary question 21852/2024', 14 May.

<sup>224</sup> Correspondence with DCEDIY, November 2024.

<sup>225</sup> DCEDIY (2024). 'Responses to issues raised by the Committee of Public Accounts at the meeting of 18 April 2024'.

<sup>226</sup> Written comments from DCEDIY, October 2023 in the context of EMN Ireland's national report, *The Application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and good practices in 2023*. Further information is available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/absencepolicyen>.

a single pathway for all commercial accommodation offers. According to the Government, it has enabled the full validation of all offers received and thus limited provider noncompliance.<sup>227</sup>

### 5.2.3 Health

Regarding the provision of health services, BoTPs arriving in Ireland are automatically eligible for a medical card. In 2023, these cards were renewed through a means-tested criteria, under the same criteria as the rest of the Irish population. A ‘grace period’ of three months was granted to ensure the continuation of healthcare provision, throughout the assessment period.<sup>228</sup>

In February 2023, a catch-up immunisation programme was approved. This scheme aims to provide catch-up immunisations and screen for certain infectious diseases among BoTPs and international protection applicants.<sup>229</sup>

The Department-of-Health-funded free counselling project carried out by MyMind was initially established as a support service for those suffering from long-term effects of COVID-19. It was extended during 2022 to include those impacted by ongoing events in Ukraine.<sup>230</sup>

MyMind offered almost 1,000 appointments to Ukrainian nationals through the free counselling project in 2022 and the first quarter of 2023. Further funding was provided in 2023 for counselling for adult BoTPs. The service is offered online to adults by Ukrainian mental health professionals who were recruited after moving to Ireland following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022.<sup>231</sup>

### 5.2.4 Welfare and announcement of changes to social protection supports

BoTPs could avail of income supports and services from the Department of Social Protection on the same basis as Irish citizens in 2023.<sup>232</sup> Some changes to these supports were announced or implemented in 2023.

In May 2023, the regulations relating to the One Parent Family Payment, a payment for parents under 66 who are not cohabiting, and whose youngest child is under

<sup>227</sup> Written comments from DCEDIY in the context of EMN Ireland’s national report, *The Application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and good practices in 2023*, October 2023.

<sup>228</sup> Written comments from the Department of Health in the context of EMN Ireland’s national report, *The application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and good practices in 2023*, February 2024.

<sup>229</sup> Written comments from the Department of Health in the context of EMN Ireland’s national report, *The application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and good practices in 2023*, February 2024.

<sup>230</sup> MyMind Centre for Mental Wellbeing (2023). *Annual report 2022*, p. 7.

<sup>231</sup> MyMind Centre for Mental Wellbeing (2023). ‘New Ukrainian project Launched’; Written comments from the Department of Health in the context of EMN Ireland’s national report, *The application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and good practices in 2023*, February 2024.

<sup>232</sup> Section 60 (10) (b) of the *International Protection Act 2015*.



seven,<sup>233</sup> were amended to ensure that BoTPs were not disadvantaged by the geographical separation criteria.<sup>234</sup> Under the amendment, BoTPs can fulfil the criteria for a separated spouse, if they are separated due to the fact that they are benefitting from temporary protection in Ireland, for as long as temporary protection remains in force.<sup>235</sup>

Changes to social protection supports for BoTPs were announced in December 2023, whereby newly arriving BoTPs seeking state-provided accommodation would be provided with accommodation for a maximum of 90 days (see Section 5.2.2.5), during which time they would also receive a reduced administrative payment in lieu of social welfare (the BoTP weekly payment), amounting to €38.80 per adult and €29.80 per child in respect of daily expenses. Previously, BoTPs were entitled to ordinary social welfare payments (e.g. the previous payment of €232).<sup>236</sup> The reduced administrative payment would be available for the duration of their stay in DACs, after which BoTPs would be eligible to apply for standard social assistance payments.<sup>237</sup> These changes, affecting those who arrived in state-provided accommodation after 14 March 2024, were deemed necessary by the Government to ensure Ireland can continue to meet its obligations to BoTPs and align with provisions made by other EU countries.<sup>238</sup> However the changes were criticised by stakeholders such as the ICI.<sup>239</sup> A spokesperson from Ukrainian Action Ireland expressed similar concerns and added that welfare cuts would confine BoTPs to their hotels and negatively impact integration outcomes.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Department of Social Protection (2023). 'One-Parent Family Payment'.

<sup>234</sup> Written comments from the Department of Social Protection in the context of EMN Ireland's national report, *The application of the Temporary Protection Directive, Challenges and Good Practices in 2023*, October 2023.

<sup>235</sup> Section 125 of the Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) Regulations 2007, as amended by the Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) (Amendment) (No. 7) (One parent family payment) Regulations 2023.

<sup>236</sup> Department of the Taoiseach (2023). 'Government approves changes to measures for those fleeing war in Ukraine', press release, 12 December.

<sup>237</sup> In May 2024, the Government agreed to treat equally BoTPs who arrived in Ireland before and after 14 March and who are living in full board state-supported accommodation where meals and utilities are provided. This means that BoTPs who live in a Designated Accommodation Centre no longer qualify for certain social assistance payments from 9 September 2024. BoTPs in DACs will be entitled to a weekly payment of €38.80 per adult and €29.80 per child, subject to an income test. See more here: 'Beneficiary of Temporary Protection Weekly Payment', [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie).

<sup>238</sup> Department of the Taoiseach (2023). 'Government approves changes to measures for those fleeing war in Ukraine', press release, 12 December.

<sup>239</sup> ICI (2023). 'Statement regarding the significant diminution of support to People ow arriving from Ukraine', press release, 13 December.

<sup>240</sup> Byrne, Lousie (2023). "'No end in sight", thousands of Ukrainian refugees facing uncertain futures', *RTÉ Prime Time*, 20 June.

It should be noted that further changes to this were announced in May 2024.<sup>241</sup>

## 5.2.5 Education

### 5.2.5.1 Access to education for minors

In September 2023, new guidelines were published for schools supporting children from Ukraine. This guidance acknowledges that some Ukrainian students and their families may still wish to maintain engagement with the Ukrainian curriculum. This may take place during the school day where schools have the capacity to facilitate this. In cases where such engagement takes place prior to the student attending school in the morning, or after school finishes in the evening, schools are advised to be cognisant of implications for the students' wellbeing. The Department guidance emphasises the importance of school attendance for Ukrainian students, and states that students should be in school every day for the full school day.<sup>242</sup> Other supports introduced in 2022 were continued in 2023, including the allocation of additional special needs supports, English as an additional language supports and the Regional Education and Language Teams (*see Annual report on migration and asylum 2022: Ireland* for further detail).

### 5.2.5.2 Access to higher and further education

BoTPs can access the Post-Leaving Certificate Bursary for Displaced Persons Scheme, which facilitates access to full-time post-Leaving Certificate courses. In 2023, progression rules were introduced to standardise the scheme and align it with the Student Grant Scheme. These changes included ensuring that students in receipt of this bursary have not previously received financial aid from the State for another course at the same Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) level. Additionally, these revisions aim to prevent students from accessing the bursary if they have already obtained a higher education qualification or have not progressed in their studies.<sup>243</sup>

Financial supports for BoTPs pursuing higher and further education courses were first implemented in the 2022/2023 academic year, and have been maintained for 2023/2024, with financial support rates remaining unchanged from 2022. Other schemes, such as the Temporary Tuition Fee and the financial stipend for full-time higher education students (Erasmus National Grant) also continued to be available in

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<sup>241</sup> Correspondence with the Department of Social Protection, November 2024. Further changes to social protection supports for BoTPs were announced in May 2024, whereby BoTPs in Ireland before 14 March 2024 and living in Designated Accommodation Centres would also receive reduced social protection payments, amounting to €38.80 per adult – a reduction from the previous payment of €232 – and €29.80 per child in respect of daily expenses. This payment would be available for the duration of their stay in Designated Accommodation Centres, after which BoTPs would be eligible to apply for standard social assistance payments.

<sup>242</sup> Department of Education (2023). *Educational provision for students from Ukraine, international protection applicants and students with recognised status guidance for post-primary schools*, p. 10.

<sup>243</sup> Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (2023). 'Ukraine student fees and financial support update'.

2023 (for further detail, see Chapter 5 of *Annual report on migration and asylum 2022: Ireland*).<sup>244,245</sup>

### 5.2.6 Access to the labour market

In March 2023, the Government announced that beneficiaries of temporary protection displaced from Ukraine would be eligible for the Community Employment Scheme after 9 months on the live register, reduced from the previous 12 months.<sup>246</sup> This programme aims to help unemployed individuals by providing part-time and temporary employment opportunities in local communities, thereby facilitating access and integration of BoTPs into the community. Intreo, the public employment service, began actively engaging with BoTPs on a voluntary basis in April 2022. The service, while voluntary in nature, was targeted to the cohort, providing information on and access to the employment supports available. From early 2023, engagement became targeted and mandatory, and since June 2023, BoTPs have been integrated into the standard activation process and are treated the same as all other recipients of Jobseeker's Allowance: employment services and supports are provided by Intreo for up to 12 months and by Intreo partners after 12 months of engagement.<sup>247</sup>

### 5.2.7 Other developments

An automated procedure for the allocation of PPSNs to arrivals from Ukraine was introduced in 2023. This replaced the processing team responsible for this task in 2022. This new procedure automatically generates a PPSN once an individual's status as a BoTP is shared, making the PPSN allocation process more efficient.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> The Higher Education Temporary Tuition Fee Support Scheme for Displaced Ukrainian Students is an administrative scheme of Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science available for BoTPs (including Ukrainian students who are currently registered as higher education students, on approved courses or authorised transition arrangements in approved publicly funded institutions in Ireland) and Irish nationals who were attending a higher education institution (HEI) in Ukraine during the 2021/2022 academic year, and who have now returned to Ireland due to the conflict and who took up a place on an authorised transition scheme during 2022/2023 academic year. This was extended for the 2023/2024 academic year for eligible first-time higher-education students and students seeking to progress to a higher level of study up to postgraduate level. Students who availed of the 2022/2023 scheme, and who are progressing to the next year of their course, were eligible for the same supports in 2023/2024.

<sup>245</sup> BoTPs who are pursuing or progressing in a full-time approved course in a publicly funded HEI will be supported financially through a financial stipend of €1,150.

<sup>246</sup> Department of Social Protection (2023). 'Minister Humphreys and Minister O'Brien announce new measures to support Community Employment Schemes nationwide', press release, 22 March.

<sup>247</sup> Stapleton, A. and C. Dalton (2024). *The application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and good practices for Ireland*.

<sup>248</sup> Written comments from the Department of Social Protection in the context of EMN Ireland's national report, *The application of the Temporary Protection Directive: challenges and good practices in 2023*, October 2023.

## 5.3 RESEARCH

### 5.3.1 Lessons from the Ukraine hosting response for refugee sponsorship programmes

The Migration Policy Institute published a policy brief that examines how private hosting initiatives for displaced Ukrainians have been implemented in a range of European countries, and offers recommendations for hosting initiatives.<sup>249</sup> In broad terms, the research identified three models for private hosting. Firstly, some programmes were initiated by receiving country governments, while other initiatives emerged with lower levels of government engagement. For example, in Spain, the programme Familia Necesita Familia (Family Needs Family) was developed as a collaboration between the Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migrations and the foundation La Caixa, at the request of the Spanish government; the ministry was responsible for identifying Ukrainian refugees in need of housing and matching them with hosts approved by the foundation. In Ireland, the Government provided resources, but hosting began as a civil society initiative, with NGOs such as the Irish Red Cross playing a key role in its implementation. Secondly, the roles and responsibilities of hosts varied across countries. In countries like Ireland and Spain, hosts were required to commit to the provision of accommodation for a specific duration, whereas elsewhere, this was less regulated. Lastly, the level of vetting and support for hosts varied.

To build on the lessons learned from hosting efforts, the policy brief recommends the creation of a civil society community of practice to promote the exchange of lessons learned across hosting and sponsorship programmes. It also recommended that a single point of information, such as a national-level website, for people interested in hosting and sponsorship initiatives would facilitate engaging potential hosts, act as a platform to gather information, help the host community select the appropriate initiatives and facilitate knowledge sharing on training, vetting and other areas. Lastly, it recommends updating community sponsorship programmes by applying the lessons learned for hosting, particularly by lowering barriers to participation for increased volunteer engagement while maintaining safeguarding measures. Other innovations, such as technology-based procedures for matching Ukrainian guests and hosts and technological tools such as portals and chatbots, could also add value to sponsorship programmes. The policy briefing recommended improvements to hosting arrangements based on community sponsorship practices, particularly ensuring that private hosting is monitored and that hosts are supported, to avoid host burnout and manage potential issues proactively.

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<sup>249</sup> Fratzke, S., V. Pulkkinen E. and Ugolini (2023). *From safe homes to sponsors: Lessons from the Ukraine Hosting response for refugee sponsorship programs*, Policy Brief, CAPS-EU Project.

### 5.3.2 Divisions of care within Ireland’s response to Ukrainian refugees and impacts on asylum seekers

This research, by Felicity Daly and Jacqui O’Riordan, compared Ireland’s response to the arrival of BoTPs from Ukraine to the situation of international protection applicants already present in the State, from the perspectives of international protection applicants.<sup>250</sup> The study employed a mixed methods approach, using focus groups alongside policy and media analysis. This report found significant compassion by international protection applicants towards Ukrainians, but also hurt and confusion as to why the two groups were granted different conditions. The report identified a growing division of care when comparing entitlement differences through policy analysis. This hierarchical treatment could be the result of racialised, cultural or geopolitical factors, but the authors propose that the identity of asylum international protection applicants clearly influences the level of care they receive. To illustrate this, the authors highlighted the multi-level response to the arriving Ukrainians, and the role played by the State, local communities and businesses. Through media analysis, the researchers found that some media coverage of the response to BoTPs drew on notions of empathy as being inherent in Irish national identity but obscured the differential treatment of asylum seekers. The authors also reported rising social tensions across Ireland, particularly around the allocation of resources such as housing. Public discourse was found to increasingly blame vulnerable populations, especially international protection applicants.

## 5.4 CASE LAW

### 5.4.1 Child abduction from Ukraine and the best interest of the child: *IF v. JG* [2023] IEHC 495

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a seven-year-old child was taken by her mother during an access visit, from her home, where she lived with her father, stepmother and half-siblings, and brought to Ireland. The child’s parents had separated after she was born and she lived with her father, with her mother having regular access. The child’s father is the applicant in the case and did not consent to the child’s removal.

In the High Court, Gearty J recalled the provisions of the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of Child Abduction, which was created to provide fast redress when children are moved across state borders without the consent of both parents/guardians and to mitigate the damage sustained to a child’s relationship with the ‘left-behind parent’ by returning the child home as quickly as possible.

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<sup>250</sup> Daly, F. and J. O’Riordan (2023). ‘Unintended consequences: Divisions of care within Ireland’s response to Ukrainian refugees and impacts on asylum seekers’, *PHRG*, Vol. 7, No. 1.

In considering whether the removal of the child by her mother was wrongful under Article 3 of the Hague Convention, Gearty J reviewed similar case law from other jurisdictions and found that no court had considered the initial removal of the child lawful due to the effect of a Resolution from the Ukrainian government, which the mother had claimed allowed her to remove the child. The Resolution was found to not have affected the application of family law in Ukraine and the Supreme Court of Ukraine has held that the best interests of the child are paramount. Gearty J found that the removal of the child by her mother was therefore unlawful and in breach of the father's custody rights.

The mother raised the defence of the child facing a grave risk of exposure to physical or psychological harm, or being otherwise placed in an intolerable situation, if she were to return to Ukraine. Reviewing psychological assessment reports on the child, as well as evidence on the gravity of the situation in the specific city in which the child's father and family live in Ukraine, Gearty J held that the threshold of grave risk had not been met. While accepting there was generalised real risk that affected all children in Ukraine, there was no grave risk of harm. Instead, the risk of the child's distress in Ireland becoming a serious psychological problem if she were to stay was considered a more serious risk of harm, particularly as the child had shown little sign of integration in Ireland. Gearty J also distinguished the assessment of serious risk of harm considered in return cases under the *International Protection Act 2015* from the grave risk of harm under the Hague Convention, considering the threshold in the latter to be different and more specific to the individual case.

It was therefore held that it was in the child's best interests to be returned to Ukraine to live with her father and family.

## CHAPTER 6

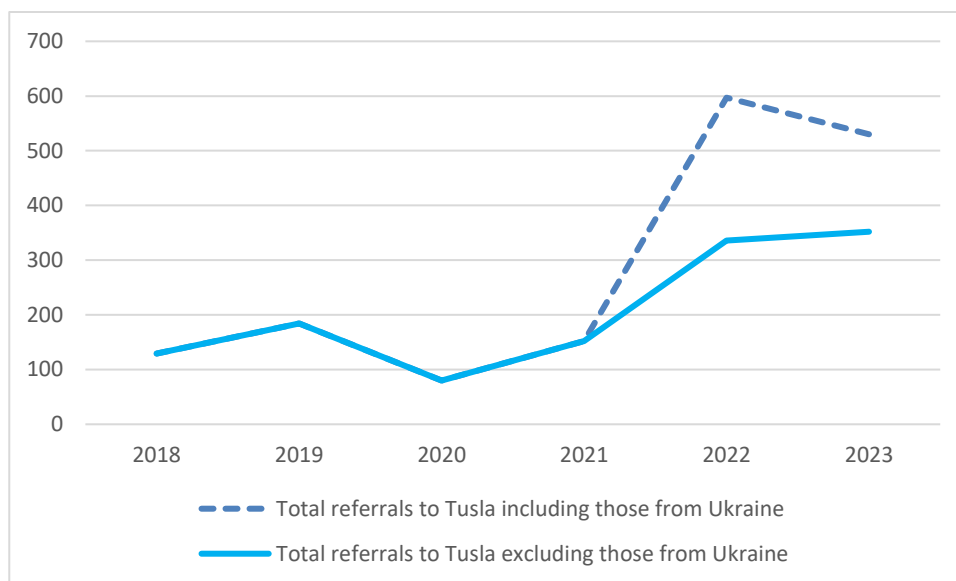
### Unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable groups

#### 6.1 STATISTICS

##### 6.1.1 Unaccompanied minors

In 2023, a total of 530 unaccompanied minors were referred to Tusla Child and Family Agency, of which 178 were from Ukraine.<sup>251</sup> This is a decrease (11%) from 2022 (597 referrals) but is still a significant increase (65%) from the last peak in 2019 (184 referrals), prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and Russian invasion of Ukraine. While the number of referrals from Ukraine decreased between 2022 and 2023, there was a slight increase in the number of unaccompanied minors from other countries referred to Tusla. Tusla provided accommodation and placements for 432 new referrals, 157 of whom were from Ukraine. A total of 620 unaccompanied minors were accommodated by Tusla in 2023.<sup>252</sup>

**FIGURE 6.1 UNACCOMPANIED MINORS REFERRED TO TUSLA, 2018–2023**



Source: EMN Ireland annual reports on migration and asylum 2018, 2019 and 2021; Tusla annual reports 2020, 2022 and 2023.

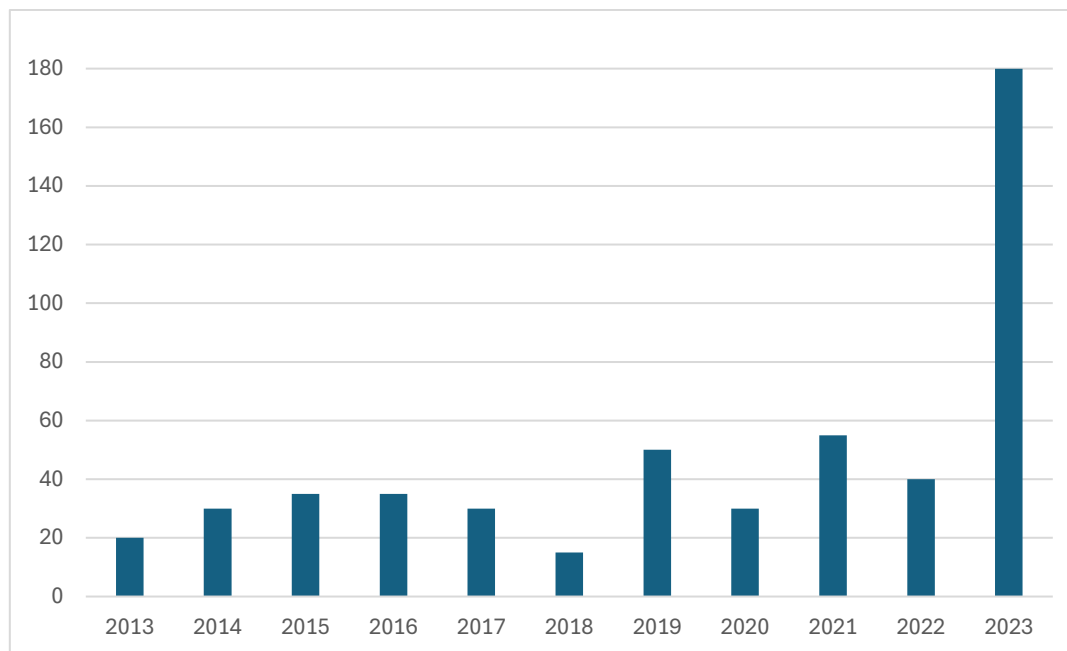
The number of international protection applicants who are classified as unaccompanied minors increased significantly in 2023 (see Figure 6.2), according to Eurostat data. In 2023, there were 180 international protection applicants classified as unaccompanied minors, a 350% increase from 2022 and the highest number in more than ten years. Similarly to 2022, over one-third of unaccompanied minor

<sup>251</sup> Tusla (2024). *Annual report and financial statements 2023*, p. 10.

<sup>252</sup> Tusla (2024). *Annual report and financial statements 2023*, p. 10.

international protection applicants in 2023 were from Afghanistan (42%) and nearly one-third were from Somalia (28%). Algeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone and Syria were also represented.<sup>253</sup>

**FIGURE 6.2 INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION APPLICANTS CLASSIFIED AS UNACCOMPANIED MINORS, 2013–2023**



Source: Eurostat (2023). 'Asylum applicants considered to be unaccompanied minors by citizenship, age and sex – Annual data', extracted 20 July 2024.

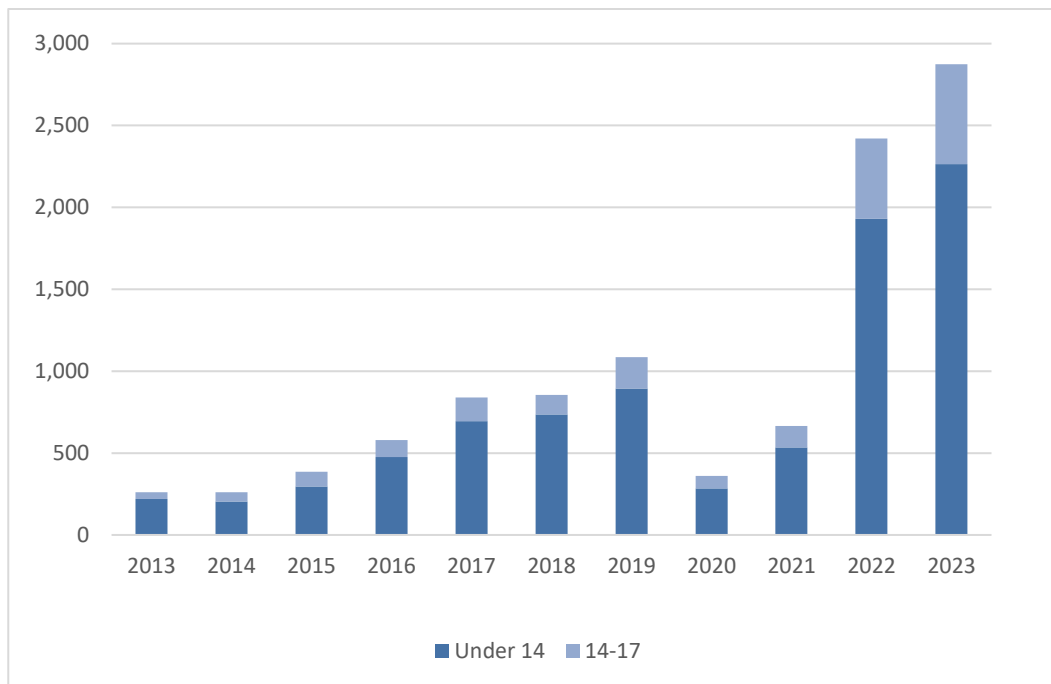
### 6.1.2 Children in the international protection process

In 2023, there were 2,880 child applicants for international protection in Ireland. This was a 19% increase from 2022 and represents a ten-year high. As in previous years, children under the age of 14 were in the majority (79%). In December 2023, 4,035 children had asylum applications pending. This is a 64% increase from December 2022 (2,460).<sup>254</sup>

<sup>253</sup> Eurostat (2023). 'Asylum applicants considered to be unaccompanied minors by citizenship, age and sex – Annual data', extracted 20 July 2024.

<sup>254</sup> Eurostat (2024). 'Persons subject of asylum applications pending at the end of the month by citizenship, age and sex – Monthly data', extracted 22 July 2024.



**FIGURE 6.3 FIRST-TIME APPLICANTS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION UNDER 18, 2013–2023**

Source: Eurostat (2024). 'Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex – Annual aggregated data', extracted 18 July 2024.

## 6.2 DEVELOPMENTS

### 6.2.1 Council of Europe report on violence against women

The Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) published its baseline report on Ireland in 2023.<sup>255</sup> GREVIO is an independent human rights monitoring body that monitors the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the 'Istanbul Convention'). Ireland ratified the convention in March 2019. This first report represents an evidence baseline on Ireland's implementation of the Istanbul Convention and assesses legislation and practice in the areas covered by the Convention.

In the area of migration and asylum, the main requirement of the Convention is to ensure that residence status laws and asylum procedures acknowledge and respond to the realities faced by women who are living in abusive relationships, subjected to sexual violence, exploitation or other forms of gender-based violence.<sup>256</sup> Since the ratification of the Convention, there have been notable developments in Ireland regarding domestic, sexual and gender-based violence in the area of migration and international protection, according to the report. Examples referenced include Zero

<sup>255</sup> GREVIO (2023). *GREVIO baseline evaluation report*, Ireland.

<sup>256</sup> GREVIO (2023). *GREVIO baseline evaluation report*, Ireland, p. 89.

Tolerance, the third national strategy on domestic and gender-based violence and the plans to establish specialised accommodation for victims of gender-based violence as part of the White Paper to End Direct Provision.

However, the report also outlines challenges and makes recommendations. It found that some forms of violence against women, such as female genital mutilation (FGM), receive less focus than others. GREVIO experts found that FGM is only explicitly referred to in one of the planned actions in the implementation plan for Zero Tolerance, and that it does not feature in any of the other pillars, including those on awareness raising, training and education. The GREVIO report urges that domestic legislation, policies and programmes comprehensively address all forms of violence against women, including FGM and forced marriage. The report also highlights that Ireland is significantly behind in the area of data collection. On this point, it emphasises a lack of data on the grounds on which international protection applications are based or the number of decisions granting refugee status on the basis of gender-related forms of persecution, and recommended this be put in place. The Istanbul Convention requires parties to ensure gender-sensitive asylum procedures. While positive measures are outlined in the report, such as training on gender-sensitive interpretation of persecution and interviewing techniques, some areas of concern were raised for improvement. For example, there are no International Protection Office (IPO) or International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) specific guidelines on the examination of gender-related asylum applications. The implementation plan for Zero Tolerance includes an action to apply gender-specific guidelines and a gender sensitive interpretation of the *International Protection Act 2015*.<sup>257</sup>

Other recommendations relating to migration in the GREVIO report include:

- ensuring that vulnerability screening is routinely undertaken at the earliest opportunity for all international protection applicants, and provided to women and girls arriving from Ukraine under the Temporary Protection Directive;
- providing in-depth and specific training for professionals engaging with victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, for example judges and other court personnel;
- funding studies that address violence against women experiencing intersectional discrimination;
- ensuring that victims of domestic violence who move out of International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) accommodation do not lose their right to receive payments associated with their status; and

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<sup>257</sup> Action 2.1.8 of Zero Tolerance, the third national strategy on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.

- strengthening coordination between Zero Tolerance, the strategy on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, and other equality and inclusion strategies such as the National Intercultural and Health Strategy (2018–2023).

### 6.2.2 Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency Act 2023

The General Scheme of a Bill to establish a statutory body, under the Department of Justice, with responsibility for domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, was published in March 2023.<sup>258</sup> The *Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency Bill 2023* provided for the establishment of an agency that would be responsible for coordinating government strategies and plans in relation to domestic and gender-based violence, supporting and providing financial assistance to service providers for the provision of services and programmes, delivering public campaigns, compiling and publishing information as well as conducting or commissioning research and analysis.<sup>259</sup> The establishment of an agency was a key action of Zero Tolerance, the third national strategy on domestic and gender-based violence.<sup>260</sup>

The Bill was welcomed by NGOs working in the area of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, such as Women’s Aid.<sup>261</sup> However, concerns were raised by Women’s Aid around the proposed limited scope of the agency to work in the area of perpetrator accountability and the provision of information on services to specific groups who may need tailored information.<sup>262</sup> In a submission on the General Scheme, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) stated that the Bill did not protect or safeguard the equality and human rights of structurally vulnerable groups such as migrant women and victims of trafficking, as it did not sufficiently incorporate an intersectional approach.<sup>263</sup> There were no significant debates raised during the Bill’s passage through the Oireachtas. The Bill was signed into law in November 2023 and the agency was formally opened in February 2024.<sup>264</sup>

### 6.2.3 International Protection Student Scheme

In July 2023, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science published the International Protection Student Scheme (for Further and Higher Education Students) 2023–2024.<sup>265</sup> This student scheme provides grants, in line with the current Student Grant Scheme (SUSI), to eligible school leavers who are in the international protection system (except those at the deportation order stage) and who

<sup>258</sup> Department of Justice (2023). Draft General Scheme of a DSGBV Agency Bill.

<sup>259</sup> Oireachtas Library and Research Service (2023). ‘Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency Bill’, *Bill Digest*.

<sup>260</sup> Oireachtas Library and Research Service (2023). ‘Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency Bill’, *Bill Digest*.

<sup>261</sup> Women’s Aid (2023). ‘Women’s Aid submission to the General Scheme of the Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency Bill’.

<sup>262</sup> Women’s Aid (2023). ‘Women’s Aid submission to the General Scheme of the Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency Bill’.

<sup>263</sup> IHREC (2023). ‘Submission on the General Scheme of the Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency Bill’.

<sup>264</sup> Department of Justice (2024). ‘Launch of Cuan – The new statutory domestic, sexual and gender-based violence agency’.

<sup>265</sup> Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (2023). ‘International Protection Student Scheme (for FE/HE Students) 2023/2024’.

are either international protection applicants or leave-to-remain applicants. Applicants must have spent three years in the protection system. The scheme covers attendance at approved courses in approved institutions at post-Leaving Certificate, undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The scheme has been reviewed annually since its inception in 2015. In the 2023/2024 academic year, nine awards were made under the Scheme.<sup>266</sup>

#### 6.2.4 Awareness campaigns

In October 2023, there was an awareness campaign about FGM at Dublin Airport. This was conducted by An Garda Síochána and the Border Management Unit of the Department of Justice. The aim of this campaign was to raise awareness about the law on FGM in Ireland. Under the *Criminal Justice (Female Genital Mutilation) Act 2012*, it is a criminal offence both to undertake FGM within Ireland and to bring a girl to another country to undergo FGM. This awareness campaign is the result of FGM being recognised as a form of gender-based violence in Zero Tolerance, the third national strategy on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.<sup>267</sup>

A national ‘Know Your Rights’ campaign was launched in 2023 to highlight some of the most important rights available to victims of crime, including the right to interpretation and translation services.<sup>268</sup> The advertisements ran across TV, local and national radio, and digital and social media, and included text translated into a number of languages including Arabic, French, Polish, Lithuanian, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian and Ukrainian. The campaign is part of an action in Zero Tolerance, the third national strategy on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, launched in 2022 to raise awareness of the legislation on victims’ rights that currently exists, particularly for groups at a higher risk, including individuals with disabilities, asylum seekers, trafficked persons as well as Travellers, Roma and members of the LGBTI+ community.

#### 6.2.5 Changes to naturalisation of minors

In 2023, the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956* was amended via the *Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023*. The amendments were initially proposed in 2022 (see Section 7.2.1 of *Annual report on migration and asylum 2022: Ireland*).

One of the amendments reduced the residence requirement for the naturalisation of minors from five to three years for those born in the State. It also provides for a clear

<sup>266</sup> Correspondence with Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, November 2024.

<sup>267</sup> Department of Justice (2023). ‘Two day awareness raising initiative on law against female genital mutilation to take place in Dublin Airport this weekend’, press release, 27 October.

<sup>268</sup> Department of Justice (2023). ‘Minister Harris launches major new campaign highlighting rights and supports for victims of crime’, press release, 23 April.

and specific application procedure for the naturalisation of a minor. (See Section 7.2.2 for more information.)

## 6.3 RESEARCH

### 6.3.1 Migrant experiences of domestic abuse in Ireland

The Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI) published a policy paper in December 2023, setting out current national law and policy, and documenting issues that present to ICI's services or have been raised with ICI regarding migrants who experience domestic abuse.<sup>269</sup> Drawing on case studies and information provided during roundtable discussions, the paper outlines discrepancies between policy and practice. The paper finds that while the Victims of Domestic Violence Immigration Guidelines were introduced in 2012,<sup>270</sup> the discretionary basis of these guidelines means that there is no legal certainty for migrant victims of domestic violence that seek to rely on them.

ICI reports discrepancies between policy and practice, with some differences welcomed as positive practices. For instance, while the guidelines state that they are only applicable to migrants who hold a current valid residence permission, practice has found that migrants without a valid residence permission were successful in their residence permit application under the guidelines. ICI found that these differences may give rise to confusion on the part of prospective applicants and could deter individuals from seeking assistance. The paper recommends a clarification of guidelines in the context of current practices.

Referring to practices across the European Union (EU), the report finds that there is no information on what types of residence permission can be applied for in Ireland, while some other EU states provide specific permissions to victims of crime. Difficulties in accessing state supports were reported, including social welfare and refuge and shelter settings, because of residence permission issues. The paper also finds that withholding residency or making threats regarding residence permissions is a form of coercive control experienced by victims, and recommends that the Department of Justice considers this form of abuse in the cases presented to it. Specific barriers to reporting domestic violence for people from a migrant background, which may differ from those experienced by survivors who are not of a migrant background, were noted. For instance, overall migrants had positive experiences reporting crimes but some reported experiences of discrimination or racism. Financial dependence on perpetrators due to not having access to the labour market on certain residence

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<sup>269</sup> The guidelines provide a clearly stated policy that the Minister for Justice would apply when migrants who relied on an abusive partner for residence permission sought to change their residence permission.

<sup>270</sup> Department of Justice (n.d). *Victims of Domestic Abuse, Immigration Service Delivery Guidelines*.

permissions also act as a barrier to reporting domestic violence. Language and cultural barriers can also be an issue of concern, as can social isolation.

Other key recommendations of the paper include:

- Putting the guidelines on a statutory basis;
- Providing all those issued with a residence permit under the guidelines a written statement outlining the terms and conditions with available translations online;
- Removing the reference to good character in the guidelines and instead targeting this information towards potential perpetrators;
- Abolishing Stamp 3 residence permission and granting access to the labour market to all spouses and partners, as well as access to independent residence over time on fulfilment of conditions;
- Applying the guidelines uniformly across all Immigration Service Delivery (ISD) units, and providing appropriate training to all ISD staff to respond to applications made by survivors of domestic abuse with priority and sensitivity; and
- An Garda Síochána applying a firewall when receiving reports of crimes from undocumented migrants, and making information on this available so that migrants are aware of their rights to seek assistance and support when they are victims of crime.

## CHAPTER 7

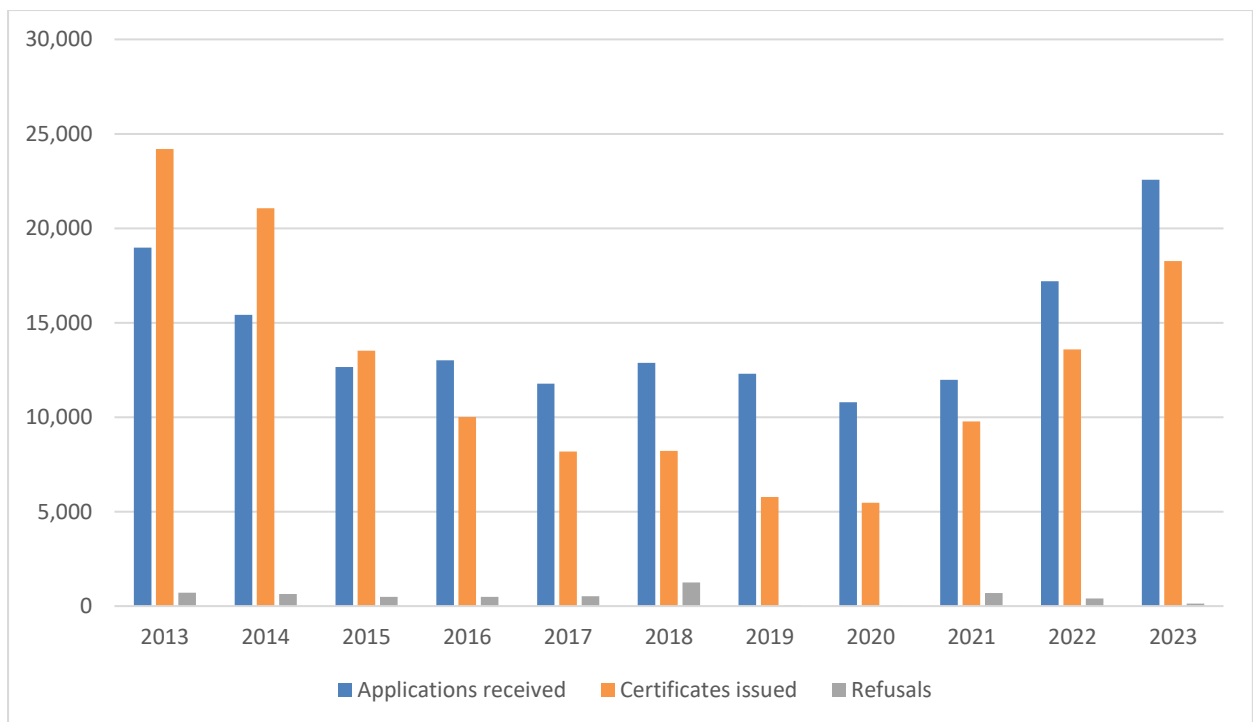
### Citizenship and statelessness

#### 7.1 STATISTICS

##### 7.1.1 Citizenship acquisition

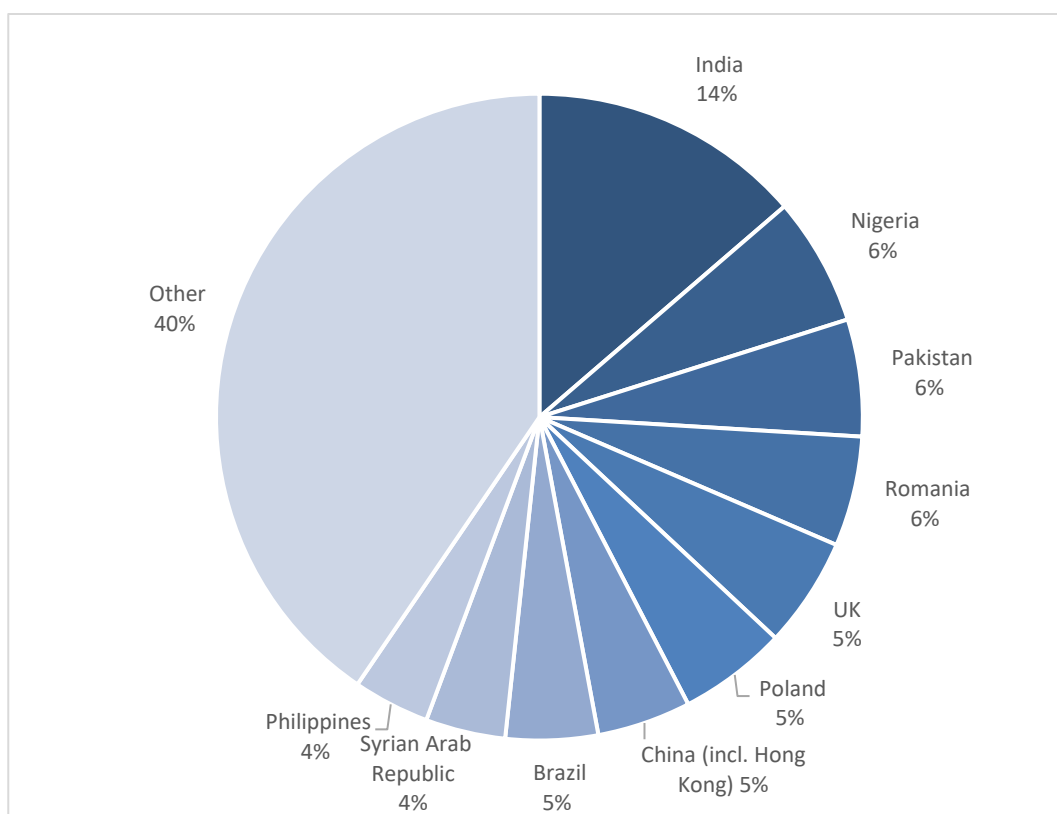
Figure 7.1 shows applications for citizenship, certificates issued and refusals in Ireland between 2013 and 2022. It shows a continued increase in applications in 2023, with 22,570 applications made that year. This is the highest since 2013, and a 31% increase from 2022. It also shows an increase in certificates issued, up 34% (to 18,269) from 2022, and a slight decrease in refusals.

**FIGURE 7.1 CITIZENSHIP APPLICATIONS, CERTIFICATES ISSUED AND REFUSALS, 2013–2023**



Source: Correspondence with the Department of Justice, September 2024.

Figure 7.2 shows the nationalities of those who acquired citizenship in 2023. India was the most common country of origin in 2023, followed by Nigeria and Pakistan. Other most common countries of origin are similar to previous years.

**FIGURE 7.2 NATIONALITIES OF THOSE WHO ACQUIRED CITIZENSHIP, 2023**

Source: Correspondence with the Department of Justice, September 2024.

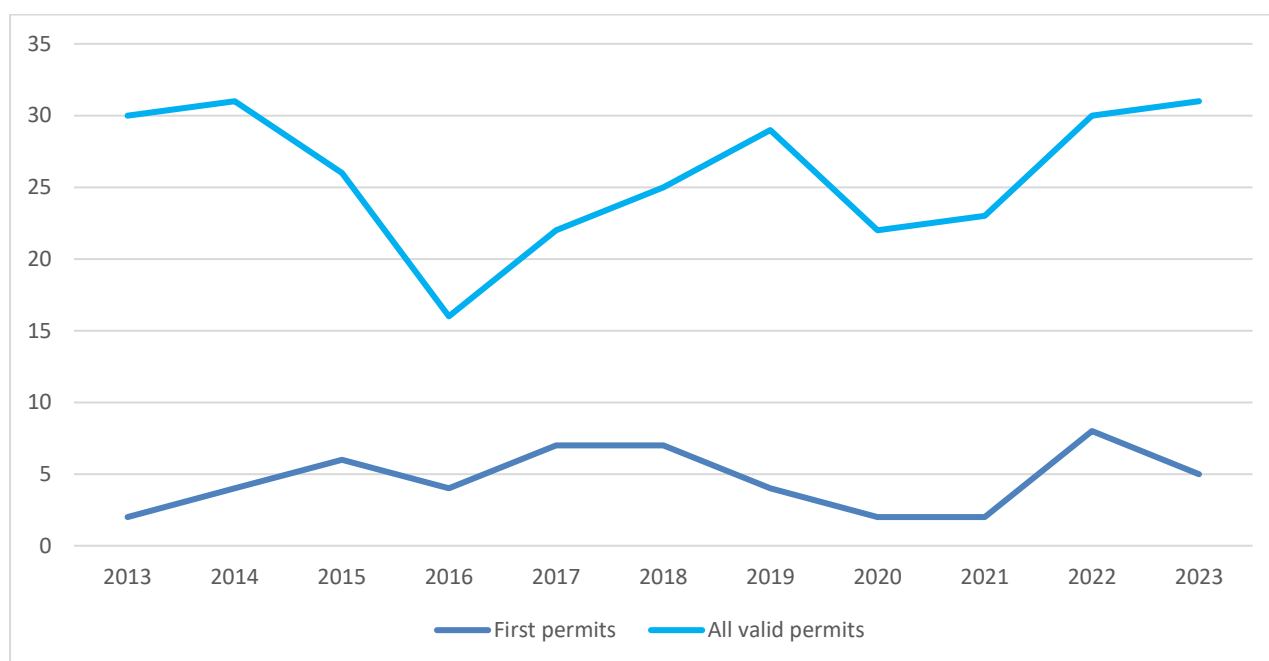
### 7.1.2 Statelessness

Figure 7.3 shows the number of first permits issued to stateless persons in Ireland and all valid permits as of 31 December 2023. According to Eurostat, there were five permits issued to persons whose nationality was recorded as stateless in 2023, representing a slight decrease on 2022. There was one first permit issued to a stateless minor.<sup>271</sup> By the end of the year, 31 valid residence permits were held by stateless persons, including two minors.<sup>272</sup>

<sup>271</sup> Eurostat (2024). 'First permits by reason, age, sex and citizenship', extracted 2 September 2024.

<sup>272</sup> Eurostat (2024). 'All valid permits by age, sex and citizenship on 31 December of each year', extracted 2 September 2024.



**FIGURE 7.3 FIRST PERMITS ISSUED AND ALL VALID PERMITS AS OF 31 DECEMBER FOR STATELESS PERSONS IN IRELAND, 2013–2023**

Source: Eurostat (2023). 'All valid permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship on 31 December of each year', extracted 2 September 2023; Eurostat (2023). 'First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship', extracted 2 September 2023.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Ireland, in their report *Mapping statelessness in Ireland*, noted the difficulty in collating statistics on statelessness in Ireland.<sup>273</sup> They found that this collation process was challenging because different units in the Department of Justice could only provide data on different groups of stateless persons where available, with some units not collecting statistics on nationality or statelessness. It is therefore difficult to estimate the total population of stateless people that come into contact with international protection or other immigration procedures. According to UNHCR, this means that the true extent of statelessness in Ireland is uncertain.<sup>274</sup>

In relation to international protection specifically, UNHCR's mapping report noted that there is inconsistency in the recording of statelessness within the international protection process, and a lack of other data sources with the capacity to indicate statelessness. Figure 7.4 shows that in 2023, 28 applicants were recorded as stateless on making an application for international protection, a 52% increase on 2022 figures. It should be noted that the recording of someone's nationality as stateless in the international protection process is not the equivalent of identifying them as stateless. While an applicant can be found to be stateless (or not stateless) during case

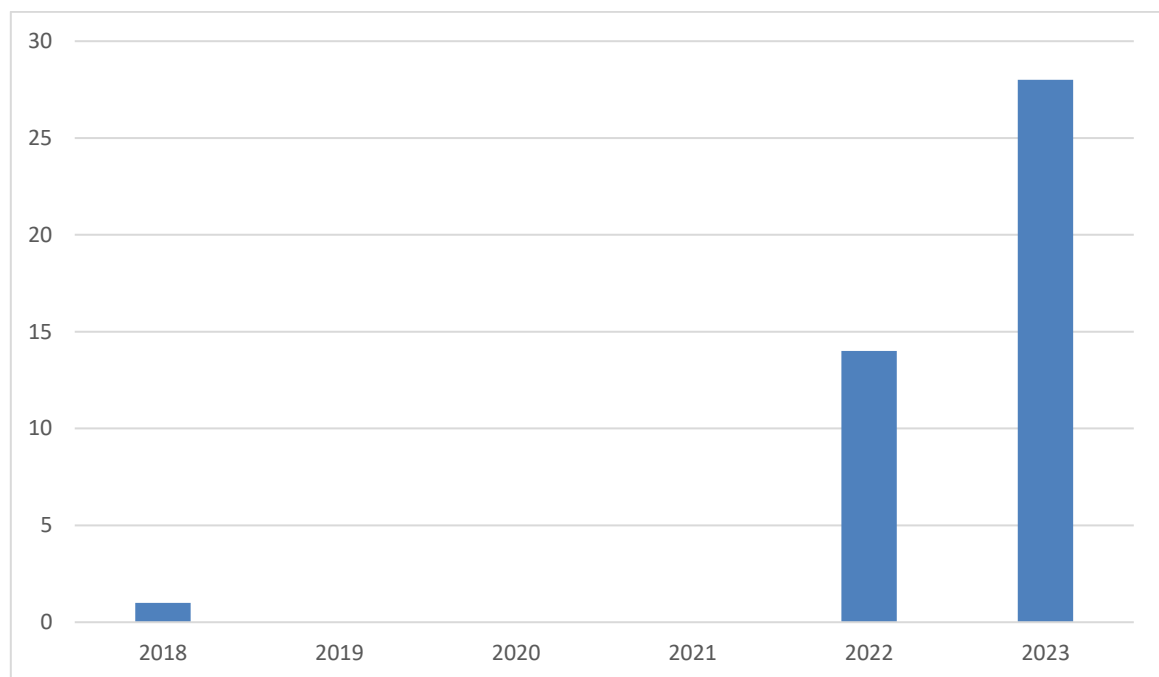
<sup>273</sup> UNHCR (2022). *Mapping statelessness in Ireland*. This report was launched on 23 May 2023.

<sup>274</sup> UNHCR (2022). *Mapping statelessness in Ireland*. This report was launched on 23 May 2023.

processing, these statistics relate only to the nationality stated at the time of application.<sup>275</sup>

In 2018, one person was recorded as stateless, while between 2019 and 2021 no individuals were recorded as stateless. When compared with prior years, the number of people recorded as stateless increased in 2023, which could indicate either improved recording of statelessness on making an application for international protection, or that there is an increasing number of stateless people arriving in Ireland seeking international protection. At a European level, while the total number of international protection applications by stateless people has remained stable between 2022 and 2023, there has been a slight increase in the number of first-time stateless applicants in 2023, compared to 2022, with 1.9 million applications in 2023 compared to 1.86 million in 2022.<sup>276</sup>

**FIGURE 7.4 APPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION BY STATELESS PERSONS, 2018–2023**



Source: Correspondence with the Department of Justice, November 2024.

## 7.2 DEVELOPMENTS

### 7.2.1 Online citizenship applications

In October 2023, online citizenship applications were introduced as part of the Department of Justice’s Immigration Service Delivery Modernisation Programme (see

<sup>275</sup> Correspondence with the IPO, November 2024; Correspondence with the Department of Justice, November 2024.

<sup>276</sup> Eurostat (2024). ‘Asylum applicants by type, citizenship, age and sex – Annual aggregated data’, extracted 11 September 2024.

Section 2.2.1) via the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Regulations 2023*.<sup>277</sup> The online process allows applicants to submit their application, upload supporting documentation and pay fees online. A key driver of this change was the need to improve the capacity of the Department to efficiently process increasing numbers of applications.<sup>278</sup> These Regulations removed the requirement for statutory declarations to be made by applicants on submission of an application and the requirement for referee signatures for forms needed for the application process to allow increased efficiency.<sup>279</sup> While online applications are encouraged, paper-based applications will still be available.

## 7.2.2 Amendments to the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956*

In 2023, the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956* was amended via the *Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023*. The amendments were initially proposed in 2022. (See Section 7.2.1 of *Annual report on migration and asylum 2022: Ireland*).

One amendment clarified the procedure for citizenship ceremonies. It allowed the Minister to dispense with the requirement that citizenship ceremonies be attended in person for a person to make the declaration of fidelity to the State, and undertake to follow the laws of the State and respect its democratic values. This amendment allows the declaration to be taken in a different manner as specified by the Minister. This can be applied where it is considered appropriate due to the volume of applications, for example.<sup>280</sup>

Another amendment reduced residence requirements for the naturalisation of children born in Ireland to non-Irish parents from five years to three years. This three-year residency period must include a one-year period of continuous residence in the State immediately prior to the date of the application for naturalisation. In addition, in the eight years prior to the application, the applicant must have a total residence period of two years in the State.<sup>281</sup>

Another amendment relates to applications for naturalisation on behalf of all minors. Previously, these applications assessed the residency permissions and good character of the parents. This changed to an assessment only of the residency and good character of the minor applicant themselves. In practical terms, according to the

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<sup>277</sup> Department of Justice (2023). 'Department of Justice begins accepting citizenship applications online', press release, 16 October.

<sup>278</sup> Department of Justice (2023). 'Department of Justice begins accepting citizenship applications online', press release, 16 October.

<sup>279</sup> *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Regulations 2023*, S.I. No. 498/2023.

<sup>280</sup> Sections 6 and 7 of the *Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023* amending sections 15 and 15A of the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956*.

<sup>281</sup> Section 8 of the *Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023* inserts a new section 15B into the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956*.

Department of Justice, good character is assessed from the age of 10 upwards. For those aged 10 to 13, only serious crimes are taken into consideration. For applicants aged 14 onwards, the regular adult applicant character assessment is employed. Naturalisation application forms were updated to remove questions no longer deemed operationally relevant and also to take account of the fact that minor applicants are now completely assessed for eligibility in their own right.<sup>282</sup>

Amendments were also made to the calculation of continuous residency, which is required to meet the residence eligibility criteria for naturalisation (known as reckonable residency). The amendment clarified that when determining the one-year continuous residence period, an applicant may be outside of the State/or island of Ireland for 70 days in total.<sup>283</sup> In exceptional circumstances such as health requirements, uncontrollable situations, family circumstances, study and employment reasons, applicants may spend an additional 30 days outside of the State/island of Ireland.<sup>284</sup>

### 7.2.3 Statelessness determination procedure

During the Global Refugee Forum in 2023, the Irish Government pledged to explore the introduction of a statelessness determination procedure by utilising a provisional determination procedure in 2024. The pledge also noted that the effectiveness of this procedure would be reviewed and evaluated. The Government added that this will be undertaken on a limited, pilot basis in 2024 to identify key learnings.<sup>285</sup>

### 7.2.4 Other developments

The Department of Justice issued new guidance for naturalisation applicants in April 2023. From April 2023, new applications for naturalisation are only required to provide a certified colour copy of the biometric page of their current passport. The purpose of this change was to make the application process more customer friendly.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Correspondence with the Department of Justice, Civil Justice Migration Policy. January 2024; A new Form 11 taking into account amendments made in the *Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023* was introduced via the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Regulations 2023* S.I. No. 489/2023.

<sup>283</sup> For the purposes of section 15A of the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act* (naturalisation of spouses of Irish citizens) the period of absence is outside the island of Ireland. For the purposes of section 15 (conditions for issue of certification) and section 15B (naturalisation of minors born on the island of Ireland) of the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act* the period of absence is outside the State.

<sup>284</sup> Section 8 of the *Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023* inserts a new section 15C into the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956*. See Legislation Summary, available at [www.emn.ie/legislation/courts-and-civil-law-miscellaneous-provisions-act-2023](http://www.emn.ie/legislation/courts-and-civil-law-miscellaneous-provisions-act-2023).

<sup>285</sup> Pledge ID GRF-08496 made on 11 December 2023.

<sup>286</sup> Department of Justice (2023). *Further Guidance on new passport process when submitting and application for naturalisation*.

## 7.3 RESEARCH

### 7.3.1 Mapping statelessness in Ireland

UNHCR Ireland published *Mapping statelessness in Ireland* in May 2023. The report builds on a 2014 scoping study, and provides updated information on legislation, policy and practice. The report found that, in addition to the absence of a stateless determination procedure, the identification and protection process for stateless persons is hampered by the absence of coordinated policy and guidance for government staff who encounter stateless persons in the course of international protection or immigration procedures. However, the report did note that while stateless persons may not be officially registered as stateless at the outset, there is evidence of positive engagement by the International Protection Office (IPO) and International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT), in examining protection risks linked to statelessness and making clear findings on statelessness during the analysis of their claims. UNHCR Ireland identified that there is a need to ensure stateless persons are identified as stateless at the registration stage of their international protection application, as individuals may find it difficult to change their status at a later stage, which can subsequently affect processes after the international protection process, such as renewing their residence permission or in the context of deportation proceedings.

The report also found that stateless persons are likely to face delays in resolving their situation and be left in legal limbo for prolonged periods of time. Moreover, they can face numerous obstacles and administrative hurdles when engaging with various government departments.<sup>287</sup>

## 7.4 CASE LAW

### 7.4.1 Citizenship for a child born by a surrogate: *A, B and C v. Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade [2023] IESC 10*

A and B were a same sex couple who lived in England and had a child through gestational surrogacy. The child was conceived using eggs donated by an anonymous donor inseminated with sperm from B. The surrogate was named as the child's mother on the birth certificate, along with B as the child's father. The couple, A and B, obtained an order from the courts of England and Wales recognising A as the child's parent, with a new birth certificate issued. Whereas B is a British citizen, A is both a British and Irish citizen.

A and B then applied for an Irish passport for their child. Under section 7(1) of the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956*, a person is an Irish citizen if at the time of their

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<sup>287</sup> UNHCR (2022). *Mapping statelessness in Ireland*.

birth, either parent was an Irish citizen. The applicants were notified of the Minister's intention to refuse the passport application because A was not the child's father at the time of birth. The applicants sought an order of mandamus in the High Court to direct the Minister to decide whether a passport should be issued to the child. In the High Court, Barrett J agreed with the applicants that the child was an Irish citizen. The Minister appealed this to the Supreme Court.

In the Supreme Court, in the opinion of the majority, Murray J held that A was not the child's parent for the purposes of section 7(1) of the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956*. While the order issued by the courts of England and Wales recognising A as the parent of the child could be recognised in principle by the private international law of the State, the interpretation of the term 'parent(s)' in Irish law depends on the language, context and objective of the specific piece of legislation. The term parent that is used in section 7(1) of the 1956 Act was held to refer only to the genetic father of the child and the birth mother.

The applicants advanced various arguments under the Constitution and the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR), according to which the child would be entitled to Irish citizenship. Murray J held that even if well placed, it is not possible to construe the term 'parent' in section 7(1) to include the child, because it would alter the legislative scheme from which it was enacted. It was held that the Court was not in a position to grant the applicants' orders to strike down the provisions of section 7(1) on grounds of unconstitutionality for the reasons put forward in the case and this declaratory relief was not sought by the applicants. Similarly, the Court, for the same reasons, was not able to grant a declaration of incompatibility under the 2003 Act.

In a separate opinion, Hogan J held that absent a direct challenge to the constitutionality of section 7(1) of the 1956 Act, the appeal should be allowed and disposed of in the manner suggested by Murray J.

The Minister's appeal from the High Court decision was allowed. A was not the child's parent for the purposes of section 7(1) of the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956*.

## CHAPTER 8

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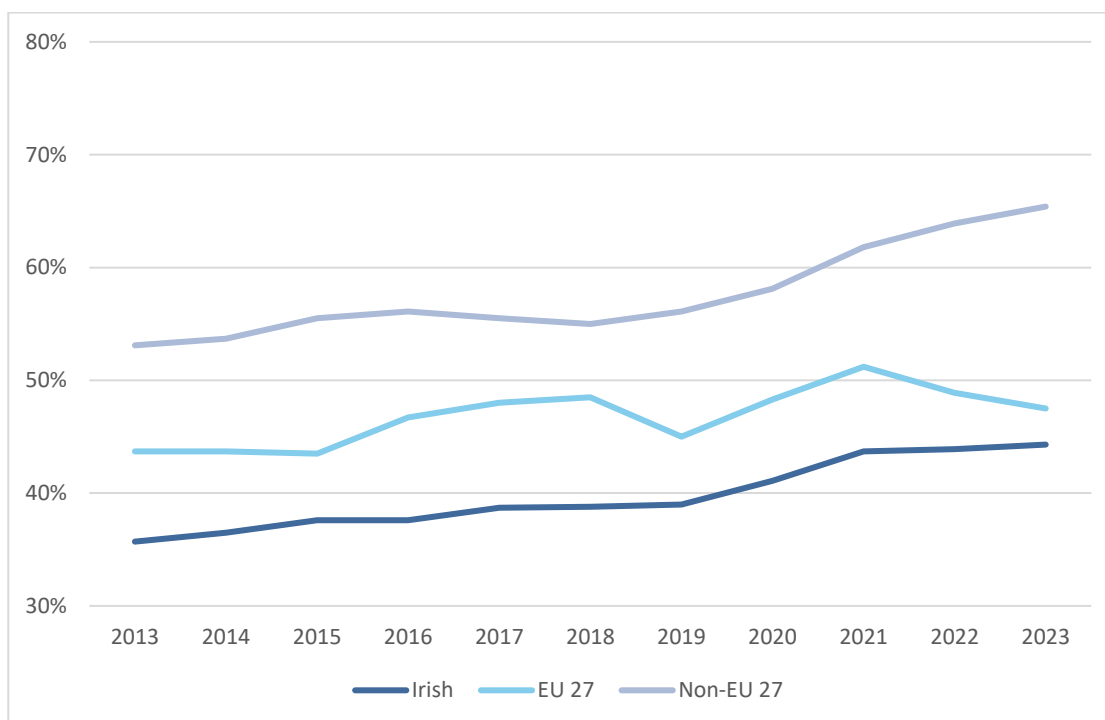
### Integration and inclusion

#### 8.1 STATISTICS

The Zaragoza indicators were agreed at the European Ministerial Conference on Integration in 2010. These indicators assess migrant integration in key areas such as education, labour, social inclusion and active citizenship. The statistics below compare migrants to Irish-born individuals based on some of these indicators. Migrants are defined as those born outside Ireland and are categorised as European Union (EU) born – excluding the United Kingdom (UK) – or non-EU born migrants. The below figures compare how migrant groups are faring compared to the Irish-born population across a range of indicators. It is important to note that the UK is included in the non-EU27 category.

##### 8.1.1 Tertiary education

Figure 8.1 shows the percentage of migrant and Irish-born populations, aged 18–69 years, with a tertiary education. Non-EU migrants (65%) have considerably higher educational attainment than either Irish-born (44%) or EU migrants (48%). This has been the case for the last decade, with non-EU migrants consistently having higher levels of tertiary education. Additionally, the share of non-EU migrants with a tertiary degree has grown faster than Irish-born or EU migrants: 2023 represents a 10-year high and 12 percentage point increase since 2013. This is higher than EU migrants over the same period (4 percentage point increase) or Irish born (8 percentage point increase). EU nationals in Ireland have seen a slight decrease in the percentage of those with a tertiary education since 2021. In 2023, 46% of EU migrants had a tertiary degree, a decrease from the recent peak of 51% in 2021.

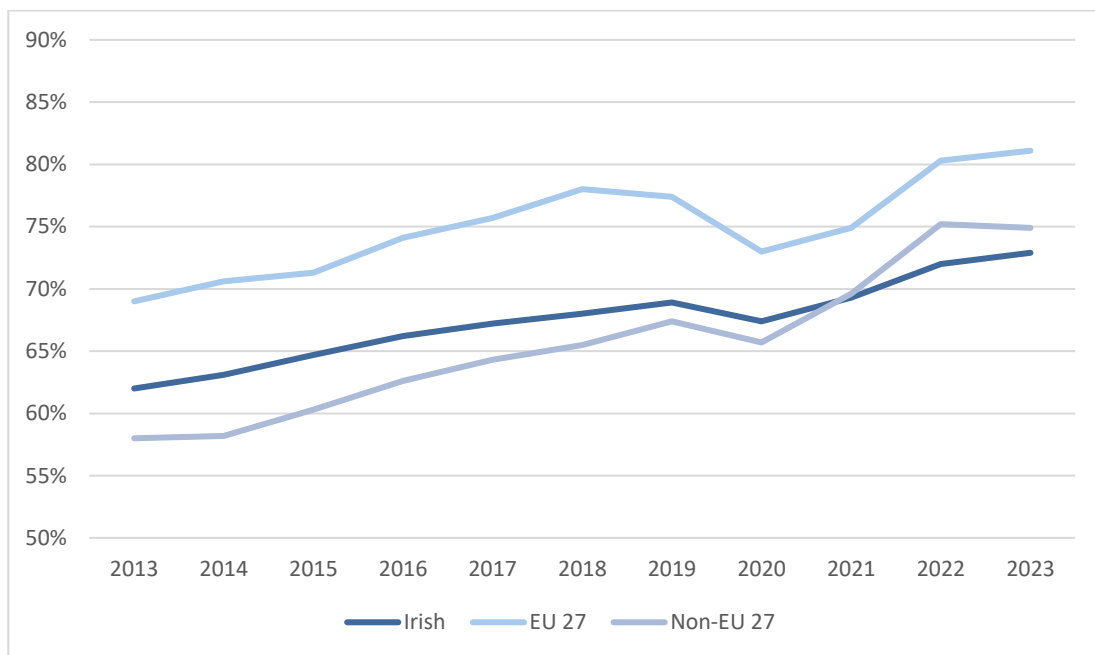
**FIGURE 8.1 PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION AGED 18–69 WITH TERTIARY EDUCATION ACCORDING TO COUNTRY OF BIRTH, 2013–2023**

Source: Eurostat (2024). 'Population by educational attainment level, sex, age and country of birth', extracted 15 July 2024.

### 8.1.2 Labour market integration

As seen in Figure 8.2, the employment rate of all three groups is largely similar. EU migrants show the highest employment rate, at 81%, followed by non-EU migrants (75%) and Irish born (73%). For all three groups, 2023 represented a ten-year high. While all three groups have seen an increase in employment rates, this is most pronounced among non-EU migrants, whose employment rate rose from 58% in 2013 to 75% in 2023.

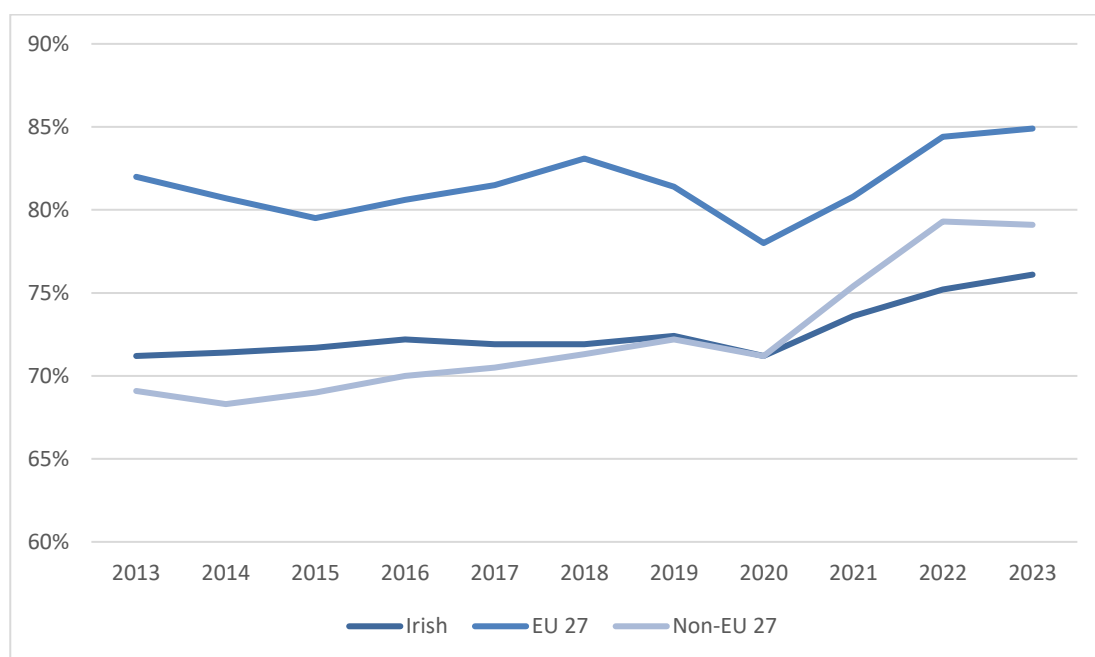


**FIGURE 8.2 EMPLOYMENT RATE OF THE POPULATION (AGED 15–64), ACCORDING TO COUNTRY OF BIRTH, 2013–2023**

*Source:* Eurostat (2024). 'Employment rates by sex, age and country of birth (%)', extracted 15 July 2024.

*Note:* The employment rate represents the proportion of employed individuals relative to the total comparable population. Eurostat (2020). 'Statistics explained, glossary: employment rate'.

Figure 8.3 illustrates the labour market activity rate of the population according to country of birth. In 2023, EU migrants had the highest activity rate, at 85%. Non-EU migrants had the second highest, at 79%. Both migrant groups' activity rates are higher than the Irish (76%). EU migrants have consistently had a higher activity rate than their non-EU or Irish counterparts. However, non-EU migrants have experienced a significant increase. In 2013, 69% of the non-EU migrant population were considered to be economically active; by 2023, this had increased to 79%.

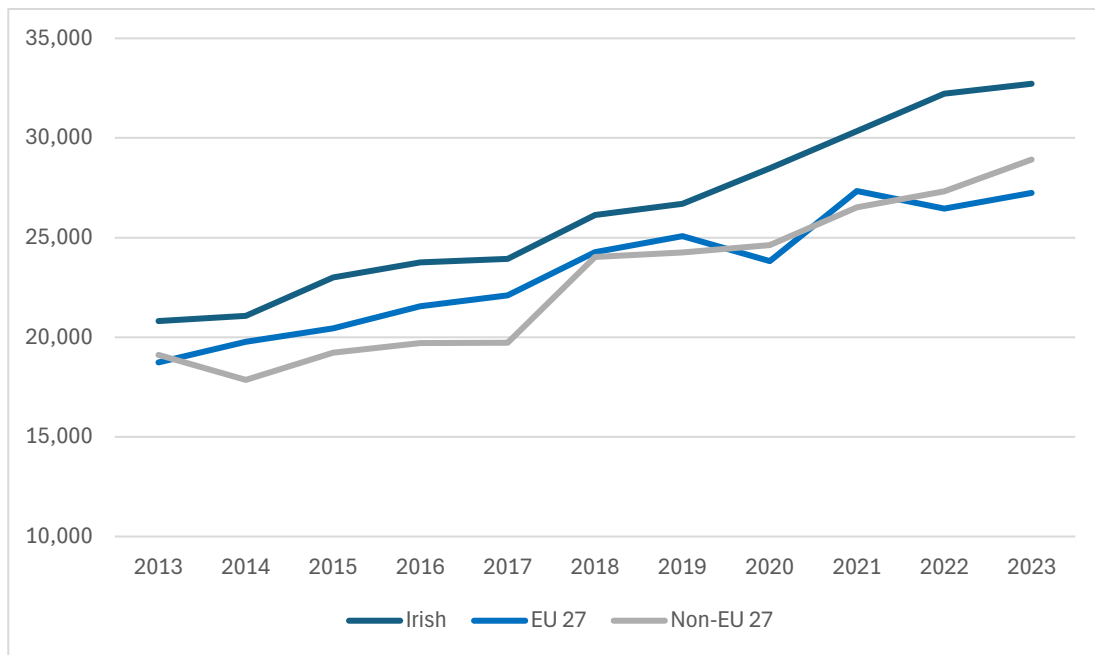
**FIGURE 8.3 LABOUR MARKET ACTIVITY RATES OF THE POPULATION (AGED 15–64) ACCORDING TO COUNTRY OF BIRTH, 2013–2023**

*Source:* Eurostat (2024). 'Activity rates by sex, age and country of birth', extracted 15 July 2024.

*Note:* The activity rate is the proportion of that population in the labour force (i.e. employed and unemployed). It therefore includes all persons offering their work capacity on the labour market. Eurostat (n.d.). 'EU Labour Force Survey – New methodology from 2021 onwards', *Statistics Explained*.

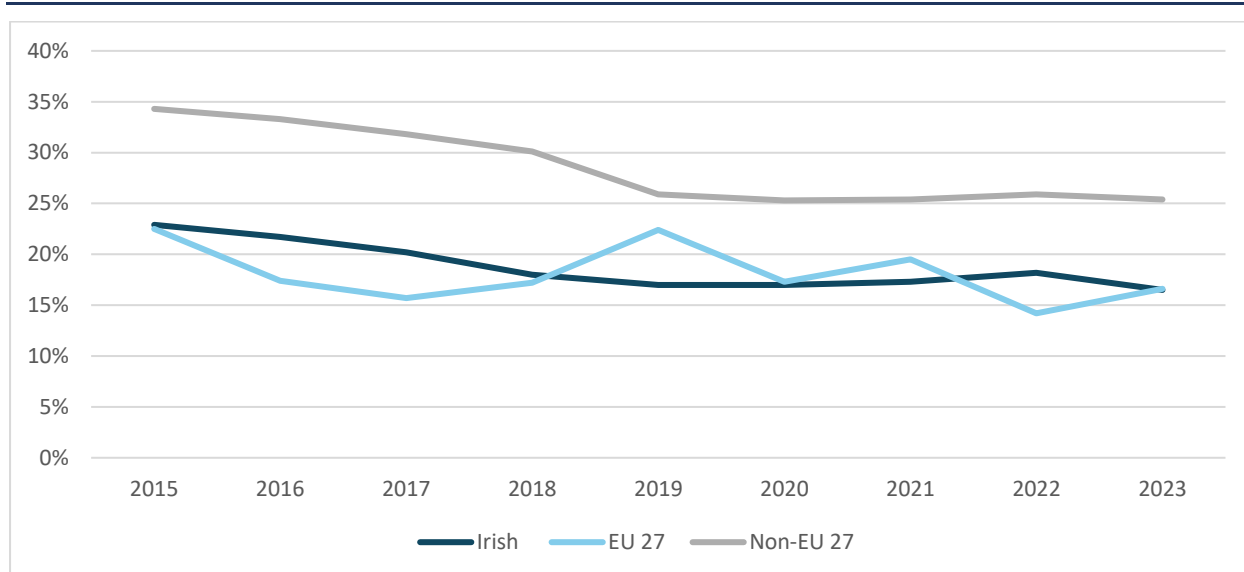
### 8.1.3 Social inclusion

Figure 8.4 shows that the median incomes of all three groups have risen substantially since 2013. In 2023, the median income for the Irish-born population (€32,720) was higher than that of either migrant group, followed by non-EU (€28,916) and EU migrants (€27,237); this has consistently been the case over the last ten years. All groups have seen a significant increase since 2013. This was most pronounced for the Irish-born population (57% increase), followed by non-EU migrants (51%). EU migrants have seen the smallest growth, at 45%.

**FIGURE 8.4 MEDIAN INCOME OF THE POPULATION ACCORDING TO COUNTRY OF BIRTH, 2013–2024**

Source: Eurostat (2024). 'Median income by group of country of birth (population aged 18 and over)', extracted 15 July 2024.

The at risk of poverty and social exclusion rate (AROPE) is indicated in Figure 8.5. AROPE is based on a number of indicators. These include the at-risk-of-poverty rate (the share of the population aged 18 and over whose disposable income is below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold), as well as indicators of severe material and social deprivation and households with very low work intensity. The AROPE rate for non-EU migrants in 2023 was 25%, higher than that for the EU migrant or Irish-born populations (both 17%). This is consistent with previous years. However, while non-EU migrants do have higher AROPE rates than others, this has been trending downwards since 2013. EU migrants have seen more fluctuation in the AROPE rate, but it has fallen 6 percentage points for EU migrants since 2015, the same as for Irish citizens.

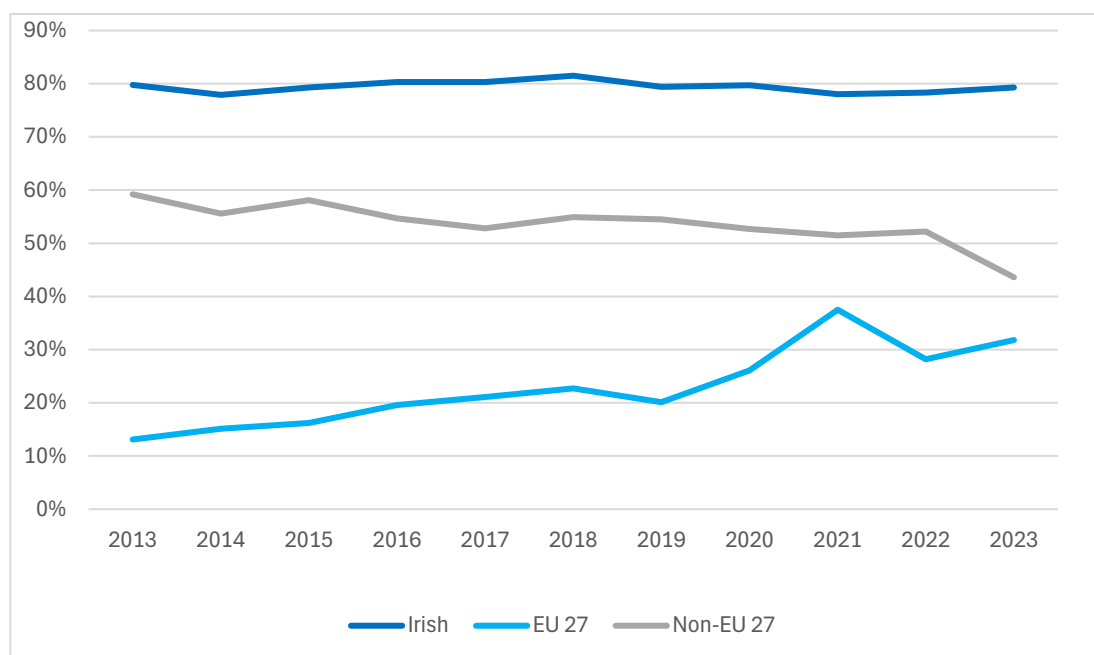
**FIGURE 8.5 AT RISK OF POVERTY OR SOCIAL EXCLUSION RATE OF THE POPULATION AGED 18 AND OVER BY COUNTRY OF BIRTH, 2015–2023**

Source: Eurostat (2024). 'Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion by group of country of birth (population aged 18 and over)', extracted 15 July 2024.

Figure 8.6 shows the share of the population who own their homes, according to country of birth. Those Irish born have the highest share, at 79%, followed by non-EU migrants (44%) and EU migrants (32%). The share of the Irish-born population who own their homes has remained consistent since 2019, fluctuating between 78% and 80%. The share of EU migrants who own their own home has been rising steadily since 2013, from 13% to 32%, although it has dropped from its peak of 38% in 2021. Non-EU migrants appear to have experienced the largest decline in home ownership: in 2022, 52% of non-EU migrants were homeowners, in 2023 this decreased to 44%. This may be due to the increase in non-EU migration in 2022 and 2023. Previous research has found that the length of time someone has spent in the country is an important determinant of homeownership.<sup>288</sup>

It should also be noted from these figures that the UK is included in the non-EU figures, although home ownership is quite high for this group. Therefore, while data on the UK is not available for 2023, in previous years, inclusion of the UK in the EU group rather than the non-EU reverses the order of these groups.

<sup>288</sup> McGinnity, F., I. Privalko, H. Russell, S. Curristan, A. Stapleton and J. Laurence (2022). *Origin and integration: Housing and family among migrants in the 2016 Irish Census*, Dublin: ESRI.

**FIGURE 8.6 PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION WHO OWN THEIR HOMES BY COUNTRY OF BIRTH, 2013–2023**

*Source:* Eurostat (2024). 'Distribution of population by group of country of birth and tenure status (population aged 18 and over)', extracted 15 July 2024.

*Note:* The data visualised in this graph uses the classifications from the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). Thus, the statistical units are private households and individuals living in these households.

## 8.2 DEVELOPMENTS

### 8.2.1 Publication of the National Plan Against Racism and the Ireland Against Racism Fund 2023

The National Action Plan Against Racism (2023–2027) was published in March 2023.<sup>289</sup> It was developed by the independent Anti-Racism Committee with consultation from stakeholders, civil society, public submissions, experts and representatives from the business sector.<sup>290</sup> The plan sets out five main objectives, which are:

1. Strengthen protections from racist crimes and incidents, and making it easier for people experiencing racism to access effective remedies;
2. Address inequalities of outcome including in employment, education, health and housing;
3. Support the representation and participation of minority ethnic people in all aspects of life in Ireland, in particular where they are currently under-represented;
4. Measure the impacts of racism as well as causes of racism and remedies; and

<sup>289</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'Minister Joe O'Brien announces publication of Ireland's National Action Plan Against Racism 2023–2027', press release, 21 March.

<sup>290</sup> DCEDIY (2023). *National Action Plan Against Racism*.

5. Develop a collective understanding of the impacts of racism and its prevalence both historically and currently.

The plan sets out both priority actions, with accompanying implementing bodies and target dates under each objective, and recommendations. Priority actions are those identified as fundamental to the achievement of the plan's objectives, and which should be started immediately. Recommendations relate to these priority actions and provide suggested ways of achieving the actions and objectives.

The plan foresees a National Action Plan Against Racism Coordination Committee to co-ordinate activity under the plan and monitor progress. It indicates that the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) will chair the committee, which will be comprised of representatives of government departments responsible for actions under the plan, as well as local authorities. The plan also states that a Special Rapporteur on Racial Equality and Racism would be nominated, as well as an Advisory Committee on Racial Equality and Racism to monitor the implementation of the plan, and to make separate annual reports. DCEDIY also committed to publishing a twice-yearly implementation report.

The plan was welcomed by stakeholders such as the Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI), who encouraged its swift implementation.<sup>291</sup> Other groups such as the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) welcomed the publication of the plan but reiterated that the Government must ensure its effective implementation and ensure that the necessary resources are allocated. Additionally, INAR urged the Government to ensure the effectiveness of the plan through full resourcing, monitoring, review and evaluation, and to ensure that the National Action Plan is iterative in nature, so that it does not come to an end without a successor plan.<sup>292</sup>

One action within the plan is the provision of funding for national and local initiatives that address racism in Ireland, and promote racial equality and community cohesion (Action 2.14). In line with this objective, the Ireland Against Racism Fund was established, which provides up to €1 million in funding for projects that have a specific focus on anti-racism.<sup>293</sup> Applicants for this funding were divided into two streams: one for projects at a national and regional level and one for projects at the local level.

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<sup>291</sup> ICI (2023). 'Immigrant Council urges Government to ensure swift and effective implementation of new national plan against racism', press release, 21 September.

<sup>292</sup> Irish Network Against Racism (2023). 'Increase in INAR racist incident data prompts Civil Society Coalition call for effective National Action Plan Against Racism', press release, 22 March.

<sup>293</sup> DCEDIY (2024). 'Minister Joe O'Brien announces the appointment of the Special Rapporteur for the National Action Plan Against Racism', press release, 2 July.

Twenty-four successful applicants were announced in September 2023 with €1.3 million funding awarded in total.<sup>294</sup>

### 8.2.2 Development of local authority integration teams

In 2023, progress was made on the rollout of local authority integration teams in each of Ireland's local authorities. Funded by DCEDIY, recruitment for these four-person teams commenced in 2023. By the end of 2023, approximately eight local authorities had teams in place, with another eight expected to have established teams by the end of February 2024.<sup>295</sup> Local authority integration teams were established following the publication of the White Paper to End Direct Provision (see *Annual report on migration and asylum 2022: Ireland*). Their primary goal is to provide integration support to international protection applicants and beneficiaries, resettled refugees and BoTPs.<sup>296</sup> These teams are not intended to replace services or facilities, but will support access to existing services. They connect international protection applicants, beneficiaries of international protection and resettled refugees with mainstream and nongovernmental organisation (NGO) services. They also provide information and advice, as well as support in accessing services to ensure that basic needs are being met, and identify any support and service gaps. These teams consist of an integration support coordinator, two integration support workers and administrative support.<sup>297</sup> See Section 4.2.2.3 for more information.

### 8.2.3 Public consultation on the Migrant Integration Strategy

A public consultation to inform the development of the new Migrant Integration Strategy was launched in October 2023 and closed in November. The consultation process took place using surveys for individuals to submit their views in a range of languages such as Arabic, English, French, Irish, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish and Ukrainian. Organisations could also make more detailed submissions, which could be submitted to the Department. The aim of the consultation was to gather information and insights as to the challenges and needs in supporting migrant integration.<sup>298</sup> The information from this consultation will be used to inform the new Migrant Integration Strategy, which was scheduled to be published in 2024.<sup>299</sup> In addition, the Department held two workshops with stakeholder organisations.<sup>300</sup> The previous Migrant Integration Strategy concluded in 2021, having

<sup>294</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'Minister Joe O'Brien announces 24 projects to be funded under the Ireland Against Racism Fund 2023', press release, 21 September.

<sup>295</sup> DCEDIY (2024). 'Response to parliamentary question 3770/24', 30 January.

<sup>296</sup> DCEDIY (2024). 'Response to parliamentary question 3770/24', 30 January.

<sup>297</sup> DCEDIY (2024). 'Response to parliamentary question 3770/24', 30 January.

<sup>298</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'Public consultation to inform a national strategy about migration integration', 20 October.

<sup>299</sup> Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2023). 'Response to parliamentary question 6360/23', 9 February.

<sup>300</sup> Correspondence with DCEDIY, November 2024.

been extended during the COVID-19 pandemic (for more information see *Annual report on migration and asylum 2021: Ireland*).

#### 8.2.4 Hate crime and hate speech legislation

As reported in previous years, the *General Scheme of the Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022* went through pre-legislative scrutiny in 2021. The Bill was published in October 2022 and completed second stage in the Dáil in November 2022 (for more information, see *Annual report on migration and asylum 2021: Ireland* and *Annual report on migration and asylum 2022: Ireland*).

The Bill aimed to repeal the *Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989* and replace it with provisions creating new incitement to violence offences and updated incitement to hatred offences more appropriate for modern online communications, and to provide for offences aggravated by hatred on account of protected characteristics. The Bill as published also created a new offence of condoning, denying or grossly trivialising genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed against groups based on their protected characteristics (see more in Section 8.2.2 of *Annual report on migration and asylum 2022: Ireland*).

In February 2023, the Bill was debated in the Select Committee on Justice. Amendments were proposed to provide an expanded definition of hatred in the Bill, an issue that has arisen frequently in relation to it (see *Annual report on migration and asylum 2022: Ireland*). The Minister for Justice argued that the proposed amendments would make prosecution more difficult, and that hatred should be given its ordinary meaning, as this is a concept understood by the courts. He also mentioned that other jurisdictions do not define hatred in similar laws. In addition, he mentioned that some of the proposed definitions (such as ‘bias’) may set too low a threshold. He indicated that he would consider the proposed amendments before report stage.<sup>301</sup>

An amendment was also proposed to include ‘migration status’ as a protected characteristic.<sup>302</sup> The Minister for Justice recognised the motivation for including migration status as a protected characteristic and committed to examining the proposal further in advance of report stage. At report stage, the Minister outlined that consultations with An Garda Síochána confirmed that there is little evidence to suggest that migrants are targeted by hatred based on their migration status, and that no such incidents had been recorded by the police force.<sup>303</sup> Migrants are targeted on the grounds of their race, colour, nationality, religion, national or ethnic origin, and/or descent. These personal characteristics already receive protected status under the Bill.

<sup>301</sup> Houses of the Oireachtas (2023). ‘Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022: Committee Stage, Select Committee on Justice debate’, 21 February.

<sup>302</sup> Houses of the Oireachtas (2023). ‘Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022: Committee Stage, Select Committee on Justice debate, 21 February.

<sup>303</sup> Correspondence with the Department of Justice, November 2024.



Furthermore, the Department of Justice noted migration status is not an ‘identity factor’ or personal characteristic of an individual or group that is inherent to their identity, but rather arises situationally and is of a temporary nature.<sup>304</sup>

The amendments in respect of the definition of hatred and migration status did not receive approval during Report Stage and in April 2023, the Bill passed Dáil Éireann and entered the Seanad for scrutiny, where it was debated in June 2023. While the Government had committed to enacting the Bill before the end of 2023, concerns were raised during the Seanad debate in relation to the incitement to violence or hatred provisions and freedom of expression, and the Minister committed to considering this part further.<sup>305</sup>

It was subsequently agreed to remove the incitement to violence or hatred provisions from the legislation, and to progress the hate crime aspects only. An amended Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Bill passed all Oireachtas stages in October 2024.<sup>306</sup>

### **8.2.5 Evaluation of processes implementing equality strategies**

The Centre for Effective Studies was commissioned by DCEDIY to examine and evaluate the effectiveness of the processes for implementation of three equality strategies: the Migrant Integration Strategy, the National Strategy for Women and Girls, and the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy.<sup>307</sup> The report analysed best practices in implementing equality, the processes used by Government to implement the three strategies in question, the effectiveness of these processes, and possible improvements to these processes for successor strategies. The analysis included a literature review, a review of documentation relating to the strategies, and consultations with experts and stakeholders involved in implementing the strategies.

The Migrant Integration Strategy was criticised by stakeholders for not adequately addressing the diversity of experiences within the populations it targeted, as it was perceived that migrants were seen as one homogenous group. Challenges to addressing intersectionality in public policy in Ireland were discussed, including a lack of available data and awareness among decision makers about its importance, indicating the need for further exploration in this area. The involvement of civil society representatives in the strategy was highly valued by governmental representatives tasked with coordinating it; however, the research found a perceived disconnect between the results of the consultations and the actions that were included in the final strategy, and a lack of co-ownership of strategies. CES found strong consensus among stakeholders that clear roles and responsibilities are essential to effective

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<sup>304</sup> Correspondence with the Department of Justice, November 2024.

<sup>305</sup> Correspondence with the Department of Justice, November 2024.

<sup>306</sup> Correspondence with the Department of Justice, November 2024.

<sup>307</sup> DCEDIY (2023). ‘Minister O’Gorman welcomes publication of evaluation study of processes implementing equality strategies’, press release, 13 July.

implementation of whole-of-government strategies, and that this was lacking in the implementation of the three strategies. It recommended dedicated structures with explicitly defined terms of reference, which may improve implementation processes for future whole-of-government strategies. Lastly, the evaluation found challenges in incorporating emerging issues and maintaining dynamism in the implementation of equality strategies, with the large number of actions initially included in the strategies making it difficult to incorporate new issues over time. Challenges relating to ensuring commitment and buy-in from government departments and state agencies responsible for implementing strategies were also raised, as well as issues around staff expertise of equality issues. In addition, issues were flagged in relation to a lack of indicators of progress in the strategies, making them difficult to monitor. Restructuring of government departments as well as high turnover of committee members were highlighted as key challenges to implementing the strategies.

The evaluation made 20 recommendations, including:

- Reflect the findings of stakeholder consultations accurately in national equality strategy texts and communicating reasoning with stakeholders when they are not;
- Allocate resources to support the capacity of marginalised groups to participate fully in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national equality strategies;
- Give civil society representatives a more formal and influential role in strategy implementation and monitoring, moving towards co-ownership of strategies;
- Develop suitable indicators of progress in advance of launching strategies and developing an implementation plan for each strategy;
- Conduct further research to explore how an intersectional approach can be incorporated into the various phases of the policy cycle; and
- Reconsider the reliance on steering/strategy committees and giving consideration to the creation of dedicated structures with explicitly defined terms of reference, such as decision making or steering bodies, technical or advisory groups and implementation teams.

The evaluation report was welcomed by the Government, who stated that it would inform the process of consultation and development of successor strategies.<sup>308</sup>

### 8.2.6 Integration funding

In May, a funding call for projects to mark the International Decade for People of African Descent 2015–2024 was launched. A total of €150,000 was to be made

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<sup>308</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'Minister O'Gorman welcomes publication of evaluation study of processes implementing equality strategies', press release, 13 July.

available for funding of up to €5,000 for individual projects for events to mark the decade.<sup>309</sup> In the event, a total of €169,740 was granted to 35 successful projects.<sup>310</sup>

In June 2023, a total of €509,415 in funding was awarded to 111 community projects nationwide under the Communities Integration Fund 2023. Individual grants are between €1,000 and €5,000.<sup>311</sup>

The International Protection Integration Fund announced funding of €500,000 and applications were invited from community-based projects supporting the integration of international protection applications at local, regional or national level. In July 2023, funding of just over €1.2 million was announced for 70 projects. This level of funding was made available in 2023 as a targeted measure, and DCEDIY noted that parity funding may not be available in future editions of the fund.<sup>312</sup> For the 2023 call, projects focusing on mental health and wellbeing of women, solidarity through sport and inclusion of LGBTI+ persons in the international protection system through community supports were prioritised and given additional marks during the selection process.<sup>313</sup>

In October, Ireland's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) opened its call for proposals. A total fund of €10 million was announced with a minimum grant amount of €300,000 over four years.<sup>314</sup>

The National Integration Fund has the goal of supporting communities across Ireland to play a greater role in promoting the integration of migrants, and is open to organisations operating at regional and national level. This fund was launched in October 2023 and results were announced in March 2024. A total of €2,872,412 was awarded to 18 projects over a three-year period.

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<sup>309</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'Minister of State Joe O'Brien announces the launch of the International Decade for People of African Descent funding call', press release, 26 May.

<sup>310</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'Minister Joe O'Brien announces 35 projects to be funded under the International Decade for People of African Descent Funding Call', press release, 28 September.

<sup>311</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'Minister Joe O'Brien announces 111 projects to be funded under the Communities Integration Fund 2023', press release, 8 May.

<sup>312</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'Minister Joe O'Brien announces 70 projects to be funded under the International Protection Integration Fund 2023', press release, 21 July.

<sup>313</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'Minister Joe O'Brien announces 70 projects to be funded under the International Protection Integration Fund 2023', press release, 21 July.

<sup>314</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'Minister Joe O'Brien invites applications to the 2023 Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund call for proposals', press release, 20 October.

## 8.3 RESEARCH

### 8.3.1 Monitoring report on integration

In 2023, the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) published its eighth monitoring report on integration.<sup>315</sup> This report measures outcomes for Ireland's foreign-born population and compares them to the outcomes of the Irish-born population. Integration outcomes are measured in four key domains as established in the Zaragoza integration indicators: employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship. The report found that migrant labour market outcomes were more affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health restrictions than those of Irish-born people. However, by early 2022, the migrant employment rate was higher than that of the Irish-born population and exceeded the migrant employment rate immediately prior to the pandemic. For African migrants, who have long faced disadvantages in the labour market, the employment rate increased significantly between 2020 and 2022, as did labour force participation. In terms of education, the report found that while the Irish population is among the most highly educated in the EU, a greater share of the foreign-born population aged 25–34 has a third-level degree than the Irish-born population of that age. However, migrants were much less likely to own their home than the Irish-born population and also faced more issues relating to housing affordability, with 29% of migrants spending more than 30% of their income on housing compared to 8% of the Irish-born population.

### 8.3.2 Comparing migrant integration in Ireland and Northern Ireland

Research by the ESRI compared migrant integration in Ireland and Northern Ireland, focusing on key integration indicators, including labour outcomes, education and attitudes towards migrants.<sup>316</sup> This project used a quantitative approach to analyse survey data on migrant outcomes. In addition, qualitative data through public consultation was utilised to understand migrant experiences of the border post-Brexit.

The report found that a significant proportion of those born outside of the island are citizens of their new places of residence (Ireland or Northern Ireland). This share is greater in Ireland, where 35% of migrants are Irish citizens, than in Northern Ireland, where 17% of those born outside the UK are British citizens. In both jurisdictions, most migrant groups are highly skilled and more likely to have third-level qualifications than the native-born population, though the skills profile of migrants is generally higher in Ireland than in Northern Ireland. It also found that migrants in both jurisdictions have high employment rates, particularly EU migrants. In Ireland, there was little difference in either academic achievement scores or wellbeing at age 15 between migrant-origin

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<sup>315</sup> McGinnity, F., S. Sprong, E. Quinn, J. Laurence, K. Murphy and S. Curristan (2023). *Monitoring report on integration 2022*, Dublin: EMN/ESRI.

<sup>316</sup> McGinnity, F., J. Laurence and E. Cunniffe (2023). *Comparing migrant integration in Ireland and Northern Ireland*, Dublin: ESRI.

children and their Irish-origin peers. In Northern Ireland, first generation migrant-origin children have considerably lower achievement scores in English reading and mathematics than their Northern Irish/UK origin peers. Cross-border travel can be a fraught experience for some migrants and Brexit has exacerbated this issue according to the report; stakeholders at the consultation raised the issue of immigration checks and how ethnic minority migrants are much more likely to be checked while travelling across the border. Cross-border work was found to have become more complex for migrants, and it was also found that some migrants may be effectively excluded from participation in activities, such as education-related events, sports events, holidays, religious events and family gatherings, that require cross-border travel. The consultation group also raised a lack of clarity around rights and entitlements to travel, work and access services in the other jurisdiction, which has led to considerable feelings of fear and uncertainty among migrant groups.

The report found that attitudes towards migrants are more positive in Ireland than in Northern Ireland. However, the difference in attitudes is explained by important differences between jurisdictions in other key drivers of immigration attitudes. People in Ireland are more likely to have migrants in their social networks, they are more optimistic about the future and are more likely to believe their voice is heard in politics than people in Northern Ireland. Taken together, these factors explain most of the differences in attitudes between the two jurisdictions.

### **8.3.3 Refugee and migrant children's experiences of educational integration**

Shirley Martin, Deirdre Horgan, Jacqui O'Riordan and Reana Maier published an article analysing factors that impact refugee and student's feelings of belonging and unbelonging in schools.<sup>317</sup> The researchers used participatory and co-creation qualitative approaches, and found that factors such as peer inclusion, positive child-teacher interaction, English language acquisition and the school's ability to deal with racist bullying and discrimination were all instrumental in helping to cultivate migrant students' feelings of belonging. These factors were found to be interrelated, but the manner in which the factors arose varied across age groups, reflecting their interests, and how they understand and focus on belonging in school. The research found that robust and flexible welcome programmes, supportive teachers and positive peer relations enhance feelings of belonging, in addition to focusing on language acquisition. However, participants also noted the need for greater recognition of and support for linguistic diversity, with children in the study sharing that they appreciated opportunities to retain their home languages and to see multiple languages represented in school.

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<sup>317</sup> Martin, S., D. Horgan, J. O'Riordan and R. Maier (2023). 'Refugee and migrant children's views of integration and belonging in school in Ireland – and the role of micro- and meso-level interactions' *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, Vol. 28, No. 13.

### 8.3.4 Post-school expectations and outcomes among migrant origin young people

Frances McGinnity, Merike Darmody and Emer Smyth published a book chapter on post-school expectations and outcomes among migrant origin students.<sup>318</sup> It analysed migrant origin students' post-school expectations at 17 years and their actual participation in higher education at 20 years, using longitudinal data from the *Growing Up in Ireland* survey. Previous international evidence indicates an aspiration–achievement paradox among migrant youth; they are highly motivated to access higher education, but these aspirations are achieved at lower rates when compared to native young people. However, this research finds that both English and non-English speaking migrant origin groups do not differ from their Irish counterparts regarding their aspirations. It also found that non-English-speaking and English-speaking migrant origin groups, and their Irish counterparts, have similar progression rates to higher education, with non-English speaking migrant-origin groups having higher rates of progression. This study highlights the academic progression of migrant origin youth in Ireland and challenges the aspiration–achievement paradox.

### 8.3.5 Migrants' experiences of local authority integration efforts

Researcher Mary Gilmartin conducted qualitative research, in collaboration with Maynooth University and ICI, on service providers and migrants' experiences of local-level integration.<sup>319</sup> The research builds on previous ICI research, which developed the Local Migrant Integration Index. In many cases, migrants and service providers highlighted evidence of good practices implemented by local authorities, including positive face-to-face interaction with local authority agents. Others reported difficulties in accessing local authority agents. The reception of arrivals from Ukraine was cited as a good practice. Concerns raised related to difficulties understanding the role and function of local authorities, and issues around communication and participation with local authorities. Issues about staff hiring and training procedures were raised. The report identifies four key areas for improvement: enhancing communication and services for migrants; improving physical and social spaces; increasing representation and resources; and encouraging local authorities to act as a positive force for change. Specific recommendations are provided for local authorities to improve their support for migrant communities.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> McGinnity, F., M. Darmody and E. Smyth (2023). *Post-school expectations and outcomes among migrant-origin young people in Ireland*, Dublin: ESRI

<sup>319</sup> ICI (2022). *Indicators for migrant local integration*.

<sup>320</sup> Gilmartin, M. (2023). *Enhancing migrant integration at local level in Ireland*, Maynooth University.

## 8.4 CASE LAW

### 8.4.1 Racism in the workplace and the response of the employer: *Onyemekeihia v. Minister for Justice and Equality [2023] IEHC 697*

Mr Onyemekeihia was employed as a prison officer in Mountjoy Prison. He was subjected to constant racial abuse by some prisoners. He complained to his employer, the Irish Prison Service (IPS); however, he felt that their response was inadequate. He submitted that the Prison Rules 2007 were inadequate to address the issue at hand, and that sanctions were never implemented or only briefly implemented. He subsequently made two complaints to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), and one of the WRC decisions was appealed to the Labour Court. Witnesses on behalf of the appellant submitted that a focus on rules and sanctions was too narrow, and that education and a more visible policy was required.

The IPS argued that prisons represent a unique environment and the prison rules have sanctions for prisoner misconduct. The IPS sought to rely on the practicable defence requirements under section 14A of the *Equality Act 1998*, as amended. This provides a defence for the employer where the employer took reasonably practicable steps to prevent harassment or the victim being treated differently and, if the harassment had already occurred, the employer took steps to reverse its effects.

In the hearing in the Labour Court, it was found that the IPS consistently took a robust approach to dealing with allegations of racist behaviour, and that the sanctions were meaningful and proportionate. It recognised that the IPS's approach to equality and diversity was evolving and that it may not have been given an adequate level of attention to date. The Labour Court directed IPS to conduct a thorough review of its anti-racism strategy and policies with regard to international best practice. This decision was appealed by the applicant in the High Court.

In the High Court, O'Regan J stated that it was difficult to reconcile the finding of the Labour Court, which found, on the one hand, that the IPS had a consistently robust approach, meaningful and proportionate sanctions and an active anti-harassment policy, and, on the other hand, that the IPS has not given racism and racial harassment sufficient attention, directing them to conduct a review of their anti-racism strategy and policies. This was held to be insufficiently explained and therefore irrational. It was also held that the Labour Court did not fulfil its obligation to give reasons for its decision.

As regards the claim of indirect discrimination made by the appellant, including with reference to the Race Equality Directive 2000/43/EC, O'Regan J held that the Labour Court should have made some reference to indirect discrimination as opposed to ignoring the issue. The adequacy of the Prison Rules 2007 in providing adequate

sanctions or an adequate policy was considered a matter for the Labour Court and not the instant proceedings. The decision of the Labour Court was set aside.



## CHAPTER 9

### Trafficking in human beings

#### 9.1 STATISTICS

In 2023, 53 people were identified as victims of human trafficking. Twelve were European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA) nationals, and none were Irish nationals. Five of the total number of victims were children and the majority were female.<sup>321</sup>

Of the total victims in 2023, 28 (52%) were victims of sexual exploitation, 16 (30%) were victims of labour exploitation and 9 (17%) were victims of other types of exploitation such as forced criminality and forced begging.<sup>322</sup> The top country of origin of victims of human trafficking in 2023 was Nigeria.

In 2023, prosecutors initiated two prosecutions for trafficking, compared with three prosecutions in 2022 and one in 2021. Both prosecutions initiated in 2023 were for labour trafficking, Ireland's first labour trafficking prosecutions. No prosecutions for trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation were initiated.<sup>323</sup>

#### 9.2 DEVELOPMENTS

##### 9.2.1 National Referral Mechanism for victims of trafficking

As reported for 2021 and 2022, the Minister for Justice announced a revised National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for victims of trafficking to be placed on a statutory footing.<sup>324</sup> The *Criminal Justice (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Bill 2022*, which contained provisions for the NRM, was published in July 2022 and was initiated in Dáil Éireann in July 2023.<sup>325</sup>

The purpose of the revised NRM is to make it easier for victims to come forward, be officially recognised and receive the appropriate supports.<sup>326</sup> Government departments and agencies such as the Department of Children Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), the Department of Justice, the Department of Social Protection, Tusla Child and Family Agency, the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the

<sup>321</sup> Correspondence with An Garda Síochána, November 2024.

<sup>322</sup> Correspondence with the Department of Justice and An Garda Síochána, November 2024.

<sup>323</sup> US Department of State (2024). *Trafficking in Persons report: Ireland*.

<sup>324</sup> Department of Justice (2022). 'Government approves publication of general scheme of Bill which will strengthen law on consent in rape cases and support victims in sexual violence and human trafficking cases', press release, 27 July.

<sup>325</sup> Government of Ireland (2023). *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Bill 2023*, as initiated.

<sup>326</sup> Department of Justice (2022). 'Government approves publication of general scheme of Bill which will strengthen law on consent in rape cases and support victims in sexual violence and human trafficking cases', press release, 27 July.

Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), in addition to An Garda Síochána, will be designated as competent authorities for formally identifying victims of trafficking. In addition, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) that have been designated as trusted partners will be able to refer victims for formal identification.<sup>327</sup>

As reported for 2022, while the Bill was welcomed by many stakeholders such as NGOs and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC), these stakeholders raised multiple concerns and recommendations in submissions during pre-legislative scrutiny of the General Scheme of the Bill.<sup>328</sup> In 2023, during Committee Stage, amendments were suggested to address these concerns,<sup>329</sup> including:

- Removing reference to Direct Provision, which was seen by some stakeholders as an inappropriate form of accommodation for victims of trafficking and not in line with the Government's commitments to end the Direct Provision system. This amendment was accepted;
- Inserting a child-specific identification clause to ensure that there is a mechanism to identify whether an applicant is a child where the question arises. This amendment was withdrawn; the Minister explained that the intention of the legislation is to have one referral mechanism, but that appropriate supports would be wrapped around a child where they are identified, until there is an age assessment that proves otherwise;
- Removing the credibility requirement, which was claimed to set a standard that is incompatible with the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive. This amendment was withdrawn on the basis that the Minister planned to bring forward her own amendment to achieve the same outcome; and
- Allowing for a statutory defence to prosecution within the meaning of the *Bail Act 1997*. This amendment was rejected, with the Minister reiterating the independence of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) and that not all potential offences that may be committed by a trafficked person may be linked to the circumstances of their trafficking.

The Bill passed Committee Stage in November 2023. The Minister agreed to bring forward further amendments during report stage, which will be discussed in the 2024 report of this series.<sup>330</sup> The legislation was signed into law in 2024.<sup>331</sup>

<sup>327</sup> *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Bill 2023*, Bill 62 of 2023.

<sup>328</sup> EMN Ireland (2022). *Annual report on migration and asylum 2022: Ireland*.

<sup>329</sup> Houses of the Oireachtas (2023). 'Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Bill 2023: Committee Stage, Select Committee on Justice debate', 14 November.

<sup>330</sup> Houses of the Oireachtas (2023). 'Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Bill 2023: Committee Stage, Select Committee on Justice debate', 14 November.

<sup>331</sup> *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Act 2024*, No. 28 of 2024.

## 9.2.2 Second evaluation of the implementation of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive

The IHREC was designated Ireland’s independent National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings in 2020 (see *Annual report on migration and asylum 2020: Ireland*). As part of this role, IHREC produces annual evaluation reports on the implementation of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive in Ireland. The 2023 annual evaluation report focuses on the period of January–December 2022 and was published in September 2023.<sup>332</sup>

Key recommendations include:

- the use of seized criminal assets to compensate victims of trafficking;
- a ‘roadmap’ for each victim to track their support and integration needs and how these are to be met by both state and NGO services;
- a trafficking-specific screening strategy to facilitate the detection of potential and at-risk child victims of trafficking;
- exemption of identified victims of trafficking from the habitual residency and reckonable residence requirements for the purposes of accessing social housing supports;
- mandatory trafficking-specific training (including in cultural competency) to be systematically rolled out to all competent authorities and trusted partners likely to come into contact with victims of trafficking;
- all specialist support services, both statutory and non-governmental, being able to provide recommendations to the Irish immigration service relating to the extension (or continuation) of trafficking-specific supports, and that these recommendations be taken into consideration for the renewal of temporary resident permits, where necessary; and
- a clear and transparent approach to providing material assistance to victims of trafficking that is independent from the international protection system.

## 9.2.3 Third National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking 2023–2027

The Minister for Justice launched Ireland’s third National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking, for the period 2023–2027, in November 2023.<sup>333</sup> The drafting involved consultations with representatives from nongovernmental organisation (NGOs) and government bodies. The overarching objective of the action plan is to strengthen the whole-of-government approach to combatting human trafficking. According to the Department of Justice, it is hoped that this will in turn

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<sup>332</sup> IHREC (2023). *Trafficking in human beings in Ireland: Second evaluation of the implementation of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive*.

<sup>333</sup> Government of Ireland (2023). *National action plan to prevent and combat human trafficking 2023–2027*.

facilitate more victims to come forward and seek support, for the relevant agencies to continue to provide an appropriate care response and for the criminal justice agencies to prosecute traffickers.<sup>334</sup>

The action plan is divided into four sections:

1. Work towards the abolishment of human trafficking and its demand;
2. Identify and provide supports to victims of trafficking;
3. Enforce the rights of the victim and bring perpetrators to justice; and
4. Ensure whole-of-government coordination in supporting victims and decreasing trafficking.

A key action of the plan includes the establishment of a new National Referral Mechanism (see Section 9.2.1 above). This priority aims to allow for the identification of more victims by a broader range of departments and state agencies, including the Border Management Unit, health and social care professionals and HSE registration services. A new training framework will be developed for people who encounter potential victims of trafficking. In addition, ongoing development of training through NGOs will target various front-line staff in industries such as hospitality, airline and shipping. Various supports and services for victims of human trafficking are highlighted in the action plan, including establishing dedicated accommodation for those affected, as previously set out in the Government's White Paper to end Direct Provision and Zero Tolerance, the third national strategy on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.<sup>335</sup>

As part of a victim-centred response, the plan foresees expanding the funding, use and awareness of cultural mediators and accompaniment services, and a review of the compensation avenues available to victims. In addition, the HSE Anti-Human Trafficking Team aims to establish an online presence for reaching vulnerable and 'hard to reach' victims, to help increase access to medical and social care services.

Other key actions include the following:

- Ensure effective anti-trafficking screening measures are in place at point of entry to the State;
- Provide victims with protection from deportation for immigration-related offences committed while being trafficked;

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<sup>334</sup> Correspondence with the Department of Justice, November 2024.

<sup>335</sup> Government of Ireland (2018). *White Paper to End Direct Provision and Establish a New International Protection Support Service*; Government of Ireland (2022). *Zero Tolerance: Third national strategy on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence*.

- Provide exit pathways for individuals impacted by prostitution who may be vulnerable to trafficking for sexual exploitation;
- Continue to raise awareness through materials available in languages of recognised victims of trafficking and make information available in healthcare and other settings;
- Enhance capabilities to locate children who are missing, including those who have run away from state care, and may be vulnerable to human trafficking;
- Liaise with educational institutions to establish how raising awareness of the issue of trafficking can be developed in educational settings;
- Devise a mechanism (with associated supports) to ensure the implementation of the action plan will be informed and influenced by the voices of victims/survivors; and
- Ensure professionals in contact with children are qualified in recognising and dealing with child victims and that they can act in the child's best interest.

A national policy and oversight committee will also be established, with membership comprising the competent authorities in the referral mechanism (see Section 9.2.1 for a list of members) and the Department of Justice. Its role will be to keep the NRM and its operations under review, to identify policy or operational issues and to work together collaboratively to reach agreement on solutions. An NRM operational committee with the competent authorities and trusted partners as members will be established to oversee the NRM.<sup>336</sup> This committee, as a multi-disciplinary team, will make decisions on the formal recognition of victims based on the recommendations of the individual competent authorities or authorised referral partners.<sup>337</sup>

The Department of Justice will monitor the implementation of the actions within the plan, and a human trafficking governance and strategy group, comprising senior officials from departments and agencies and with relevant expert participation as appropriate, will be established with the overall objective of guiding the implementation of the national action plan, providing strategic direction on anti-trafficking responses and driving cooperation between key agencies. This group will meet twice per year.<sup>338</sup> A human trafficking oversight group will inform the work of the governance and strategy group, with representatives drawn from key agencies. This group will meet four times per year and will be a multiagency oversight group with an operational focus and responsibility for national coordination and development of initiatives to progress the objectives of the action plan.<sup>339</sup> The oversight group will also be responsible for convening sub-groups, which would be tasked with specific strands of work, and reporting back regularly to the governance

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<sup>336</sup> Government of Ireland (2023). *National action plan to prevent and combat human trafficking 2023–2027*.

<sup>337</sup> Correspondence with the Department of Justice, November 2024.

<sup>338</sup> Correspondence with the Department of Justice, November 2024.

<sup>339</sup> Correspondence with the Department of Justice, November 2024.

and strategy group. Subgroups will include membership of state agencies and NGO representatives to ensure that specific issues are explored in depth and workable solutions identified. Work of both groups will be supported by the Human Trafficking Stakeholders' Forum, established by the Department of Justice, which will meet twice per year and which comprises community and voluntary sector and other expert stakeholders.<sup>340</sup> A mid-term evaluation of the plan will be carried out by Quarter 4, 2025.<sup>341</sup>

The publication of the national action plan was welcomed by IHREC; however, this organisation called for the plan to be properly budgeted for, and for a clear allocation of resources for actions outlined. IHREC also raised concerns regarding the lack of reference to age assessment for unaccompanied and separated minors, and the lack of reference to vulnerability assessments in the international protection process as a viable tool for early identification.<sup>342</sup>

#### 9.2.4 Dedicated accommodation unit for victims of human trafficking

In November 2023, the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) opened a specialised accommodation centre, Rosa's Place, on a pilot basis in 2023. Rosa's Place is an eight-bed unit providing specialist, individualised support for women who are identified as victims of trafficking and who are also international protection applicants. In addition to the supports provided by the HSE, each service user is assigned a case worker who provides individualised assessment and psychosocial supports. Six people were residing in this dedicated accommodation as of 31 December 2023.<sup>343</sup>

While the Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI) praised the opening of the specialised accommodation, it also raised concern about its limited capacity, which means other trafficking victims are accommodated within IPAS accommodation, which has been criticised as unsuitable (see Section 9.2.1 above).<sup>344</sup> DCEDIY noted that remit of the Department and IPAS is to provide accommodation for international protection applicants, some of whom are also victims of trafficking. However, some victims of trafficking are not eligible to apply for international protection, by virtue of nationality or other reasons. It has been custom and practice for IPAS to provide 60 days of rest and reflection accommodation, to allow time for those concerned to decide if they

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<sup>340</sup> Correspondence with the Department of Justice, November 2024.

<sup>341</sup> Government of Ireland (2023). *National action plan to prevent and combat human trafficking 2023–2027*.

<sup>342</sup> IHREC (2023). 'National Rapporteur calls for funding to match ambition of new National Action Plan on Human Trafficking', press release, 6 November.

<sup>343</sup> Correspondence with DCEDIY, November 2024.

<sup>344</sup> ICI (2023). 'Ireland continues to fail in meeting the minimum standards for supporting survivors of human trafficking, despite some progress made', press release, 24 June.

wish to be repatriated or seek to regularise their residency in Ireland through other means.<sup>345</sup>

DCEDIY has indicated that they have raised the need for alternative pathways to secure housing for this cohort during discussions on the National Action Plan on Human Trafficking and the National Referral Mechanism. The Department noted that without such pathways, there is a risk of victims of trafficking becoming stranded in IPAS accommodation.<sup>346</sup>

### 9.2.5 Trafficking in persons report

The *Trafficking in persons report 2024*, which covers developments from April 2023 to March 2024, was published by the United States (US) State Department in July 2024.<sup>347</sup> This report outlines efforts of countries to combat human trafficking, and categorises these efforts into four tiers, based on their efforts to meet the US Trafficking Victim Protection Act's minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking. In the 2024 report, Ireland remained at Tier 2, having been upgraded from the Tier 2 watchlist in the 2022 report.<sup>348</sup> Tier 2 indicates that a country does not fully meet the minimum standards but is making a significant effort to do so.

The report notes increasing efforts to meet the minimum standards in Ireland, including the adoption of a national action plan, the opening of the first specialised accommodation for women affected by trafficking, increased investigations, increased prosecutions and increased funding for victim assistance and awareness-raising activities. In addition, the report notes that prosecutions were initiated for the first time for labour trafficking, while increases in convictions under non-trafficking legislation also increased.

The report notes challenges in the areas of prevention and protection, such as 'systemic deficiencies' in proactive victim identification, referral and assistance, and limited capacity in specialised accommodation centres, leaving some victims in inappropriate accommodation. The report recommends improvements to victim identification through establishing the revised NRM, and allowing for formal victim identification and access to the NRM without requiring the victim's cooperation or interaction with law enforcement. In addition, the report states that special protection measures during court proceedings were not being implemented uniformly, and reports a lack of clarity on rights and legal protections for victims, which leaves them requiring the use of the legal system to ensure their rights are protected. The report also states that Ireland has not yet provided trafficking-specific training to judges. To

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<sup>345</sup> Correspondence with DCEDIY, November 2024

<sup>346</sup> Correspondence with DCEDIY, November 2024.

<sup>347</sup> US Department of State (2024). *Trafficking in Persons report: Ireland*.

<sup>348</sup> See *Annual report on migration and asylum 2021: Ireland* for more details.

date, courts have awarded any assets seized from traffickers to the Government. The report recommends that Ireland address this gap and establish a suitable route for victims to seek compensation.

NGOs and IHREC welcomed the report and echoed its findings and recommendations, highlighting the lack of sufficient specialised accommodation,<sup>349</sup> lack of prosecutions and reliance on prosecutions under non-trafficking legislation,<sup>350</sup> as well as a lack of meaningful access to compensation.<sup>351</sup>

While acknowledging the lead taken by the US in producing this report, the Department of Justice noted regret that the State Department determined not to upgrade Ireland's rating to Tier 1, having regard to the Government's significant recent reforms and progress in combatting human trafficking.<sup>352</sup>

## 9.2.6 EMPACT campaign and inspections

EMPACT (European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats) is a security initiative driven by EU Member States to identify and address threats posed by organised and serious international crime. Trafficking in human beings is a priority crime area within EMPACT.<sup>353</sup>

The 2023 EMPACT Trafficking in Human Beings Campaign consisted of seven 'joint days of action' across the EU in June 2023.<sup>354</sup> The campaign involved WRC inspectors, the Department of Social Protection, the Revenue Commissioners, and Gardaí from the Garda National Protective Services Unit and Garda National Immigration Bureau. In total, 285 inspections were carried out and 184 of the employers inspected had employment law breaches.<sup>355</sup>

In May 2023, WRC inspectors, Revenue Commissioners, and officers from the Garda National Protective Services Unit and Garda National Immigration Bureau participated in Operation Global Chain, EMPACT's week of action on labour exploitation.<sup>356</sup> This campaign focused on the identification of possible victims of human trafficking, and

<sup>349</sup> ICI (2023). 'Ireland continues to fail in meeting the minimum standards for supporting survivors of human trafficking, despite some progress made', press release, 24 June.

<sup>350</sup> IHREC (2023). 'National Rapporteur on the trafficking of human beings says Ireland must do more to meet minimum standards', press release, 25 June.

<sup>351</sup> ICI (2023). 'Ireland continues to fail in meeting the minimum standards for supporting survivors of human trafficking, despite some progress made', press release, 24 June.

<sup>352</sup> Correspondence with the Department of Justice, November 2024.

<sup>353</sup> For more information on EMPACT, see [www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-trends/eu-policy-cycle-empact](http://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-trends/eu-policy-cycle-empact).

<sup>354</sup> EMPACT campaigns related to this area involve WRC inspectors, the Department of Social Protection, the Revenue Commissioners and Gardaí from Garda National Protective Services Bureau and GNIB. Sectors identified as potentially high risk for inspection were: nail bars, massage businesses, car wash services and restaurants.

<sup>355</sup> Workplace Relations Commission (2023). *Workplace Relations Commission annual report 2023*.

<sup>356</sup> An Garda Síochána (2023). 'An Garda Síochána participated in Operation Global Chain, an EMPACT operational plan in Europol, targeting human trafficking', press release, 1 June.



the disruption of possible supply chains in trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, forced begging and labour exploitation in counties Monaghan, Louth and Dublin. Overall, a total of 22 unannounced inspections were undertaken; 17 of the employers inspected were found to be in breach, or possible breach, of employment rights legislation; six employers were found to be in breach of the *Employment Permits Act 2003*.<sup>357</sup> The focus was on nationals from Asia, South America and eastern Europe.

## 9.2.7 Awareness raising and training

### 9.2.7.1 Child trafficking awareness and training

Coinciding with EU-Anti Trafficking Day on 18 October 2023, the Private Security Authority (PSA – the statutory body for licencing and regulating the private security industry in Ireland), partnering with MECPATHS, a non-profit organisation focused on the issue of child trafficking, launched a new training module on child trafficking for the security industry. This made PSA the first statutory body to introduce mandated anti-child trafficking training for personnel.<sup>358</sup> The training will become mandatory for all those seeking a PSA licence to work in the door supervisor, event security and security guarding sectors.

In 2023, Tusla commissioned MECPATHS to deliver workshops to approximately 800 Tusla staff, including those working in residential care, fostering and adoption, intake and duty, and the team working with unaccompanied minors and separated children.<sup>359</sup>

### 9.2.7.2 Public and private sector training

During 2023, the Human Trafficking Investigation and Co-ordination Unit in An Garda Síochána provided training sessions to both public and private sectors.<sup>360</sup> These sessions aimed to equip professionals with the necessary skills and knowledge to recognise and address human trafficking. Officials from various sectors were trained, including the Border Management Unit, the Organised Prostitution Investigation Unit, the nongovernmental organisation (NGO) Ruhama, members of An Garda Síochána, members of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, people working in international protection accommodation centres, agricultural advisors, business leaders, other NGOs, consular staff and Tusla.

<sup>357</sup> Workplace Relations Commission (2023). *Workplace Relations Commission annual report 2023*.

<sup>358</sup> The Private Security Authority (2023). 'Launch of new human trafficking awareness training for the security industry', 18 October.

<sup>359</sup> MECPATHS (2023). *Tusla staff workshops (2022–2024)*.

<sup>360</sup> Written comments from the Department of Justice (criminal justice policy) in the context of EMN Ireland's national report, *The application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and good practices in 2023*, September 2023.

### 9.2.8 Other developments

The first Human Trafficking Stakeholders Forum was convened in December 2023, by the Department of Justice. The forum, which will meet twice a year, allows for a wide range of civil society representatives to advise on the implementation of the third national action plan to combat human trafficking.<sup>361</sup>

An anti-trafficking working group was also established within Tusla in May 2023 (see Section 9.2.3 above).<sup>362</sup>

In September 2023, the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism called on the Government to take urgent steps to ensure access to housing and assistance for victims of trafficking.<sup>363</sup>

## 9.3 RESEARCH

### 9.3.1 Human trafficking on the island of Ireland

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Ireland and the United Kingdom, in collaboration with the Department of Justice, published a report on the issue of human trafficking on the island of Ireland, focusing on evidence, trends and responses.<sup>364</sup> A key finding was that, as elsewhere, trafficking is much more prevalent than official data implies, remaining largely undetected with victims not being identified or referred for assistance. In addition, the report found that potential victims enter Northern Ireland, through the common travel area from Ireland, and are often detected through the asylum or immigration process. They also found that forced criminality and child criminal exploitation are highly prevalent but lesser-known forms of human trafficking on the island of Ireland. IOM recommended closer collaboration and coordination between stakeholders in Ireland and Northern Ireland, which could help facilitate information sharing, improve working relationships and enable more joined-up responses, for example in the form of an all-island working group on human trafficking.

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<sup>361</sup> Correspondence with the Department of Justice, November 2024.

<sup>362</sup> DCEDIY (2023). 'Response to parliamentary questions 31581/23 and 32483/23', 4 July.

<sup>363</sup> United Nations (2023). 'UN experts urge Ireland to strengthen access to housing and assistance for trafficking victims', press release, 11 September.

<sup>364</sup> Chisholm A., P. Burland, J. Dew and T. Stephenson (2023). *A study on human trafficking between Ireland and Northern Ireland*, London: International Organization for Migration.

## CHAPTER 10

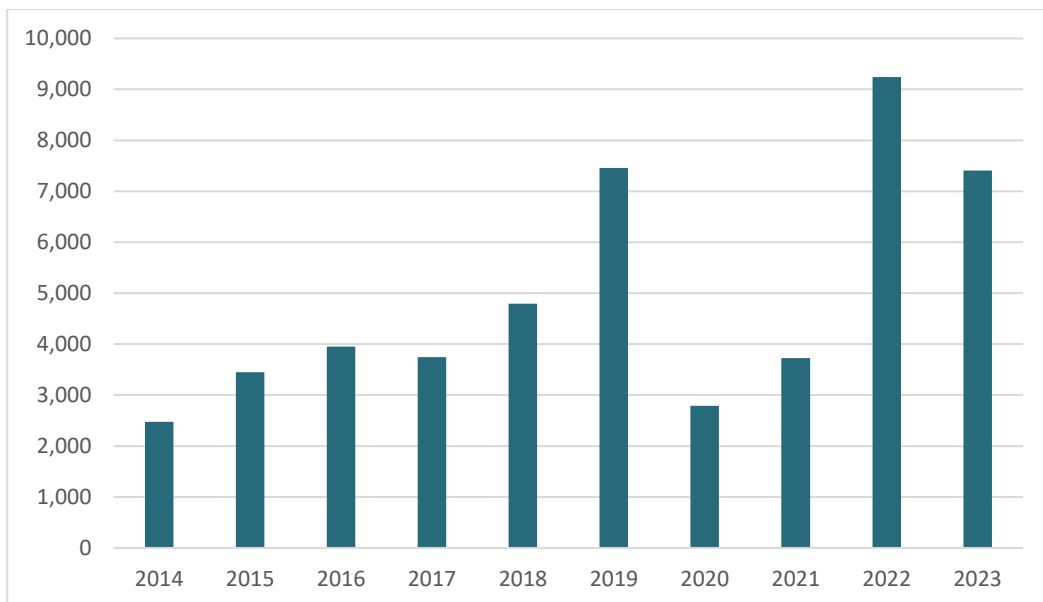
### Irregular migration, visas, borders and return

#### 10.1 STATISTICS

##### 10.1.1 Refusals of leave to land

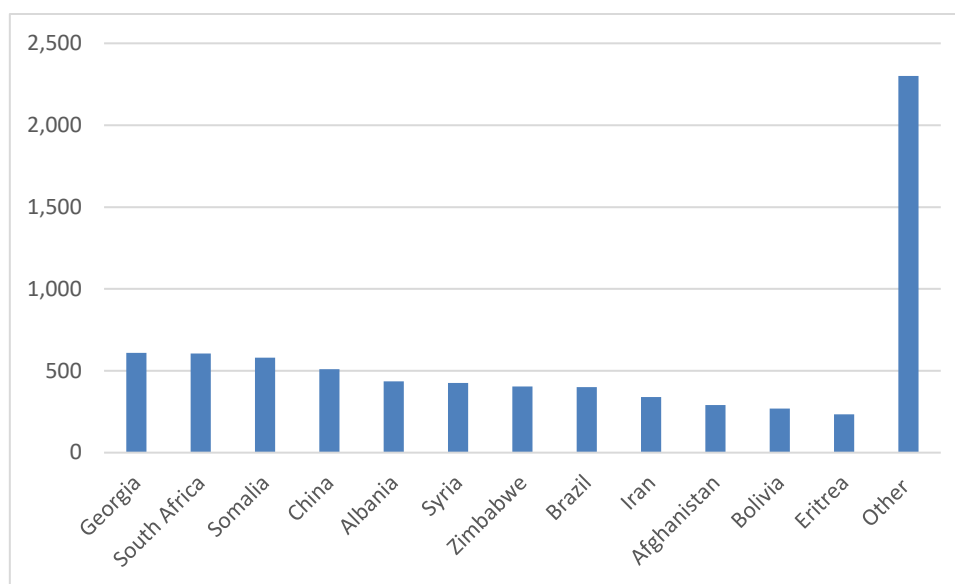
Figure 10.1 shows that the number of third-country nationals refused entry at external borders in Ireland dropped by almost 20% in 2023 compared with 2022. The 2023 figure (7,405) was almost the same as the 2019 figure (7,455), prior to the drop due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent travel restrictions.

**FIGURE 10.1 THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS REFUSED ENTRY AT THE IRISH BORDER, 2014–2023**



*Source:* Eurostat (2024). 'Third-country nationals refused entry at the external borders - Annual data (rounded)', extracted 9 July 2024.

Figure 10.2 shows the most common nationalities among those refused entry at the external borders, with Georgia, Somalia and South Africa being the most common. This country-of-origin profile is similar to those for previous years, except for China, which was not in the ten most common countries in 2022. There was a significant decrease in the number of Georgians refused entry from 2022 (64% decrease), although they still comprised the most common nationality in 2023 to be refused entry.

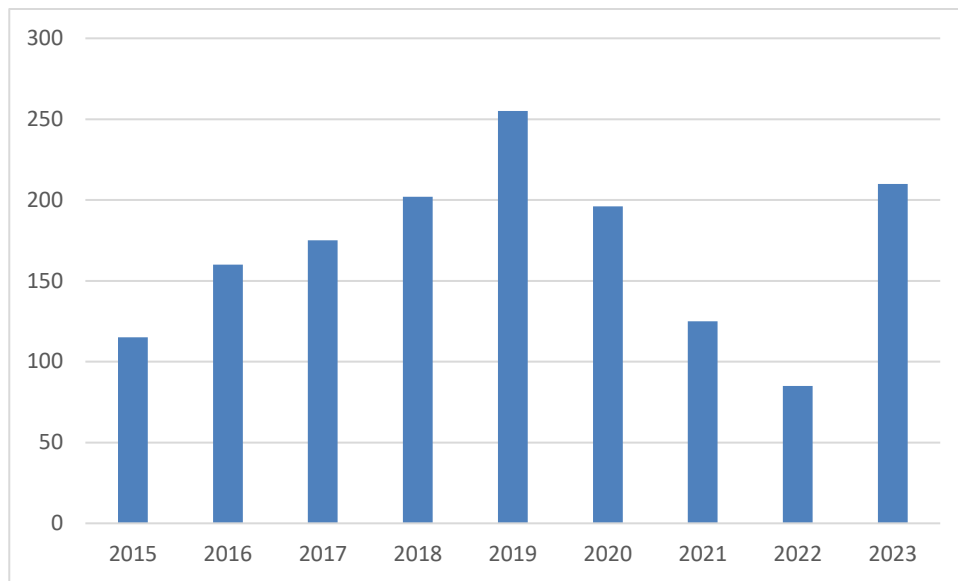
**FIGURE 10.2 COUNTRIES OF CITIZENSHIP OF THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS REFUSED ENTRY AT THE BORDER, 2023**

Source: Eurostat (2024). 'Third-country nationals refused entry at the external borders – Annual data (rounded)', extracted 9 July 2024.

### 10.1.2 Return

Voluntary return is an option open to people who have no legal status in Ireland and those who have withdrawn their application for international protection, or have had it refused and want to return to their country of origin.<sup>365</sup> Figure 10.3 shows the number of third-country nationals who have left Ireland by voluntary return. In 2023, there was a 147% increase in the number of people who availed of voluntary return (210 people) when compared with 2022 (85 people); however, the number is still less than 2019, when the number of voluntary returns peaked (255 people).

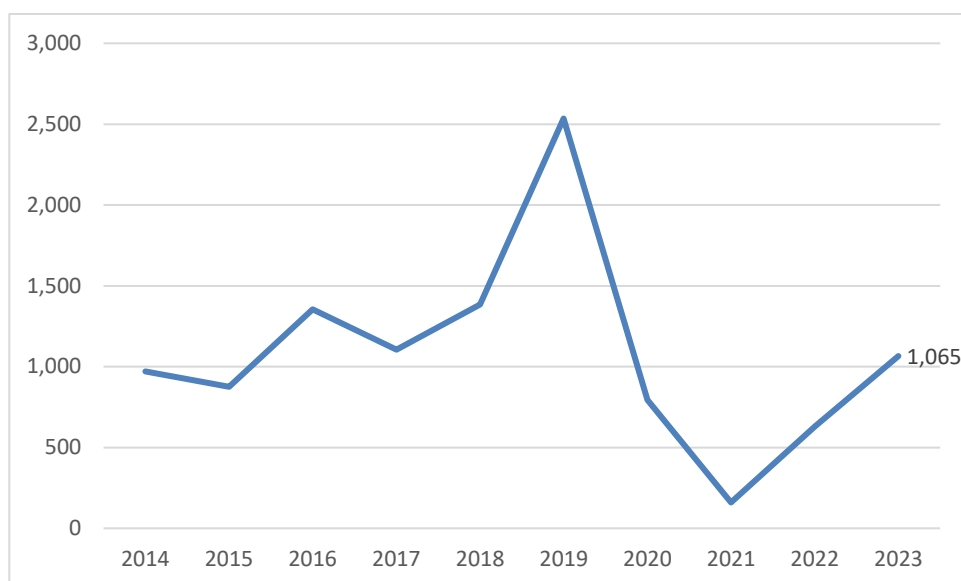
<sup>365</sup> See the Department of Justice webpage on voluntary return for more information, [www.irishimmigration.ie/voluntary-returns/](http://www.irishimmigration.ie/voluntary-returns/).

**FIGURE 10.3 THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS WHO HAVE LEFT IRELAND BY VOLUNTARY RETURN, 2015–2023**

*Source:* Eurostat (2024). 'Third-country nationals who have left the territory by type of return and citizenship', extracted 29 November 2024.

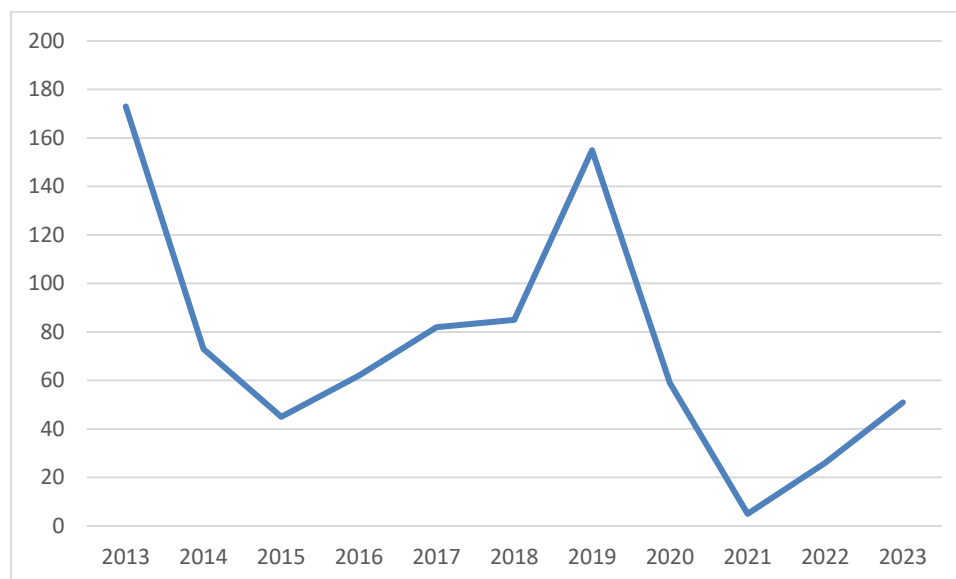
Figure 10.4 shows that there was a 69% increase in the number of third-country nationals ordered to leave in 2023 compared with 2022, although this was still less than half of the 2019 figure. The most common country of origin among those ordered to leave was Georgia (26%), followed by Albania (17%) and Brazil (13%). Pakistan, the most common country of origin to be ordered to leave in 2022, was the fourth most common in 2023 (8%). Note that this statistic refers to a combination of deportation orders signed, the international protection deportation process and voluntary returns. There were 859 deportation orders signed in 2023.<sup>366</sup>

<sup>366</sup> Correspondence with the Department of Justice, November 2024.

**FIGURE 10.4 THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS ORDERED TO LEAVE, 2014–2023**

Source: Eurostat (2024). 'Third-country nationals ordered to leave – Annual data (rounded)', extracted 9 July 2024.

Figure 10.5 shows the number of deportations enforced against third-country nationals. It shows a continued increase since the COVID-19 pandemic. There were 51 removals enforced in 2023, a 100% increase from 2022 but still a 66% decrease since prior to the pandemic.

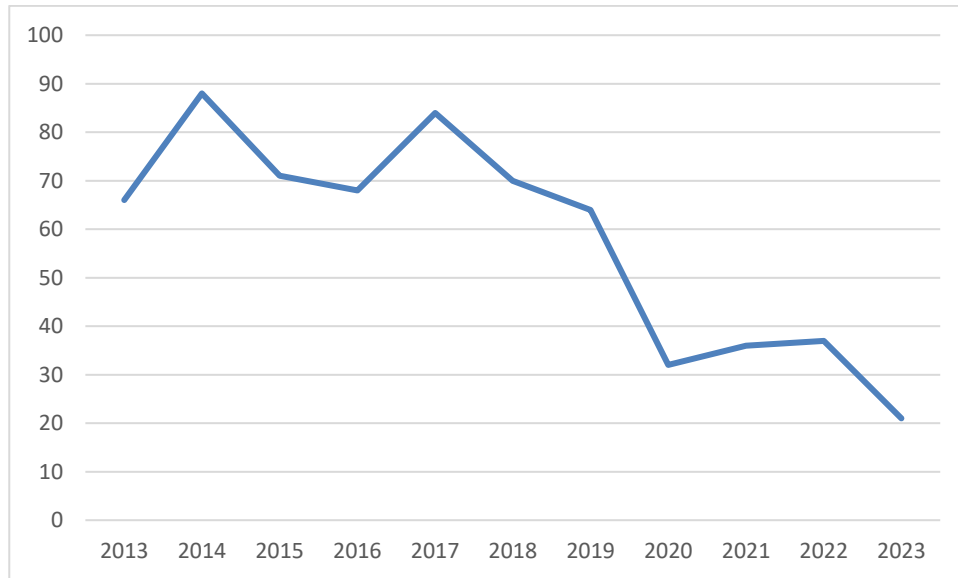
**FIGURE 10.5 DEPORTATIONS ENFORCED AGAINST THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS, 2013–2023**

Source: Department of Justice (2022). 'Response to parliamentary question 4389/22', 1 February; Correspondence with the Department of Justice, October 2023; Correspondence with the Department of Justice, November 2024.

### 10.1.3 European Union removals

Figure 10.6 shows the number of removals effected against European Union (EU) nationals. It shows a 43% decrease from 2022, with 21 EU removals effected in 2023.

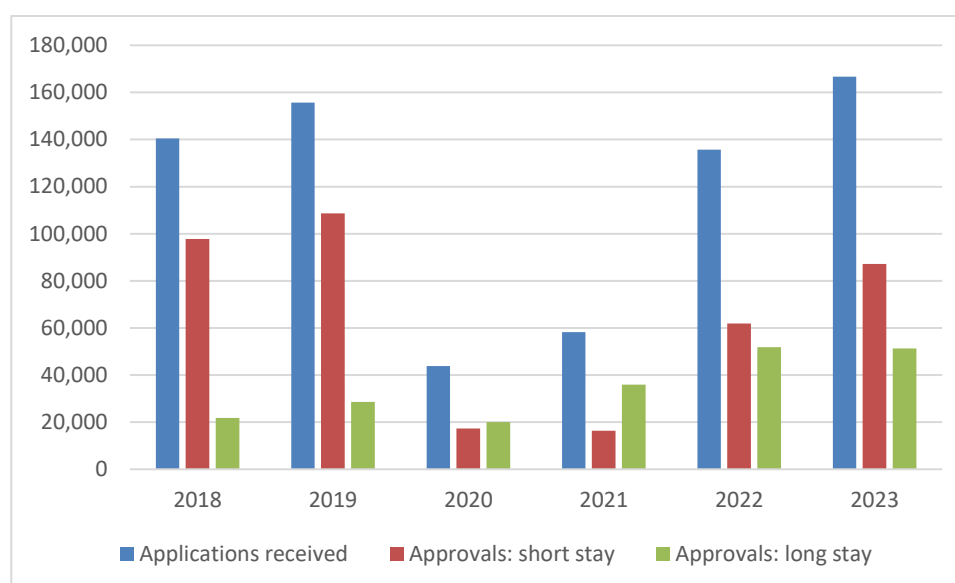
**FIGURE 10.6 EU REMOVALS EFFECTED, 2013–2023**



*Source:* Department of Justice (2022). ‘Response to parliamentary question 4389/22’, 1 February; Correspondence with the Department of Justice, October 2023; Department of Justice (2024). ‘Response to parliamentary question 1834/24’, 17 January.

### 10.1.4 Visas

Figure 10.7 shows visa applications and approvals between 2018 and 2023. It shows an increase in visa applications between 2022 and 2023 (by 22%, to 166,656 applications). Short stay visa approvals also increased in 2023; however, they remain lower than pre-COVID 19 levels. Long stay visa approvals decreased slightly in 2023, and have remained higher than they were prior to the pandemic.

**FIGURE 10.7 VISA APPLICATIONS AND APPROVALS, 2018–2023**

Source: Correspondence with the Department of Justice, October 2023 and November 2024.

## 10.2 DEVELOPMENTS

### 10.2.1 Regularisation scheme

The regularisation scheme for long-term undocumented migrants (see the 2021 and 2022 reports in this series) opened for applications in 2022. A total of 6,548 applications were received under the main strand of the scheme, relating to 8,311 people. Family applications accounted for 14%. A total of 3,240 applications were made under the international protection strand of the scheme.<sup>367</sup> The dedicated unit for the scheme closed at the end of March 2023. Since then, remaining decisions and appeals are being processed by the Domestic Residence and Permissions division of the Department of Justice.<sup>368</sup>

Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) highlighted the positive impact of the scheme and called for an ongoing regularisation process.<sup>369</sup> MRCI and the media also drew attention to delays in processing some applications beyond the promised timeframe.<sup>370</sup>

<sup>367</sup> Department of Justice (2023). 'Response to parliamentary questions 33877/23, 33878/23 and 34391/23', 11 July.

<sup>368</sup> Department of Justice (2023). 'Response to parliamentary questions 33877/23, 33878/23 and 34391/23', 11 July.

<sup>369</sup> MRCI (2023). 'Former undocumented people highlight impact of recent scheme and call for ongoing regularisation process this St. Patrick's Day', press release, 16 March.

<sup>370</sup> Holland, K. (2023). 'More than 600 undocumented migrants waiting over a year for decision on their status', *Irish Times*, 31 July.



### 10.2.2 Extension of visa requirement for refugees

In July 2023, the Government extended the European Agreement on the Abolition of Visas for Refugees (Council of Europe) requirement for refugees to obtain visas if required when travelling to Ireland for a further 12 months.<sup>371</sup> In July 2022, the Government suspended the operation of the agreement and it was agreed to review the suspension in a further 12 months.<sup>372</sup> Under the Council of Europe agreement, signatory countries issue travel documents to refugees, which allows the holders of these documents to travel to other signatory countries without the need of a visa or prior clearance for the purpose of visiting that country for up to three months.<sup>373</sup> The suspension effectively means that people with refugee status require a visa to travel to Ireland rather than being able to travel visa-free with their Convention Travel Document. The decision to introduce visa requirements for those with refugee status was taken in light of evidence of people applying for international protection in Ireland who had already received refugee status in another European country.

### 10.2.3 Electronic serving of notices

The *Immigration Act 1999* was amended to allow for the serving of notices under the Act by electronic means.<sup>374</sup> This can mean via an email address provided by the person to the Minister or a registration officer, or an electronic system (e.g. a portal) where the person is registered. The electronic service is not intended to replace other methods of delivery already provided for under the legislation (delivery by hand or via registered post). The amendment was commenced from July 2023.<sup>375</sup>

This provision is intended to make it easier to serve notices under the *Immigration Act 1999* (including deportation orders) in cases where persons cannot be reached by post.<sup>376</sup>

### 10.2.4 Removal of option for voluntary return for persons convicted of serious offences

The *Immigration Act 1999* was also amended to remove the option to avail of voluntary return where a person has been convicted of a serious offence or where there are reasonable grounds for considering the person a danger to the security of

<sup>371</sup> Department of Justice (2023). 'Visa-free travel for people with refugee status further suspended', 14 July.

<sup>372</sup> Council of Europe Agreement on the Abolition of Visas for Refugees. The suspension is provided for in the Immigration Act 2004 (Visas) (Amendment) (No. 2) Order 2022 S.I. No. 364/2022.

<sup>373</sup> The visa exemption applies to holders of a Convention Travel Document issued by Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden or Switzerland, and allows for a visa exemption for a visit up to a maximum of three months.

<sup>374</sup> Section 45, *Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023*, amending section 6, *Immigration Act 1999*.

<sup>375</sup> *Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023 (Commencement) Order 2023*, S.I. No. 389/2023.

<sup>376</sup> Department of Justice (2023). 'Minister McEntee commences majority of wide-ranging Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023', press release, 1 August.

the State.<sup>377</sup> A serious offence is defined as an offence that is punished by imprisonment for a term of five years or a more severe penalty (for persons of full age and capacity and not previously convicted).<sup>378</sup> This was commenced in July 2023.<sup>379</sup>

This development refers to the return of persons illegally present under section 3 of the *Immigration Act 1999*. Section 48(6) of the *International Protection Act 2015* has a similar provision relating to the return of unsuccessful protection applicants, which was already in force.

### 10.2.5 Longer voluntary return notice period

The legal basis to extend the timeline for unsuccessful international protection applicants to notify the State of their acceptance of voluntary return from 5 days to 30 days was enacted in 2023.<sup>380</sup> However, this provision has not yet been commenced.<sup>381</sup> This change reflected a recommendation of the report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Supports, including Accommodation, to Persons in the International Protection Process (the Catherine Day report).<sup>382</sup>

### 10.2.6 Frontex participation

In April 2023, the management board of Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, adopted its decision on Ireland's request to participate in and contribute financially to Frontex activities in 2023. Ireland does not participate in the 'Frontex Regulation',<sup>383</sup> as it is a development of the Schengen acquis, in which Ireland does not participate. However, the Regulation sets out parameters for cooperation between Frontex and Ireland in certain activities and that the Frontex management board decides on a case-by-case basis on any request from Ireland to participate in its activities.<sup>384</sup> Ireland is invited to participate in the Frontex management board in a non-voting capacity.

Ireland submitted its request to participate in 2023 activities and covers the cost of such participation in accordance with a 2016 management board decision.<sup>385</sup> Ireland estimated a budget of €440,800 in relation to its request to contribute experts to a

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<sup>377</sup> Section 44, *Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023* amending section 3 of the *Immigration Act 1999* to insert a new section 4a.

<sup>378</sup> Section 44(c), *Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023*.

<sup>379</sup> *Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023 (Commencement) Order 2023*, S.I. No. 389/2023.

<sup>380</sup> Section 70, *Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023*, amending section 48(3) of the *International Protection Act 2015*.

<sup>381</sup> *Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023 (Commencement) Order 2023*, S.I. No. 389/2023.

<sup>382</sup> Government of Ireland (2020). *Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process*, p. 74.

<sup>383</sup> European Border and Coast Guard (Frontex) Regulation 2019/1896.

<sup>384</sup> Article 70 sets out the parameters for cooperation and Article 100(5) states that the management board decides on requests.

<sup>385</sup> Article 1 of Management Board Decision 03/2016.

range of operations, workshops, trainings and meetings.<sup>386</sup> The Minister for Justice indicates that Frontex trainings include the use of IT systems, escorts in return operations and detection of false documents, and seek to establish a standardisation of processes.<sup>387</sup>

### 10.2.7 New Voluntary Returns Unit

A new dedicated Voluntary Returns Unit was set up in the Department of Justice's Repatriation Unit (part of Immigration Service Delivery). Staff were recruited who have previous specialist career experience in this area. The unit processes cases for voluntary return and works with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to effect cases for assisted voluntary return and reintegration. It is also involved in promoting the process with relevant individuals and organisations.<sup>388</sup>

In Justice Plan 2023, a continued focus on removals, deportations and voluntary returns is included as one action, which seeks to contribute to ensuring a fair and balanced rules-based international protection system.<sup>389</sup>

### 10.2.8 Introduction of visa requirements for Bolivian nationals

A visa requirement and transit visa requirement were introduced for Bolivian nationals from September 2023.<sup>390</sup> This was introduced via the *Immigration Act 2004 (Visas) (Amendment) Order 2023*.<sup>391</sup>

These visa requirements were introduced to bring Ireland into alignment with the visa regime applying in the United Kingdom (UK) and in the Schengen Area, as Bolivian nationals are required to obtain a visa before travelling to these destinations.<sup>392</sup>

## 10.3 RESEARCH

### 10.3.1 Regularisation of migrants in Europe: Scope, impact and lessons learned

Toronto Metropolitan University published a policy brief discussing once off regularisation schemes and more regular or continuous regularisation mechanisms for

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<sup>386</sup> Frontex (2023). 'Management Board Decision 17/2023 on Ireland's request to participate in, and contribute financially to, Frontex activities in 2023'.

<sup>387</sup> Department of Justice (2023). 'Response to parliamentary question 42388/23', 3 October.

<sup>388</sup> Correspondence with the Department of Justice in the context of 'EMN Inform: Coherent return and reintegration', February 2024.

<sup>389</sup> Department of Justice (2023). *Justice Plan 2023*, Action 124, 5 April.

<sup>390</sup> Department of Justice (2023). 'Introduction of visa and transit visa requirement for Bolivian nationals', press release, 8 September.

<sup>391</sup> *Immigration Act 2004 (Visas) (Amendment) Regulations 2023*, S.I. No. 442/2023.

<sup>392</sup> Department of Justice (2023). 'Introduction of visa and transit visa requirement for Bolivian nationals', press release, 8 September.

migrants without a legal status. It provides an overview of various approaches taken to regularisation in Europe over the past 15 years, drawing on case studies from Italy, Ireland and Spain, outlining and assessing their main features and impact. The analysis by Ruth Heylin and Anna Triandafyllidou outlines that while there is significant variation in the design of regularisation programmes across Europe, successful regularisation programmes include clear criteria for eligibility, a role for civil society organisations to support applicants through the process and the provision of ‘firewalls’ or protections and temporary permits while the application is in progress. The analysis also found that ongoing regularisation mechanisms are crucial for addressing endemic situations where applicants may fall through the cracks of the immigration system and for avoiding the formation of ‘pockets’ of irregularity.<sup>393</sup>

## 10.4 CASE LAW

### 10.4.1 Deportation orders and the constitutional rights of children: *Odum & ors v. Minister for Justice and Equality (No. 2)* [2023] IESC 26

Mr Odum, a Nigerian national, arrived to Ireland irregularly in November 2007. He married EA, also a Nigerian national, in December 2007. However, the marriage was not registered and therefore was not considered lawful. They went on to have three children. The couple separated in 2014. In that same year, Odum applied for residency, but this application was refused and he was issued with a deportation order. In the decision, the Minister assessed various factors under section 3(6) of the *Immigration Act 1999*, including rights to family life under Article 8 ECHR. The Minister concluded that the deportation order would not violate these rights. Odum challenged the deportation order by way of judicial review. The High Court dismissed the case in 2021. The Supreme Court granted leave to appeal in 2022 and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) was granted permission to participate as *amicus curiae*. In 2022, Mr Odum was granted temporary leave to remain in the State via the Regularisation of Long-Term Undocumented Migrants’ Scheme. It fell to the Supreme Court to decide if the case should still be heard. In *Odum and ors v. Minister for Justice and Equality (No. 1)* [2023] IESC 3, it was held that while the appeal could be understood as technically moot, it involved a point of general public importance and should be heard. Central to this case was the consideration of the constitutional rights of the family, who are non-EU citizens, in the context of a deportation order. In the Supreme Court, O’Donnell CJ distinguished the case from Gorry ([2020] IESC 55) in that the applicant and EA were not a married couple and were not cohabiting. The applicants did not argue that they should be treated as constituting a family for the purposes of Article 41 of the Constitution. However, O’Donnell CJ considered whether their children have constitutional rights, namely to the care, company and companionship of their parents, irrespective of their marital status. O’Donnell CJ first

<sup>393</sup> Heylin, R. and A. Triandafyllidou (2023). *Regularizations of migrants without status in Europe: Scope, impact and lessons learned*, Toronto Metropolitan University.

considered the question of the entitlement of non-citizens to invoke constitutional rights.

With reference to *NVH v. Minister for Justice and Equality and the Attorney General* ([2017] IESC 35), O'Donnell CJ recognised that there are a number of circumstances in which a non-citizen who can establish a sufficient connection to the State is considered the same as a citizen, and where, therefore, the Article 40.1 guarantee of equality as 'human persons' before the law entitles them to rely on the same rights as a citizen. This is reinforced by the connection between fundamental rights in the Constitution and the reference in the Preamble to securing the dignity of the individual. The children in this case could rely on the mechanism of Article 40.1 for constitutional guarantees such as family life and education, and rights to liberty, free speech and fair procedures, among others. However, this did not apply to attributes of citizenship, such as voting. It was held that the children did have constitutional rights to the care and company of their parent, and that they may be affected by the deportation decision.

The Supreme Court, however, found that a non-citizen parent whose presence in the State was precarious would require exceptional circumstances to render a deportation decision invalid. It was held that the evidence provided on the first-named applicant's relationship with his children and EA was limited, fragmentary and contradictory. It therefore failed to provide sufficient evidence of a real meaningful relationship such that a deportation order would impermissibly interfere with the children's rights under both Article 8 ECHR and to the care and companionship of their parents under the Constitution. In a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court upheld the decision of the High Court in dismissing the appeal.

#### **10.4.2 Rights of the child in visa applications for family reunification: *NZ & ors v. Minister for Justice* [2023] IEHC 545**

SMR was born in Pakistan and married an Irish national in 2004. In 2005, he moved to Ireland and is now a naturalised Irish citizen. The couple had two children, who are Irish citizens. The applicant submitted that his marriage was subsequently dissolved in accordance with Pakistani law around 2011 and that he has custody of the children. In 2017, he remarried, this time to a Pakistani national, NZ.

SMR and NZ applied for a joint family visa for NZ. This application was refused in 2018, as was the appeal in 2019. In 2020, the couple had a child, MUSR. Following his birth, a new visa application was submitted. This was refused in 2022, due to insufficient explanation for inconsistencies in the application, including with regard to the validity of the divorce between SMR and his first wife, and thus the validity of the subsequent marriage between SMR and NZ. The visa appeals officer found that because the marriage was not recognised, the child was considered to have been born outside of

a lawful marriage and therefore did not have rights under Article 41 of the Constitution. In terms of the best interests of the child, it was held that the minor's relationship with his father could be sustained at a distance (e.g. through electronic means of communication). The applicants appealed this decision by way of judicial review in the High Court.

In the High Court, Phelan J agreed with the visa appeals officer's finding that the information on the divorce of SMR from his first wife was insufficient. Phelan J also agreed with the ensuing finding that there was insufficient information to confirm the validity of the marriage, which in turn meant Article 41 of the Constitution was inapplicable.

Nonetheless, Phelan J held that the position of the child, MUSR, required further scrutiny. The applicants had not applied to register the birth of the child as an Irish citizen on the Foreign Births Register at the time of the visa decision, with an application only initiated after the proceedings commenced. Phelan J agreed with the respondent, the Minister for Justice, that prospective rights of the child would be too remote given that no application had been made for Irish citizenship for the child at the time of the decision.

However, Phelan J recalled that it is established in case law that children who are not citizens and who do not fall under Article 41 still have constitutional rights due to the 'inherent characteristics of human personality and the nurturing relationship between parent and child' (para 41). These rights are not absolute and are limited by both the common good and the State's legitimate interests, with a balancing exercise to be conducted by the decision maker. In the visa appeals officer's decision, while Article 41 was inapplicable and although it was accepted that the family have rights under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), there was no analysis of the rights of the child under Article 40 and Article 42A. No reference is made to the child's constitutional rights irrespective of the marital status of his parents. It was recalled that while constitutional and ECHR rights overlap, they are not synonymous or interchangeable, and must be considered separately.

The High Court held that the decision maker must conduct a balancing exercise between the State's interests and the rights of the child to the care and company of both parents under Articles 40 to 42A of the Constitution. It was held that the refusal decision failed to fully consider the constitutional rights of the child in the balancing exercise between the State's interests and the rights of the child under the Constitution. Phelan J thus quashed the decision.

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## ANNEX A

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### Migration and asylum governance structures and policy

This section sets out the institutional and legal structure governing migration in Ireland as of 31 December 2023. As significant developments occurred in this area in 2024, major developments in 2024 have also been flagged to signpost where the position as of 31 December 2023 no longer reflects the key legal structures in the area.

Three government departments are primarily involved in migration management in Ireland (see Figure 1.1). A fourth government department, the Department of Foreign Affairs, plays a limited role in migration management, with some responsibilities for issuance of visas overseas. Other government departments may have limited input into specific aspects of migration management.

Figures 1.1 and 1.2 (page 4 and 5) set out the departmental and institutional arrangements respectively, as of 31 December 2023. This section provides further detail on their roles and responsibilities.

#### A.1 STRUCTURE OF THE IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

##### A.1.1 Department of Justice

The Department of Justice is responsible for immigration management. The Minister for Justice has ultimate decision-making powers in relation to immigration and asylum.

##### Immigration Service Delivery

The Immigration Service Delivery (ISD) function of the Department of Justice (formerly the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service) is responsible for administering the statutory and administrative functions of the Minister for Justice in relation to international protection, immigration (including visas), repatriation and citizenship matters.

Since 31 December 2016, ISD has been responsible for investigating applications by beneficiaries of international protection to allow family members to enter and reside in the State and for providing a report to the Minister on such applications, under sections 56 and 57 of the *International Protection Act 2015*. ISD also administers the Atypical Working Scheme, which provides permissions for working situations that fall outside of the employment permits system.

Since 2015, the Border Management Unit of ISD of the Department of Justice has taken over frontline border control functions at Dublin Airport. Established in May 2018, the Irish Passenger Information Unit is a unit of the Department of Justice that collects and processes:

- passenger name record data for the purpose of the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of terrorism and serious crime; and
- advance passenger information, which processes data from inbound flights from outside the European Union (EU) for immigration purposes.

The Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB), a unit of An Garda Síochána (and therefore under the authority of the Department of Justice), is responsible for all immigration-related Garda operations in the State. GNIB carries out policing functions of immigration such as deportations, detentions at borders and investigations of immigration issues. It also provides border management functions at all ports of entry other than Dublin Airport. An Garda Síochána has personnel specifically dealing with immigration in every Garda district, at all approved ports and airports, and at a border control unit attached to Dundalk Garda Station. Responsibility for immigration registration of non-EEA nationals will have fully transferred to the Registration Office of ISD by early 2025.

### **International protection**

The International Protection Office (IPO) is an administrative unit within the ISD function of the Department of Justice that is responsible for processing applications for international protection under the *International Protection Act 2015*. It also considers, as part of a single procedure, whether applicants should be given permission to remain. International protection officers are independent in the performance of their international protection functions. International protection officers make recommendations in relation to international protection applications, but it is the function of the Minister for Justice to make the decision. The Minister for Justice also makes decisions in relation to permission to remain. These decisions are made through the Ministerial Decisions Unit.

The IPO also administers the Dublin III Regulation in the State, which is given further effect in Ireland via the *European Union (Dublin System) Regulations 2018*.<sup>394</sup>

The statutorily independent International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) is responsible for hearing appeals.

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<sup>394</sup> European Union (Dublin System) Regulations 2018, S.I. No. 62 of 2018.



## Trafficking

The Department of Justice also has responsibility for anti-human trafficking policy and legislation. Since October 2020, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) is the designated National Rapporteur on trafficking of human beings.<sup>395</sup> There are three dedicated units in the State dealing with this issue: the Human Trafficking Investigation and Co-ordination Unit in the Garda National Protective Services Bureau, the Anti-Human Trafficking Team in the Health Service Executive (HSE) and a specialised human trafficking legal team in the Legal Aid Board. In Ireland, it is the responsibility of An Garda Síochána to identify a victim of human trafficking and refer them to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). A new Bill containing a revised NRM was published in July 2023, and the legislation – the *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Act 2024* – was signed into law in 2024.

Once designated as a victim of trafficking within the NRM, the Human Trafficking Investigation and Coordination Unit has the responsibility to refer the victim to a variety of services.<sup>396</sup> Dedicated personnel are assigned to deal with prosecution of cases in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. In addition, the Anti-Trafficking Team liaises with a dedicated team in the Department of Social Protection. Some of the services provided by the Department of Social Protection include material assistance (Supplementary Welfare Allowance, Rent Supplement), translation and interpretation when needed, and when appropriate, access to the labour market, vocational training and education.

### A.1.2 INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION APPEALS TRIBUNAL

The International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) is a statutorily independent quasi-judicial body that exercises the performance of its functions under the *International Protection Act 2015*.<sup>397</sup> It is regarded as a court or tribunal of first instance, tasked with performing the judicial scrutiny function provided for in Article 39 of Directive 2005/85.<sup>398</sup> Established in December 2016 in accordance with section 61 of the *International Protection Act 2015*, IPAT hears and determines appeals in relation to recommendations made by international protection officers in the IPO on applications for protection status in the State, and in relation to appeals of transfer decisions made by the IPO under the Dublin III Regulation. Since 30 June 2018, IPAT also hears appeals in relation to the *European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018*.

<sup>395</sup> *European Union (Prevention and Combating of Human Trafficking) (National Rapporteur) Regulations 2020*, S.I. No. 432 of 2020.

<sup>396</sup> Breen, M., A.E. Healy and M. Healy (2021). *Report on human trafficking and exploitation on the island of Ireland*, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.

<sup>397</sup> Section 61(3)(b) of the *International Protection Act 2015*.

<sup>398</sup> See most recently *X v. International Protection Appeals Tribunal & ors* (Case C-756/21, 29 June 2023).

### A.1.3 Legal Aid Board

The Refugee Documentation Centre is an independent library and research service within the Legal Aid Board that provides a specialist query and research service in support of the work of the Legal Aid Board and the Department of Justice.<sup>399,400</sup> The specialised Services for Asylum Seekers Office within the Legal Aid Board provides ‘confidential and independent legal services’ to persons applying for asylum in Ireland. Legal aid and advice are also provided in ‘appropriate cases’ on immigration and deportation matters.<sup>401</sup> Additionally, the Legal Aid Board provides legal services on certain matters to persons identified by the Human Trafficking Investigation and Co-ordination Unit of An Garda Síochána as ‘potential victims’ of human trafficking under the *Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008*.

### A.1.4 Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Following the transfer of functions in October 2020, the Department of Children, Disability, Equality, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) has responsibility for the provision of accommodation and other supports to applicants for international protection, and for integration and resettlement.<sup>402</sup> DCEDIY also has policy responsibility for children, including unaccompanied minors arriving in the State who are in the care of Tusla Child and Family Agency.

In August 2019, the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA), which was responsible for arranging accommodation and working with statutory and non-statutory agencies to co-ordinate the delivery of other services for applicants for international protection, was divided into the International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS) and the International Protection Procurement Services (IPPS). IPPS is responsible for procurement, contract management, inspection and payments for accommodation provided to international protection applicants. IPAS is responsible for all other aspects of reception of international protection applicants, including all ancillary services. Since 30 June 2018, the statutory basis for this work is the *European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018*,<sup>403</sup> which transpose the EU Reception Conditions Directive 2013/33/EU into Irish law. IPAS also provides accommodation to suspected victims of trafficking pending a determination of their case and during the 60-day recovery and reflection period.

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<sup>399</sup> For further information on the Refugee Documentation Centre, see [www.legalaidboard.ie/lab/publishing.nsf/Content/RDC](http://www.legalaidboard.ie/lab/publishing.nsf/Content/RDC).

<sup>400</sup> For further information on the Legal Aid Board, see [www.legalaidboard.ie](http://www.legalaidboard.ie).

<sup>401</sup> See [www.legalaidboard.ie](http://www.legalaidboard.ie).

<sup>402</sup> *Disability, Equality, Human Rights, Integration and Reception (Transfer of Departmental Administration and Ministerial Functions) Order 2020*, S.I. No. 436 of 2020.

<sup>403</sup> *European Union (Dublin System) Regulations 2018*, S.I. No. 62 of 2018.

DCEDIY has responsibility for leading and co-ordinating integration and equality policy across government departments, agencies and services.

Following the transition of functions in October 2020, responsibility for the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP), approved by Government in 2015, was transferred to DCEDIY.

In addition, Tusla Child and Family Agency is responsible for the administration of care for unaccompanied third-country minors in the State and, since November 2020, sits under DCEDIY. Tusla is responsible for improving the wellbeing and outcomes of children, providing child protection, early intervention, family support services and putting in place suitable arrangements for those arriving to the State under relevant IRPP programmes and other immigration schemes.

### **A.1.5 Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment**

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) administers the States' employment permit schemes. DETE's Employment Permits Section implements a skills-oriented employment permits system to fill labour and skills gaps that cannot be filled through European Economic Area (EEA) supply. The Employment Permits section: processes applications for employment permits; issues guidelines, information, and procedures; and produces online statistics on applications and permits issued.

The Economic Migration Policy Unit within DETE works to support the operation of an employment permits system in a way that maximises the benefits of economic migration and minimises the risk of disrupting Ireland's labour market. As of the end of 2023, the employment of non-EEA nationals in the State was governed by the *Employment Permits Acts 2006* (as amended), which facilitates economic migration through nine different types of employment permits for different employment scenarios. However, this Act was replaced by the *Employment Permits Act 2024*, which was signed into law in June 2024.

Set up in the late 1990s, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs is an independent body that advises Government on the future skills needs of enterprises and associated labour market issues. It carries out research and analysis in relation to emerging skills requirements, engages with relevant bodies to produce action plans to address identified skills needs, and disseminates findings. DETE provides administrative support to this expert group.<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (2021). *The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs: Statement of activity 2020*, Dublin: National Skills Council.

The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) is an independent statutory body established under the *Workplace Relations Act 2015*, which regulates employment rights and undertakes inspections in relation to employment rights and adherence to employment permits legislation.

#### **A.1.6 Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science**

On behalf of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and under the Irish University Association, EURAXESS Ireland manages the operation of hosting agreements under the Third Country Researchers Directive (Council Directive 2005/71/EC). This Directive allows researchers to carry out research projects with a recognised research organisation in Ireland using a permit that can last up to five years.<sup>405</sup>

#### **A.1.7 Department of Foreign Affairs**

The Department of Foreign Affairs has responsibility for the issuance of visas via Irish Embassy consular services in cases where the Department of Justice does not have a dedicated visa office within the country concerned.<sup>406</sup> The Department has operative function only and is not responsible for visa policy or decisions, which are the remit of the Department of Justice.

Irish Aid is the Government's programme for overseas development assistance and is managed by the Development Cooperation Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs. In 2019, the Government launched *A Better World*, a new policy for international development.<sup>407</sup>

## **A.2 STRUCTURE OF THE LEGAL SYSTEM**

Immigration matters are dealt with on an administrative basis by the Minister for Justice. In accordance with the Constitution, justice is administered in public, in courts established by law, with judges appointed by the President on the advice of the Government. Independence is guaranteed in the exercise of their functions. The Irish court system is hierarchical in nature and there are five types of courts in Ireland, which hear different types and levels of cases. In ascending hierarchical order, these are:

- the District Court;
- the Circuit Court;

<sup>405</sup> See Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (2021). 'Third Country Researchers Directive' (last updated 21 March), [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie).

<sup>406</sup> See Quinn, E. (2009). *The organisation of asylum and migration policies in Ireland: 2009*, Dublin: ESRI.

<sup>407</sup> See Government of Ireland (2019). 'A Better World: Ireland's policy for international development', [www.irishaid.ie](http://www.irishaid.ie).

- the High Court;
- the Court of Appeal; and
- the Supreme Court.

The Irish asylum process sits outside the national court system. The relevance of the courts in relation to asylum and immigration cases is generally limited to judicial review.<sup>408</sup> Judicial review is a way for the High Court to supervise the lower courts, tribunals and other administrative bodies to ensure that they make proper decisions in accordance with the law. Judicial review focuses on assessing the determination process through which a decision is reached to ensure that the decision maker makes their decision properly and in accordance with the law. It does not look to the merits or the substance of the underlying case.<sup>409</sup>

### A.2.1 EU acquis

Ireland does not take part in measures pursuant to Title V of Part Three of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), under the terms of Protocol 21 of the Lisbon Treaty, unless it decides to participate in the measure following a motion in the Houses of the Oireachtas.<sup>410</sup> Under Declaration number 56 to the TFEU, Ireland has declared its intention to take part in the adoption of Title V proposals to the maximum extent it deems possible.<sup>411</sup>

Ireland participated in some of the first generation of instruments under the Common European Asylum System, such as the Qualification Directive 2004/83/EC and Procedures Directive 2005/85/EC.<sup>412</sup> Ireland remains bound by these Directives. See EMN's guide to Ireland's participation in EU asylum and migration legislation, available on the EMN website, for a full list of EU asylum and migration legislation, Ireland's participation, and their transposition.<sup>413</sup>

Ireland does not participate in the 'recast' Qualification Directive 2011/95/EU or the Procedures Directive 2013/32/EU. While Ireland does not participate in the original Reception Conditions Directive 2003/9/EC, Ireland has opted into the recast Reception Conditions Directive 2013/33/EU and the *European Communities (Reception*

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<sup>408</sup> There is a statutory appeal to the Circuit Court against decisions to revoke refugee status and subsidiary protection under section 52 of the International Protection Act 2015.

<sup>409</sup> See Citizen's Information (2022) 'Judicial review of public decisions. Available at [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie).

<sup>410</sup> *Protocol (no 21) on the position of the United Kingdom and Ireland in respect of the area of freedom, security and justice* (Document 12016E/PRO/21)

<sup>411</sup> Declaration by Ireland on Article 3 of the *Protocol on the position of the United Kingdom and Ireland in respect of the area of freedom, security and justice (TFEU)*. Ireland also 'affirms its commitment to the Union as an area of freedom, security and justice respecting fundamental rights and the different legal systems and traditions of the Member States within which citizens are provided with a high level of safety'.

<sup>412</sup> Ireland does not participate in the 'recast' Qualification Directive 2011/95/EU or the Procedures Directive 2013/32/EU.

<sup>413</sup> EMN (2023). 'EU asylum and migration legislation: Ireland's participation', [www.emn.ie](http://www.emn.ie).

*Conditions) Regulations 2018*, which came into operation on 30 June 2018.<sup>414</sup> See below in relation to Ireland's participation in new instruments in 2024.

Ireland is a signatory to the Dublin Convention and is subject to the Dublin Regulation, which determines the EU Member State responsible for processing an asylum application made in the EU. Regulation 604/2013 ('the Dublin III Regulation') came into force on 29 June 2013.<sup>415</sup> The *European Union (Dublin System) Regulations 2014* were adopted to give further effect to the Dublin III Regulation.<sup>416</sup> These Regulations were amended by the *European Union (Dublin System) (Amendment) Regulations 2016*.<sup>417</sup> The *European Union (Dublin System) Regulations 2018*<sup>418</sup> came into effect on 6 March 2018. The Regulations give further effect to the Dublin III Regulation in Ireland and revoke the 2014 and 2016 Regulations. See below in relation to Ireland's participation in new instruments in 2024.

Ireland does not participate in the legal migration instruments under Title V except for the Researcher's Directive 2005/71/EC.<sup>419</sup>

Ireland is not part of the Schengen Area. In accordance with Council Decision 2002/192/EC,<sup>420</sup> Ireland requested to participate in certain aspects of the Schengen acquis, mostly related to police cooperation. Ireland participates in certain Schengen building measures in relation to irregular migration, including Council Directive 2004/82/EC on the obligation of carriers to communicate passenger data,<sup>421</sup> Council Directive 2002/90/EC on facilitation of unauthorised entry,<sup>422</sup> and Regulation (EU) 2019/1240 on the creation of a European network of immigration liaison officers.<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> *European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018*, S.I. No. 230 of 2018. The European Commission in July 2016 launched proposals to replace the asylum qualifications and procedures directives with regulations and to further recast the Reception Conditions Directive.

<sup>415</sup> Regulation (EU) No. 604/2013 (Dublin III Regulation) lays down the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person.

<sup>416</sup> *European Union (Dublin System) Regulations 2014*, S.I. No. 525 of 2014.

<sup>417</sup> *European Union (Dublin System) (Amendment) Regulations 2016*, S.I. No. 140 of 2016.

<sup>418</sup> *European Union (Dublin System) Regulations 2018*, S.I. No. 62 of 2018.

<sup>419</sup> Council Directive 2005/71/EC of 12 October 2005 on a specific procedure for admitting third-country nationals for the purposes of scientific research.

<sup>420</sup> Council Decision 2002/192/EC of 28 February 2002 concerning Ireland's request to take part in some of the provisions of the Schengen acquis.

<sup>421</sup> Council Directive 2004/82/EC of 29 April 2004 on the obligation of carriers to communicate passenger data. This Directive was transposed into Irish law via the *European Communities (Communication of Passenger Data) Regulations 2011*, S.I. No. 597 of 2011.

<sup>422</sup> Council Directive 2002/90/EC of 28 November 2002 defining the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and residence. The General Scheme of the *Criminal Justice (Smuggling of Persons) Act 2021* implemented this Directive into Irish law.

<sup>423</sup> Regulation (EU) 2019/1240 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the creation of a European network of immigration liaison officers.

The Irish Government approved the participation of Ireland (opt-in) to the Regulation on the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) in 2022. The European Commission confirmed Ireland's participation in July 2023.

The EU Migration and Asylum Pact (the Pact) is a new framework made up of various pieces of EU legislation that entered into force in June 2024.<sup>424</sup> Ireland is opting in to seven of the legislative measures, namely:

- Reception Conditions Directive 2024/1346
- Qualification Regulation 2024/1347
- Asylum Procedure Regulation 2024/1348
- Resettlement Regulation 2024/1350
- Asylum and Migration Management Regulation 2024/1351
- Eurodac Regulation 2024/1358
- Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation 2024/1359.<sup>425</sup>

## A.2.2 Irish immigration and asylum legislation

This section sets out the legislative framework as applicable on 31 December 2023.

Following a sharp rise in immigration flows from the mid-1990s,<sup>426</sup> several pieces of legislation were introduced to deal with immigration and asylum issues in Ireland. The *Illegal Immigrants (Trafficking) Act 2000*<sup>427</sup> and the *Immigration Acts 1999, 2003 and 2004*, as amended, provide the basis for domestic immigration law in Ireland, in addition to pre-existing legislation such as the *Aliens Act 1935* (and Orders made under that Act). The *Criminal Justice (Smuggling of Persons) Act 2021*<sup>428</sup> replaces most aspects of the *Illegal Immigrants (Trafficking) Act 2000*. The *Employment Permits Act 2006* (as amended) and secondary legislation made under it set out the legal framework for the employment permits schemes. The *Employment Permits Regulations 2017* set down the different classes of employment permit that may be

<sup>424</sup> European Commission (2024). 'Pact on migration and asylum', [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/pact-migration-and-asylum\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/pact-migration-and-asylum_en).

<sup>425</sup> See [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/ireland-will-participate-eu-pact-migration-and-asylum-2024-07-31\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/ireland-will-participate-eu-pact-migration-and-asylum-2024-07-31_en).

<sup>426</sup> Prior to the mid-1990s, immigration and asylum legislation in Ireland was covered by such instruments as the Hope Hanlon procedure and the *Aliens Act 1935* (and Orders made under that Act), together with the relevant EU free movement regulations and directives, including: Regulation (EEC) No. 1612/68 and repealing Directives 64/221/EEC on freedom of movement for workers within the Community; 68/360/EEC on the abolition of restrictions on movement and residence within the Community for workers of Member States and their families; 72/194/EEC on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States; 73/148/EEC on the abolition of restrictions on movement and residence within the Community for nationals of Member States with regard to establishment and the provision of services; 75/34/EEC concerning the right of nationals of a Member State to remain in the territory of another Member State after having pursued therein an activity in a self-employed capacity; 90/364/EEC on the right of residence; 90/365/EEC on the right of residence for employees and self-employed persons who have ceased their occupational activity; and 93/96/EEC on the right of residence for students.

<sup>427</sup> Certain aspects of the *Illegal Immigrants (Trafficking) Act 2000* have been amended by the *Criminal Justice (Smuggling of Persons) Act 2021*.

<sup>428</sup> *Criminal Justice (Smuggling of Persons) Act 2021*, No. 42 of 2021.

granted and the qualifying criteria, application process, fees, review process with regard to decisions taken, and other matters for these permits.<sup>429</sup> The *International Protection Act 2015* (as amended) sets out the domestic legal framework regarding applications for international protection and replaces the *Refugee Act 1996* (as amended),<sup>430</sup> and the *European Communities (Subsidiary Protection) Regulations 2013* (as amended). The *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956*, as amended, is the statute governing Irish citizenship.<sup>431</sup>

Since 31 December 2016, the single application procedure for international protection claims under the *International Protection Act 2015* has entered operation. Under the 2015 Act, applications for refugee status, subsidiary protection and permission to remain are assessed as part of a single procedure.

Under section 47(1) of the *International Protection Act 2015*, the Minister is bound to accept a positive recommendation of refugee status of the international protection officer or a decision to grant refugee status in relation to an appeal heard by IPAT, but retains a discretion not to grant refugee status to a refugee on grounds of danger to the security of the State or to the community of the State where the refugee has been convicted of a particularly serious crime.<sup>432</sup> The Minister shall refuse a refugee declaration where an international protection officer has recommended that the applicant be refused refugee status but be granted subsidiary protection status, and has not appealed the decision not to grant refugee status. The Minister is also bound by a recommendation or decision on appeal in relation to subsidiary protection status, under section 47(4) of the Act. The Minister shall refuse both refugee status and subsidiary protection status where the recommendation is that the applicant be refused both statuses and the applicant has not appealed the recommendation or when IPAT upholds the recommendation not to grant either status. The Minister also refuses both refugee and subsidiary protection status in circumstances where appeals are withdrawn or deemed to be withdrawn.

Under section 49 of the *International Protection Act 2015*, the Minister is bound to consider whether or not to grant permission to remain to an unsuccessful applicant for international protection. Information given by the applicant in the original application for international protection, including at interview, as well as any additional information that the applicant is invited to provide, is taken into account.

### A.2.3 Trafficking legislation

The *Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008* creates offences related to trafficking in persons for the purposes of sexual or labour exploitation, or for the removal of their

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<sup>429</sup> Employment Permits Regulations 2017 S.I. No. 95/2017.

<sup>430</sup> The *Refugee Act 1996* has now been repealed.

<sup>431</sup> The 1956 Act has been amended by the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Acts 1986, 1994, 2001* and *2004*.

<sup>432</sup> Section 47(3), *International Protection Act 2015*.



organs, and criminalises the selling or purchasing of human beings. The Act gave effect to the EU Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA on combating trafficking in human beings. The Act criminalises the trafficking of children into, through or out of the State, and amends the *Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998* to bring the offence of trafficking into line with other new trafficking offences. It also criminalises trafficking in adults.

The *Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) (Amendment) Act 2013* was introduced to give effect to certain criminal law provisions of Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, which replaced Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA on combating trafficking in human beings.

The 2013 Act introduced a number of changes in substantive criminal law and criminal procedure in relation to trafficking offences. The Act replaced and expanded the original definition of exploitation in the 2008 Act to cover trafficking for the purposes of forced begging. It incorporates the definition of begging set out in the *Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 2011*. The 2013 Act focuses on the phenomenon of begging as a form of forced labour. For this purpose, it incorporates the definition of forced labour in the *International Labour Organisation Convention No. 29 on Forced Labour* into the definition of exploitation. Other exploitative activities are also covered, such as trafficking for the purposes of criminal activities.

The *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017* makes it an offence for a person to pay to engage in sexual activity with a prostitute or a trafficked person, regardless of nationality. The person providing the sexual service is not subject to an offence. Part 4 (section 27) of the Act contains a specific reporting requirement on the implementation of the Act within three years, including in respect of the number of arrests and convictions and an assessment of the impact of the legislation on the safety and wellbeing of persons who engage in sexual activity for payment.

The *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Act 2019* amends the *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Act 2017* in relation to sentencing for subsequent offences and in relation to the schedule of offences pursuant to section 58 of the *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017*. Section 4 of this Act inserts a new section 58 into the *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017* in relation to sentencing for repeat sexual offenders.

The *European Union (Prevention and Combating of Human Trafficking) (National Rapporteur) Regulations 2020* designate IHREC as Ireland's Independent National Rapporteur on the Trafficking of Human Beings.<sup>433</sup> As National Rapporteur, the

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<sup>433</sup> *European Union (Prevention and Combating of Human Trafficking) (National Rapporteur) Regulations 2020*, S.I. No. 432 of 2020.

Commission monitors Ireland's performance against the State's international obligations under the EU's Anti-Trafficking Directive, as well as the Council of Europe's Convention on Action against Trafficking 2005 and the *Palermo Protocol to the UN Convention against Organised Crime 2000*.<sup>434</sup>

The *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Act 2024* provides for a mechanism for the identification of victims and presumed victims of human trafficking (the National Referral Mechanism) and the combating of the trafficking of persons. It also provides for the support of provision of assistance victims and provides for the establishment of a body known as the operational committee to oversee the National Referral Mechanism.

#### A.2.4 Sexual and gender-based violence

The *Criminal Law (Extraterritorial Jurisdiction) Act 2019*<sup>435</sup> gives effect to certain aspects of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, and extends the criminal law of the State to certain conduct engaged in outside the State. Sections 1 and 3 provide for extraterritorial jurisdiction over certain 'relevant offences' including murder, manslaughter, rape and sexual assault offences, under section 3, 4, 5, 9 or 10 of the *Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997* in accordance with Article 44 of the Istanbul Convention. Section 4 amends the *Criminal Justice (Mutual Assistance) Act 2008* to provide for the application of the provisions of that Act to the Istanbul Convention. Following this legislation, Ireland ratified the Istanbul Convention on 8 March 2019.

#### A.2.5 Free movement

The *European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) (No. 2) Regulations 2006*<sup>436</sup> were the principal Regulations transposing EU Directive 2004/38/EC<sup>437</sup> on free movement of persons.<sup>438</sup> These were subsequently amended by the *European Communities (Free Movement) (Amendment) Regulations 2008*,<sup>439</sup> following the *Metock*<sup>440</sup> judgment of the European Court of Justice. The *European Community (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2015*,<sup>441</sup> which came into operation on 1 February

<sup>434</sup> IHREC (2020). *Annual report 2020*.

<sup>435</sup> Act No. 6 of 2019.

<sup>436</sup> *European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) (No. 2) Regulations 2006*, S.I. No. 656 of 2006.

<sup>437</sup> Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States amending Regulation (EEC) No 1612/68 and repealing Directives 64/221/EEC, 68/360/EEC, 72/194/EEC, 73/148/EEC, 75/34/EEC, 75/35/EEC, 90/364/EEC, 90/365/EEC and 93/96/EEC.

<sup>438</sup> These Regulations replaced the *European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2006*, S.I. No. 226 of 2006, consequent upon the enlargement of the EU on 1 January 2007.

<sup>439</sup> *European Communities (Free Movement) (Amendment) Regulations 2008*, S.I. No. 310 of 2008.

<sup>440</sup> Case C-127/08 *Metock and Ors vs Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform*. For case summary see: [www.emn.ie](http://www.emn.ie).

<sup>441</sup> *European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2015*, S.I. No. 548 of 2015.

2016, give further effect to EU Directive 2004/38/EC and revoke the 2006 Regulations, subject to transitional provisions.

The *European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) (Citizens Rights) Regulations 2020* entered operation on 31 December 2020. These Regulations give effect to the provisions on residence and residence documents in Part Two (Citizens' Rights) of the Withdrawal Agreement between the United Kingdom (UK) and the EU. The Regulations make provision for the application, as appropriate, of the *European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2015* (S.I. No. 548 of 2015) to UK nationals and their family members to whom Part Two of the Withdrawal Agreement applies and make provision for the issue of residence documents and permanent residence documents to such persons.<sup>442</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> *European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) (Citizens' Rights) Regulations 2020*, S.I. No. 728 of 2020.

## ANNEX B

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### European Migration Network publications in 2023

#### Reports

- Annual report on migration and asylum 2022: Synthesis report (5 July)
- Integration of applicants for international protection in the labour market: EMN synthesis report (9 October).

#### Informs

- Organising flexible housing in the context of international protection (20 January)
- Prospects for displaced persons in non-EU first reception and transit centres (27 February)
- Accompanied children's right to be heard in international protection procedures (21 April)
- Statelessness in the European Union, Norway and Georgia (26 April)
- Displacement and migration related to disasters, climate change and environmental degradation (8 May)
- Resettlement, humanitarian admission and sponsorship schemes (15 June)
- Annual report on migration and asylum 2022 (5 July)
- Integration of applicants for international protection in the labour market (5 October).

#### Others

- EMN quarterly: October to December 2022, Issue 41 (15 March)
- EMN quarterly: January to March 2023, Issue 42 (3 August)
- EMN country factsheet: Ireland 2023 (5 July 2023).

#### EMN Ireland National Contact Point publications

- Michal Polakowski and Emily Cunniffe (2023). Labour market integration of international protection applicants in Ireland.
- Keire Murphy and Anne Sheridan (2023). Annual report on migration and asylum 2022: Ireland.



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