

# Waterford

## Migrant Integration Strategy

### 2021-2024



WELCOME



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



Waterford  
Public  
Participation  
Network





UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN  
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND



**MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT MICHAEL D. HIGGINS**

I greatly welcome the publication of this Integration Strategy for Migrants and Migrant Communities in Waterford.

It is inspiring to read such a strong statement of the generous will that exists amongst our citizens to welcome those who come to our shores in search of a better future. The implementation of this strategy will ensure that immigrants to Waterford will be accepted and enabled to become full participants in the life of Waterford City and County.

By establishing a strong connection to our island and becoming integral parts of our shared communities, they will also become significant contributors to the ongoing story of our nation. I hope that together we can embrace our new-found neighbours with the most generous of Irish hospitality. We must truly live up to our reputation as the island of a thousand welcomes.

I would like to thank all those who have given of their time and expertise to the preparation of this important strategy. I wish you every success as you continue with your important work.

Michael D. Higgins  
Uachtarán na hÉireann  
President of Ireland



Waterford is a very welcoming place and is also an increasingly diverse county and city in respect of ethnicity, nationality, language and culture. Therefore, on behalf of Waterford City & County Council and Waterford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), I very much welcome the publication of the **Waterford Migrant Integration Strategy 2021-2024**.

I am heartened to note from the Strategy that among migrants, the most frequently used words to describe Waterford are friendly, peace, quiet, home, beauty and welcome.

Waterford City & County Council is committed to developing a city and county with a society in which migrants have the opportunities to integrate and to actively engage in all facets of Waterford life. We hope that they enjoy the benefits of living here and can contribute meaningfully to the economy, society and civic life of Waterford.

One of the key objectives of the Waterford Local Economic & Community Plan is “*stronger participation of all Waterford communities*” and this Strategy goes a long way towards enabling this objective to be achieved.

Waterford LCDC has been instrumental in making this Strategy a reality and I commend all the members and their respective organisations for their commitment to this initiative and ask that all our partner organisations work with us in implementing the necessary strategic actions to enable the ambitious targets set out in this Strategy to be achieved. Collaborative and partnership approaches will be essential to the success of this Strategy.

I wish to pledge the Council’s support for the Migrant Forum and wish them every success in their important work and thank them for their input into the formulation of this Strategy.

In a sense our work is only beginning as we must all strive to ensure that this ambitious Strategy is delivered on.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge and thank the members of the Steering Group for their work on developing this Strategy and I also wish to thank Breandán O Caoimh and Margaret Ward for facilitating the development of such an important piece of work.

Gach rath ar an obair.

Damien Geoghegan

Mayor of Waterford City & County and Chair of Waterford LCDC

## Summary Document

This document provides a summary of the Waterford Migrant Integration Strategy, which has been developed by Waterford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). The strategy has been fully endorsed by Waterford City and County Council, and is supported by statutory bodies and several local organisations.

### Context

Over the past twenty years, Waterford has, like the rest of Ireland, become more diverse in respect of ethnicity, nationality, language and culture. This increased diversity brings opportunities, challenges and responsibilities. Integration involves harnessing the opportunities and overcoming the challenges. It is defined, in current Irish policy, as follows:

‘the ability to participate to the extent that a person needs and wishes in all of the major components of society, without having to relinquish his or her own cultural identity’.

Integration recognises the rights of migrants to give expression to their own culture in a manner that does not conflict with the basic values of the European Union and Irish society, as reflected in Ireland’s constitution and laws.

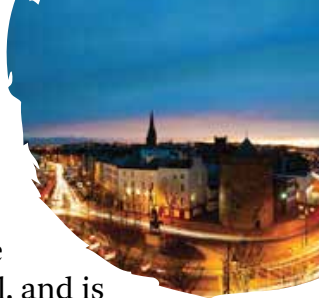
Societies change as a consequence of migration. Life changes for migrants, and the receiving / host society is also affected. Therefore, integration is a two-way process. It involves both migrants and the host society. An inclusive approach – involving migrants and Irish people - ensures that the benefits of greater diversity can be more fully realised.

In 2017, the Irish Government published a national integration strategy (The Migrant Integration Strategy – a Blueprint for the Future). In addition to enabling, encouraging and guiding local government, public bodies and the wider civil society, government policy also places particular obligations on public bodies and those in receipt of public funds. These obligations are set out in the 2014 Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) Act, which requires agencies to:

- eliminate discrimination;
- promote equality of opportunity and treatment for staff and persons to whom it provides services; and
- protect the human rights of staff and services users.

Locally, Waterford City and County Council has established a dedicated steering group to oversee this strategy. This group brings together representatives from public bodies, service providers, community organisations and the Waterford Migrant Integration Forum. Therefore, a diverse range of stakeholders has been involved in putting this strategy together, and all will be involved in delivering it – collectively and with others - over the coming four years. This integration strategy for Waterford City and County (2021 – 2024) takes a broad and inclusive approach, as it encompasses the following:

- Migrants;
- Refugees;
- Asylum seekers and persons in direct provision;
- Second-generation Irish; and
- Persons of dual nationality.





## **Aim and Rationale**

This strategy offers a supportive framework for the integration and inclusion of all migrant communities in Waterford City and County. It aims to support the integration of migrants in all facets of life in our city and county; it encompasses strategic actions that relate to all aspects of life, including the economy, civic life, public administration, services, community development, sport, the arts and recreation.

Migrants make significant contributions to the local, regional and national economies; they increase the pool of skills in our labour market, and they fill vital positions in several sectors, most notably in our health service and the hospitality industry. Migrants have brought new ideas and energies to communities; they have established businesses, particularly in our town centres, and they are among the most active, creative and enthusiastic members of community arts and music groups. Migrants have also made us more aware of Irish culture and heritage, including our own emigration experiences, and they are embracing Irish ways – while hopefully, holding on to their own culture and traditions.

While there are many ‘success stories’, and several people who have migrated to Ireland / Waterford have happy and full lives here, others face challenges. For migrants, it can be difficult to access information, make friends, get jobs and join community groups. Language and cultural obstacles exist. Dealing with systems and processes, in Ireland, can be confusing and time-consuming. There are also attitudinal and institutional barriers, and prejudice, discrimination and racism can prevent migrants from realising their potential. Therefore, integration does not simply happen organically. Integration requires strategic efforts and inputs. This strategy provides guidance and direction in those regards.

## **The evidence base**

This integration strategy is the product of collaborative working, extensive consultation and objective research. It has been informed by extensive and meaningful engagements and consultations with migrant communities, service providers – statutory and non-statutory - and other interested parties. The research underpinning this strategy is based on a mixed-methods approach – involving references to policy and literature, baseline data collection, questionnaire surveys (provided in six languages), one-to-one interviews with migrants and other stakeholders, focus groups, workshops and public meetings. The inclusion of a wide range of stakeholders recognises that integration is a multi-directional process – involving migrants and the so-called ‘host society’.

The research reveals that:

- After Irish and UK nationals, the most numerous nationals in Waterford are Polish and Lithuanian;
- The most rapid increases (since 2011) are in the number of migrants coming from Romania, Croatia, Brazil and the Middle East;
- There are approximately 400 persons living in direct provision centres in Waterford, many of whom are fleeing war, conflict and / or persecution;
- Over 1,700 people living in Waterford do not speak English well or at all;
- Despite their qualifications, migrants are more likely (than are Irish people) to be in unskilled and manual employment;
- Migrants are more likely (than are Irish people) to live in private rental accommodation;
- There are some notable geographical concentrations of migrants – particularly in city centre neighbourhoods; and
- Areas of higher socio-economic deprivation have larger proportions of migrant populations than is the case across Waterford City and County.

Consultations (including surveys and workshops) with migrants and with the host society (Irish

people) reveal that:

- Migrant experiences vary - based on people's cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and some population cohorts are more vulnerable, than are others, to exclusion and exploitation – bespoke approaches are required to promote integration;
- There is diversity within and across migrant populations, and integration strategies need to promote collaboration across all cultures and identities;
- Schools, libraries and community / voluntary organisations are very positively perceived as enablers of integration, and there is much to build on locally; and
- Frontline staff / volunteers among service providers have a particularly important role to play in promoting integration.

Among migrants, the most frequently used words to describe Waterford are friendly, peace, quiet, home, beauty and welcome.

Stakeholders in Waterford concur on the importance of building on the positives and many good practices that already pertain locally in respect of integration. At the same time, they emphasise the need to avoid any complacency, and they note the need for increased and sustained government investment in services, development projects and outreach activities.

### **Delivering the strategy**

This strategy is ambitious; it advances forty-three recommendations. The ambition is grounded in realism, and the strategy harnesses the goodwill, commitment and expertise that are evident locally. The recommendations (strategic actions) are inter-connected and mutually re-enforcing.

The strategic actions are based on the following core priorities, namely:

- improving migrants' access to reliable, accurate and timely information about public and community-based services and opportunities;
- development of the Waterford Migrant Integration Forum, and other structures that enhance the ability of migrants to play an active role in civil society;
- enhancing migrants' fluency in the English (and Irish) language, as part of the process of promoting their advancement in the labour market, social networks and decision-making bodies;
- enabling migrants' to tell their stories as part of a wider celebration of the contributions – historical, contemporary and potential – to Waterford's economy, heritage and society; and
- engaging greater numbers of Irish people in promoting integration and tackling all forms of intolerance, prejudice and racism.

Stakeholders advocate a human rights-based approach and giving effect to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. The effectiveness of this strategy is also contingent on:

- Systematically listening to and involving migrant communities;
- Meeting the specific needs of women and children (gender- and child-proofing); and
- Fully involving Irish people.

Delivering this strategy will require civil leadership, investment and commitment. As integration is multi-faceted, all agencies, organisations and communities have roles to play. This strategy is not the preserve of any single agency. It is shared by everybody, and all can, and should, contribute to it.

The strategic actions are organised in respect of nine themes, as presented in the following table.





## Waterford Migrant Integration Strategy (2021 – 2024)

Themes	Strategic Actions
<p>1. Access to Public Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Develop a ‘Welcome to Waterford / Fáilte go Phort Láirge’ Hub – as a focal point and a source of streamlined and coordinated information – a bright, lively, vibrant, creative, open, inclusive, diverse, inter-cultural and multi-lingual space.</li> <li>b. Compile an online directory of public services and social inclusion supports.</li> <li>c. Deliver a systematic training programme to all agency personnel – to better understand cultural backgrounds and to be more sensitive in identifying and responding to vulnerabilities. Training needs to systematically cover obligations and best practices in respect of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) Act.</li> <li>d. Undertake a campaign to inform migrants about their rights, particularly in relation to employment and social welfare / social insurance.</li> <li>e. Develop a ‘Welcome to Waterford / Fáilte go Phort Láirge’ online directory and app, available in multiple languages, and providing information on opportunities and mechanisms for social engagement and interaction.</li> <li>f. Build on and invest in the pre-existing information channels and those that are favourably perceived among migrants, particularly libraries, schools / colleges and religious organisations, in disseminating information.</li> </ul>
<p>2. Education and Lifelong Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Inform all education providers about ‘yellow flag status’ (recognition of integration / diversity), and actively encourage them to apply for it.</li> <li>b. Invest in additional supports to the Education and Training Board and other providers to ensure the provision and expansion of English-language classes.</li> <li>c. Work with the Department of Education and Skills to bring about structural changes in the Irish education system, so that it is more aligned with integration objectives.</li> <li>d. Equip schools with the resources to provide information material in multiple languages, to better engage parents in supporting their children’s education.</li> <li>e. Run an annual competition of the ‘most inter-cultural project’ in education.</li> <li>f. Support schools and early-learning &amp; care and school-aged childcare services to promote integration, and encourage greater diversity in the composition of school staff and parents’ associations.</li> <li>g. Support all schools, and in particular second-level schools, to challenge and eradicate all forms of bullying or harassment on the basis of ethnicity / nationality / creed / heritage / cultural background or identity.</li> <li>h. Equip schools to provide translation / interpretation services at public information events, e.g., open nights (for first year students entering second-level education).</li> </ul>
<p>3. Employment and Pathways to Work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Achieve the commitment in the national integration strategy to increase the number of persons from an immigrant background working at all levels in the civil service and wider public service, particularly in frontline positions.</li> <li>b. Support employers and workplaces in being more inclusive and supportive of migrant workers and of their career progression.</li> <li>c. Include an ‘integration’ category in the annual Waterford business awards, and incentivise businesses and employers to foster inter-culturalism in the workplace.</li> <li>d. Support regional events that aim to promote entrepreneurship and innovation – in collaboration with local enterprise offices and local development companies across the South-East Region.</li> <li>e. Publicise and support the awareness-raising events convened by the trade unions, and provide visible and tangible support for their engagements to ensure migrants are fully integrated into the workforce.</li> <li>f. Work with national bodies to ensure transitional arrangements that are conducive to allowing migrants, and in particular those exiting direct provision and with refugee status to access the labour market.</li> </ul>





Themes	Strategic Actions
<p>3. Employment and Pathways to Work</p> <p>4. Health</p>	<p>g. Undertake a skills audit among migrants, and disseminate the results, as part of the awareness-raising and two-way processes that are integral to integration.</p> <p>a. Further consolidate the Health Hub as a provider of information and a promoter of community-based and preventive health interventions and supports.</p> <p>b. Mainstream the best practices associated with the Roma Health Advocacy Project.</p> <p>c. Ensure that migrants are better informed and equipped to access GP services, and ensure that GPs are more fully aware of migrants' needs and of the supports that are available from the HSE.</p>
<p>5. Integration in the Community and Social Inclusion</p>	<p>a. Engage with all women's groups / organisations across Waterford City and County to make them more aware of their roles and potential in promoting integration, and incentivise them to be more inclusive and ethnically diverse.</p> <p>b. Add extra weighting to the promotion of integration when assessing community and voluntary organisations for funding and / or awards.</p> <p>c. Further develop the Waterford Integration Forum by resourcing it to employ a development officer and compile its own strategic plan. The Forum (including its staff person) needs to be multilingual (in as far as is practical) and to make concerted efforts to include persons from all cultural, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.</p> <p>d. Utilise the Integration Forum as a conduit for information dissemination and as a platform for migrants' engagement in community / society.</p> <p>e. Promote stronger linkages between the Migrant Integration Forum and the Public Participation Network (PPN).</p> <p>f. Extend the services that are currently available to resettled refugees and asylum seekers who are granted refugee status and / or work permits and to the Roma population.</p> <p>g. Involve family resource centres and community development projects, to a greater extent, in promoting the Integration Forum, and in ensuring its inclusion of, and appeal to, all migrant communities.</p> <p>h. Ensure that approaches to planning and the provision of housing avoid any degree of segregation or ghettoization.</p> <p>i. Equip the City and County Council with the resources and means to ensure that tenants in the private rental market, who are in receipt of housing assistance payments, live in comfortable accommodation.</p>
<p>6. Political and Civic participation</p>	<p>a. Work with Waterford Institute of Technology (staff and students) to ensure that migrants and overseas students are more informed about the operation of Ireland's political system and the avenues through which citizens can have a voice in decision-making.</p> <p>b. Provide targeted supports for those coming out of direct provision and from countries that lack democratic structures and ensure they are informed about Irish and EU citizenship rights and responsibilities. Such interventions need to be particularly supportive of women.</p>
<p>7. Promoting Intercultural Awareness and Combating Racism and Xenophobia</p>	<p>a. Work with Waterford Institute of Technology (staff and students) to ensure that migrants and overseas students are more informed about the operation of Ireland's political system and the avenues through which citizens can have a voice in decision-making.</p> <p>b. Provide targeted supports for those coming out of direct provision and from countries that lack democratic structures and ensure they are informed about Irish and EU citizenship rights and responsibilities. Such interventions need to be particularly supportive of women.</p>



Themes	Strategic Actions
8. Volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Build on the LEADER-supported community-based welcoming programme that took place in Lismore, and mainstream its best elements across communities.</li> <li>b. Provide systematic training in inter-culturalism for all community and voluntary groups, especially residents' associations.</li> <li>c. Support the work of those community-based and voluntary organisations that are active in engaging with migrant communities.</li> </ul>
9. Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Work with the Department of Justice and Equality to ensure that systems for police / garda clearance work effectively in the best interest of child protection and enabling increased migrant participation in sporting organisations – in paid and voluntary capacities.</li> <li>b. Encourage sporting organisations to recruit coaches from a range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds.</li> <li>c. Organise / host an inter-cultural sporting exhibition.</li> </ul>



*Cllr Declan Doocey, Mayor Waterford City and County, Minister David Stanton, TD and Senator Grace O'Sullivan along with members of the Migrant Integration Forum at the launch of the Forum on 4th February 2019.*