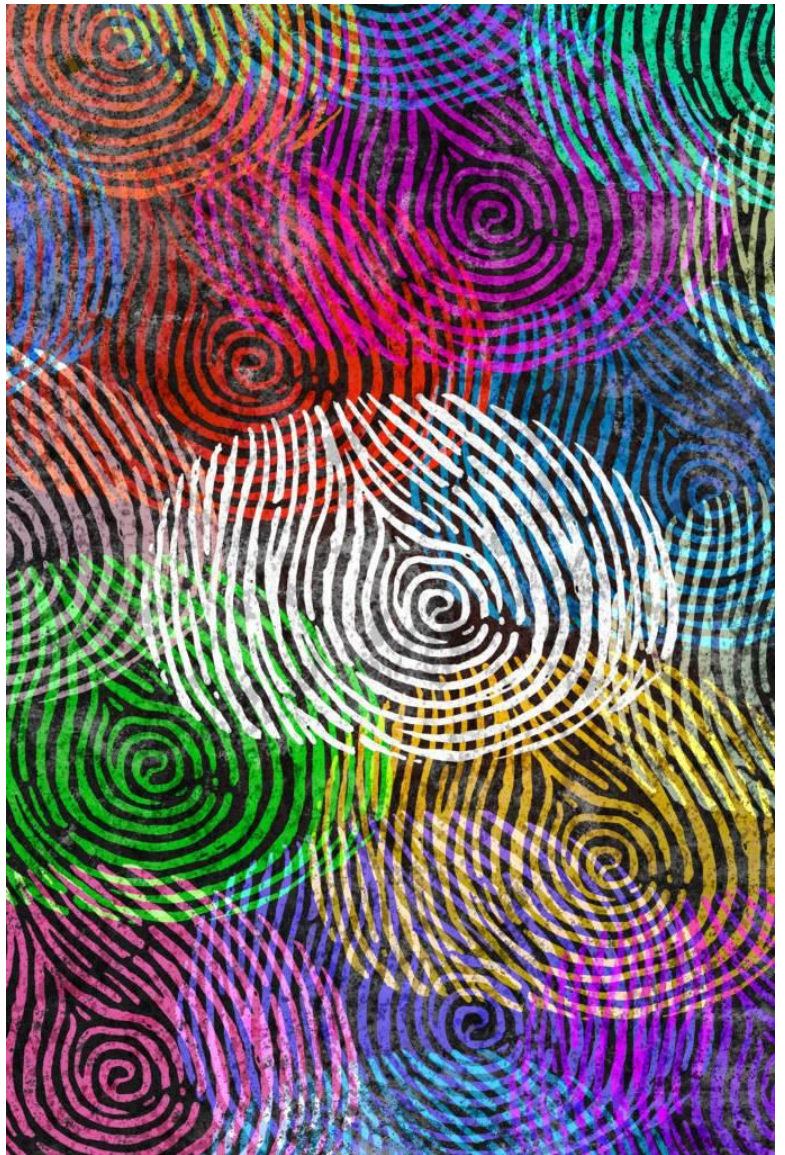


Towards an Inclusion Strategy for members of Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in County Donegal



A CONSULTATION PROCESS FACILITATED BY DONEGAL INTERCULTURAL PLATFORM 2020

On behalf of

Donegal County Council

September 2020

Acronyms

Explanation of some of the acronyms used in this report

BIC	Building Intercultural Communities
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CDP	Community Development Project
CERD	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CWI	Community Work Ireland
DCC	Donegal County Council
DIP	Donegal Intercultural Platform
DP	Direct Provision
DITI	Donegal Intercultural Training Initiative
DLDC	Donegal Local Development CLG
DTP	Donegal Travellers Project
DRRP	Donegal Refugee Resettlement Project
ENAR	European Network Against Racism .(became INAR Dec. 2020)
ETB	Education and Training Board
EU	European Union
ICofI	Immigrant Council of Ireland
IDP	Inishowen Development Partnership
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
LDC	Local Development Companies
LYIT	Letterkenny Institute of Technology
MRCI	Migrants Rights Centre Ireland
NMIS	National Migrant Integration Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RP	Resettlement Programme
ROP	Roma Outreach Project (DTP)
SEUPB	Special EU Programmes Body
PPN	Public Participation Network
TUSLA	The Child and Family Support Agency
UN	United Nations

Introduction

A Blueprint for the Future

The National Migrant Integration Strategy was published on the 7th of February, 2017 and set out the Government's approach to the issue of migrant integration for the period from 2017 to 2020. It envisaged a whole-of-Government approach involving actions by all Departments. It is targeted at all migrants, including refugees, who are legally residing in the State. It also encompasses those who have become naturalised Irish citizens but who were born outside Ireland.



Vision

The Strategy sets as its vision that migrants are facilitated to play a full role in Irish society, that integration is a core principle of Irish life and that Irish society and institutions work together to promote integration. Integration is understood to be a two-way process that involves action by migrants as well as by Irish society.

Actions

The Strategy contains 76 actions under a variety of themes including citizenship and residency, access to public services and social inclusion, education, employment and pathways to work, health, integration in the community, political participation, promoting intercultural awareness and combating racism and xenophobia, volunteering and sport. The 76 actions are being delivered by Government departments, local authorities, public bodies, local communities, the business sector, sporting and arts organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations.

The 76 action covered specific the areas of responsibility for all departments of Government and also Local Authorities and the wider community. These areas included 8 General Actions; Access to citizenship and Long term residency (6 Actions); Access to Public Services and Social Inclusion (11 Actions); Education (12 Actions); Employment & Pathways to Work (10 Actions); Health (3 Actions);

Integration in the Community (7 Actions); Political participation (3 Actions); Promoting Intercultural Awareness and Combatting Racism and Xenophobia (11 Actions); Volunteering (1 Action); Sport (1 Actions); and finally Implementation and Follow-up (3 Actions).

Local Authorities

In addition to a national strategy, there were clear responsibilities outlined for the Local authorities – these included ensuring wider participation of Migrants and members of Black and Minority Ethnic Communities on the Public Participation Networks (PPNs) and the Joint Policing Committee, and to develop a local implementation plan for Migrant Integration at Local Authority Level. This consultation document is a contribution to the development of this county-level plan.

This consultation process

The Donegal Intercultural Platform made a successful bid to undertake a consultation process that would have three sources: a. the extensive local consultations and actions that were on-going within the projects and programmes of the Platform including the Building Intercultural Communities Project – a PEACE IV funded initiative in collaboration with the lead partner – Donegal Travellers Project (2018-2020), the Intercultural Arts Research Project (2018-2019) and the Healthy Ireland Intercultural Health Priorities consultation on behalf of Donegal LCDC (2018). b. The opinions and concerns of members of Black and Minority Ethnic communities in the county. Also through engagement with faith groups, specialist support organisations and others engaged in work with and within the BME communities in the county.

Integration or Inclusion – Migrants or Minorities

The Intercultural Platform recognises that the state used the term INTEGRATION, as does the European Union, which is defined in the Migrant Integration Strategy (MIS) as follows...

“Integration is defined in current Irish policy as 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’.”

The Intercultural Platform would rather take a broader and more encompassing view of what we refer to as Inclusion. It is our contention that there is a substantial difference between integration and inclusion. It is important to know the difference if we want to create a more inclusive workplace and society.

Integration is the incorporation into society or an organisation of individuals of different groups. Which is the case when organisations create a dedicated group to address minorities, e.g. women, people with disabilities, LGBTQI group, etc.

Inclusion means that a person with a disability, women, whoever, has the same rights, access and choices as everyone else in a community. Inclusion is a universal human right and recognises and respects difference and diversity – seeing an inclusive society as great than the sum of its various parts.

Furthermore, the term MIGRANTS refers more specifically to people born outside Ireland who have travelled here to live, work or study here. The World Health Organisation (WHO) says *“At the international level, there is no universally accepted definition of the term “migrant”. Migrants may remain in the home country or host country (“settlers”), move on to another country (“transit migrants”), or move back and forth between countries (“circular migrants” such as seasonal workers).*

The Migrant Inclusion Strategy says... *The Strategy is intended to cover EEA and non-EEA nationals, including economic migrants, refugees and those with legal status to remain in Ireland. They will have differing needs depending on their situation.*

We believe that the issues of exclusion, racism and discrimination also affect members of Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds who are not migrants – people of ethnic minority descent or heritage who were born in Ireland, people of African Descent who are Irish and Irish Travellers who are recognised as an indigenous ethnic minority so there are some issues and contradictions inherent within the current policy framework as is exists in Ireland and indeed within Europe.

Focus of this consultation

Given that there are differing interpretations and understandings of the terminology surrounding the issues of the inclusion of migrants and members of Black and Minority Ethnic communities we will take a broad and encompassing approach, speaking with representative groups and organisations

To achieve a meaningful consultation some time was taken to introduce the National Migrant Inclusion Strategy, its purpose, main actions, timeframes and which agencies and departments in the state have responsibility for implementation and review. To that end we used the following table to outline the strategy and help focus the discussions.

The Action Headings of the Migrant integration Strategy

1. General Actions			
	Action	Responsible Body	Timeframe
1	Integration issues will be mainstreamed in the work of all appropriate Government Departments and agencies and addressed in their Strategy Statements, Annual Reports and other documents. Government	Departments and Agencies	2017 - 2020
2	Government Departments and agencies will ensure appropriate, regular engagement with NGOs representing migrant groups.	Government Departments and Agencies	2017 - 2020
3	Drawing on existing resources to the extent possible, factual material will be made available to enable migrants to learn about Ireland, its history, culture and so on. This material will be in a suitable format and in a range of languages as appropriate.	Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration	2017 - 2020
4	Decisions on grants to community and sports organisations will include a criterion on promoting integration activities.	Government Departments and Agencies	2017 - 2020
5	Periodic evaluations measuring the outcomes of funding initiatives will be carried out.	Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration	2017 – 2020
6	The Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration will make funding available to local and national groups to carry out integration initiatives, including once-off initiatives, with particular emphasis on local and regional effects. Activities may include, for example, measures to increase mutual understanding between the host community and migrants, actions to introduce migrants to Irish society and enable them to adapt to it, or measures to encourage migrant participation in civil and cultural life.	Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration	2017 - 2020
7	The Department of Justice and Equality will use EU funding to support migrants to access the labour market and to promote integration activities.	Department of Justice and Equality	2017 - 2020
8	A working group will be established to identify and address data gaps.	Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration	2020 - 2017

2. Access to Citizenship/Long Term Residency			
	Action	Responsible Body	Timeframe
9	Statistics on applications for citizenship disaggregated by age, gender and nationality will be published annually	Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS)	Annually
10	The fees for naturalisation will be kept under regular review to ensure that costs are reasonable and do not deter applicants who are qualified	INIS	Annually
11	A statutory scheme for Long Term Residency will be introduced.	INIS	2017
12	The introduction of civics and language tests for those seeking citizenship will be examined	INIS	2017
13	Statistics on applications for Long-Term Residency will be published.	INIS	Annually
14	Arrangements to enable registration of non-EEA migrants aged under 16 years will be finalised as a matter of urgency.	INIS	2018

3. Access to Public Services and Social Inclusion			
	Action	Responsible Body	Timeframe
15	Information will be provided in language-appropriate formats and in a manner easily accessible by migrants	Government Departments and Agencies	2017 - 2020
16	Government Departments and State Agencies will ensure that staff are trained to inform migrants accurately of their entitlements.	Government Departments and Agencies	2017 - 2020
17	Initiatives will be undertaken aimed at increasing the number of migrant representatives in local authority fora, like Public Participation Networks (PPNs), and other representative fora.	Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government; Local Authorities	2017 - 2020
18	Mechanisms for providing adequate interpreting facilities will be explored in order to facilitate equality of access to services.	Government Departments and Agencies	2017 - 2020
19	The availability of interpreting will be prominently displayed in a range of languages in relevant public offices.	Government Departments and Agencies	Ongoing
20	Progress on reducing poverty and social exclusion among migrants will be monitored in line with the national social target for poverty reduction.	Department of Social Protection	2017 - 2020
21	Department of Social Protection (DSP) will continue to take measures to ensure that the habitual residence condition (HRC) legislation is applied correctly and consistently. These measures include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing and regularly updating guidelines for decision makers within DSP; • Publishing these guidelines on the website; • Provision of training in HRC for relevant decision makers; • Ongoing provision of advice to decision-makers, as needed. 	Department of Social Protection	2017 - 2020
22	The Migrant Consultative Forum will continue to offer the opportunity for NGOs whose primary focus is dealing with migrants, to engage on migrant-related aspects of social protection services on an ongoing basis over the lifetime of the Strategy.	Department of Social Protection	2017 - 2020
23	The Department of Social Protection will continue to provide up-to-date information and training to staff on entitlements for all clients in relation to its schemes and services. In line with core values of the Department, awareness and respect for equality and diversity (including relevant legislation) is an integral component of all training activity. Provision of generic training across the public service via the shared learning and development curriculum (currently being developed under Action 9 of the Civil Service Renewal Plan) will address specific provision of antiracism and cultural awareness training where a need is identified.	Department of Social Protection	2017 - 2020
24	The Department of Social Protection will continue to provide translation/interpretive/sign language services as required and the provision of information in alternative formats where feasible on request.	Department of Social Protection	2017 - 2020
25	Research will be undertaken to assess how mainstream services are meeting migrant needs.	Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration	2017 - 2018

4. Education			
	Action	Responsible Body	Timeframe
26	The Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 will be enacted.	Department of Education and Skills	2017
27	Proactive efforts will be made to attract migrants into teaching positions, including raising awareness of the Irish language aptitude test and adaptation period for primary teaching.	Department of Education and Skills	2017 - 2020
28	The extension of the Free Fees initiative for Third Level Education to the children of migrants will be explored.	Department of Education and Skills	2017 - 2018
29	The numbers of non-English speaking migrant children in schools will be monitored annually and details published.	Department of Education and Skills	Annually
30	Current school enrolment policies will be monitored over time to assess their effect on migrant students.	Department of Education and Skills	Annually
31	The effectiveness of training for teachers on managing diversity and tackling racism will be reviewed.	Department of Education and Skills	2018 – 2019
32	The provision of ESOL classes to cater for the language needs of adults from ethnic minorities will be reviewed following the development of ESOL policy guidelines.	Department of Education and Skills / Education and Training Boards	2018 - 2019
33	The adequacy of language supports in schools to cater for the language needs of children from ethnic minorities will be kept under review.	Department of Education and Skills	2017 - 2020
34	Schools will be encouraged to support migrant parents' participation in the school life of their children	Department of Education and Skills	Ongoing
35	The use of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages for recognition of English language proficiency will be extended so that people can assess their progress.	SOLAS and Training Providers	2017 – 2020
36	The fostering and development of positive attitudes towards diversity and celebrating difference will continue to form part of the school curriculum.	Department of Education and Skills	2017 - 2020
37	Follow-on ESOL programmes will be delivered to enable migrants to acquire more intensive language skills to assist their integration into the workplace.	Department of Education and Skills	2017 - 2020

5. Employment and Pathways to Work			
	Action	Responsible Body	Timeframe
38	The Central Statistics Office will continue to publish disaggregated data on unemployment.	Central Statistics Office	Quarterly
39	The Further Education and Training Authority (SOLAS) will through its funding and reporting requirements, require the Education and Training Boards to ensure that their Further Education and Training courses provision meet the specific needs of migrants e.g. language acquisition, knowledge of the Irish working environment, interview skills, c.v. preparation etc. This provision will be either directly on their principal courses or through part-time modular provision parallel to the learners' participation on their principal courses as appropriate.	SOLAS and Education and Training Boards	2017
40	Education or training programmes specifically catering for unemployed migrants whose language skills require development will contain a language component.	SOLAS and Education and Training Boards	2017 - 2020
41	Appropriate levels of quality engagement with migrants who are registered jobseekers will be ensured. The promotion of	Department of Social Protection	2017 - 2020

	the availability of employment services to ‘voluntary engagers’/‘walkin’ immigrants not on the Live Register, if such person is entitled to work here, in the new Pathways to Work strategy will be undertaken.		
42	An analysis will be undertaken to assess the extent to which the level of joblessness among jobseekers of African origin exceeds that of other groups and determine what action, if any, is required to address any evidence that people of African origin face higher barriers to exit unemployment.	Department of Social Protection	2017 - 2020
43	The Quality and Qualifications Ireland’s system for the recognition of vocational skills accredited in other countries will be promoted more widely.	Quality and Qualifications Ireland	2017 – 2020
44	Proactive outreach and support measures will be undertaken by all public sector employers to increase the number of persons from an immigrant background working at all levels in the civil service and wider public service. There will be a particular focus on increasing the numbers of people from immigrant backgrounds working in front-line services. This work will have regard to public service employment principles of merit and transparency, and to restrictions regarding non-EEA nationals working in the Irish Public Service.	Public Appointments Service	2017 – 2020
45	To make the Civil Service fully representative of Irish society we will aim to have 1% of the workforce from ethnic minorities and will - · put in place arrangements to identify the number of civil servants from ethnic minorities; · broaden our outreach in schools and ethnic communities to raise awareness, educate about the role of the Civil Service and showcase the career opportunities available; · review the composition of our applicant pool so that we can understand where applicants to the civil service come from and develop targeted measures to encourage those areas of society that are not applying.	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform	2017 - 2020
46	Further activities will be undertaken to raise awareness of State board opportunities among key groups within society that are currently under-represented on State boards, working with Departments and the relevant State bodies in this regard.	Public Appointments Service	2017 - 2020
47	Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) will continue to undertake targeted initiatives to engage with migrant prospective entrepreneurs in line with local need. The LEO Centre of Excellence in Enterprise Ireland will promote best practice activities in this area amongst all LEOs nationally.	Enterprise Ireland/Local Enterprise Offices	2017 - 2020

6. Health			
	Action	Responsible Body	Timeframe
48	A second National Intercultural Health Strategy will be developed by the end of Q2 2017.	Health Service Executive	2017
49	An appropriate model will be developed for the provision of interpreting services to users within the health area who are not proficient in English.	Health Service Executive	2017 - 2020
50	The recording of ethnicity as part of ethnic equality monitoring across the health service will be promoted as a means of identifying unique needs of migrants and developing interventions to address these needs.	Health Service Executive	2017 - 2020

7. Integration in the Community			
	Action	Responsible Body	Timeframe
51	A Communities Integration Fund will be developed to support actions by local communities throughout Ireland to promote the integration of migrants and refugees.	Department of Justice and Equality	2017 - 2020
52	Integration strategies will be updated.	Local Authorities	2017 - 2020
53	A Migrant Integration Forum will be established in every local authority area, ideally through existing Public Participation Network (PPN) structures, and will meet regularly.	Local Authorities	2017 - 2020
54	An Integration Network will be established where migrant groups can engage with the Government and public bodies on issues of concern and on barriers to integration.	Dublin City Council	2017
55	In carrying out the reform programme on youth work funding, there will be an added focus on ensuring that young people from ethnic or religious minorities, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have access to youth services in which they will feel safe and protected and which will assist and enhance their integration. The National Youth Council of Ireland through funding provided by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs will continue to promote implementation of the recently published toolkit "8 steps to Inclusive Youth Work" which is available to all youth workers. The toolkit is broken up into 8 easy-to-follow steps, to help youth workers to identify how good, inclusive practice is evident and measurable in their organisation's youth work	Department of Children and Youth Affairs	2017 – 2020
56	Encourage businesses to focus on integration	OPMI	2017 – 2018
57	Invite speakers to present on integration to existing business sector relationships/engagements	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation	2017 - 2020

8. Political participation			
	Action	Responsible Body	Timeframe
58	Migrants will be encouraged to participate in local and national politics to the extent that these areas are legally open to them	Political parties NGOs	2017 - 2020
59	Migrants will be supported and encouraged to register to vote and to exercise their franchise.	Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government	2017 - 2020
60	Multi-lingual materials on voter registration and on elections will be made accessible and available.	Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government; Local Authorities	2017 - 2020

9. Promoting Intercultural Awareness and Combating Racism and Xenophobia			
	Action	Responsible Body	Timeframe
61	Intercultural awareness training will be provided by all Government Departments and Agencies and it will be reviewed at intervals to ensure that it is adequate and up to	Government Departments and Agencies	2017 – 2020

	date. Front-line staff will receive on-going cultural awareness training appropriate to their role and operational requirements.		
62	Local Authorities will take action to have migrant representation on all Joint-Policing Committees.	Local Authorities	2017 - 2020
63	An Garda Síochána will continue to implement a victim-centred policy and good investigative practices in racial and other similar crimes to encourage victims to report offences in line with recommendations of the Garda Inspectorate in this regard.	An Garda Síochána	2017 – 2020
64	Local Authorities will develop and publish their policy on the early removal of racist graffiti in their respective areas.	Local Authorities	2017
65	The current legislation with regard to racially motivated crime will be reviewed with a view to strengthening the law against hate crime, including in the area of online hate speech.	Department of Justice and Equality	2017
66	The issue of the under-reporting of racially-motivated crime will continue to be addressed including through the development of greater contact with marginalised communities.	An Garda Síochána	2017 - 2020
67	Public offices will display information on how to make a complaint of racist behaviour by a member of staff or other customer.	Government Departments and Agencies	2017 - 2020
68	All relevant public sector bodies will explore additional ways of working in cooperation with communities affected by stigmatisation and develop appropriate relationships with minority communities to avoid the danger of external groups having negative influences on marginalised communities.	Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration An Garda Síochána	2017 - 2020
69	Arts and culture programmes and policy will assist in the promotion of the arts and culture of diverse communities across Ireland.	Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs	2017 – 2020
70	Schools outside the established education system will be encouraged to network with the aim of providing information on child protection and health and safety regulations to them and of developing relationships with them.	Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration	2017 - 2018
71	Measures to combat racism and xenophobia will feature among the actions funded by the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration.	Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration	2017 - 2020

10. Volunteering

	Action	Responsible Body	Timeframe
72	Volunteering will be promoted among the less well represented groups.	Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government	2017 - 2020

11. Sport

	Action	Responsible Body	Timeframe
72	The potential of sport in the integration of migrants will be further explored through encouraging active participation, volunteering and involvement in governance.	Sport Ireland / Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration	2017- 2020

12. Implementation and Follow-Up			
	Action	Responsible Body	Timeframe
74	To support the process of implementing recommendations arising from this review, a monitoring and coordination Committee will be established. This Committee will encompass a broad membership, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • representatives of each relevant Government Department; • representatives of the relevant State Agencies, including the Health Service Executive; • representatives of the NGO sector. 	Department of Justice and Equality	2017 – 2020
75	The integration plan implementation process will be strengthened through the collation, analysis and development, where necessary, of relevant indicators which can be used to monitor the integration process.	Government Departments and Agencies	2017 - 2020
76	Progress on the implementation of these actions will be reviewed at the end of 2018 and a report prepared for Government.	Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration	2018

Diversity in Donegal

In the last census held in 2016, persons born abroad accounted for 17.3 per cent of the population, up from 17 per cent in 2011. This included a large number of UK citizens, but the table opposite gives an indication of countries of origin.

Table 5.1 Place of birth of Irish residents from countries with largest increases, 2011 - 2016

Country	2011	2016	Actual change
Romania	17,995	28,702	10,707
Brazil	9,298	15,796	6,498
Spain	7,003	11,809	4,806
Pakistan	8,329	12,891	4,562
Croatia	980	5,202	4,222
Italy	7,146	10,913	3,767
India	17,856	20,969	3,113
Moldova	3,421	6,472	3,051
France	10,070	11,906	1,836
Portugal	2,246	3,866	1,620
Other	682,426	681,880	-546
Total	766,770	810,406	43,636

Donegal had the smallest proportion of non-Irish nationals (7.3%) in 2016 and over half of these were UK nationals with 5,860 persons

according to the CSO figures. This amounts to over 7,000 people, and anecdotal figures suggest that this population has grown since 2016. There are several contributory factors to the growth in diversity in the county, including the rise in employee numbers in several larger international companies like Pramerica (who draw staff from across the globe) and other large international employers like Radox and Optum, the continuing need to recruit medical staff for Letterkenny University Hospital from outside Ireland, the planned growth in the numbers foreign students attracted to LYIT for graduate and post-graduate programmes, the receiving of over 200 refugees under the terms of the Resettlement Programme, mainly from Syria and the establishment of a Emergency Temporary Reception facility for people seeking international protection.

Other factors like a slow growth in employment opportunities since the low levels of employment following the economic crisis of 2008-2010 and the relatively low cost of property to rent or buy compared with southern and eastern Ireland have all contributed to the growing diversity in the county. Furthermore the Local Economic and Community Plan for Donegal 2016-2022 states “11.3% (or 8,115 persons) of the population in County Donegal had a non Irish nationality. Above average rates (Greater than 11.5%) were recorded in 3 (Bundoran, Donegal, Mountcharles) of the 12 towns in Donegal MA; in 1 (Ardara) of the 14 settlements in Glenties MA; in 1 (Buncrana) of the 18 towns in Inishowen; in 1 town (Letterkenny Legal Town and Environs) in the Letterkenny MA and 1 town (Ballybofey-Stranorlar) in the Stranorlar MA.”

Whilst it is now very difficult to predict future population trends in terms of diversity against the backdrop of what looks increasingly like a No-Deal Brexit and the on-going large scale negative impacts of the continuing COVID 19 pandemic, many of the factors mentioned above would suggest that Donegal will continue to attract inward migration. One serious consideration is the growing influence and even dependence in the county on tourism and the hospitality sector for both

investment and job creation. This sector has been grievously impacted in the past 6 months, and there is a high reliance on employment in these sectors for members of Black and Minority Ethnic communities in the county. This over time could create a dampening effect in inward migration but it is too early to point to any authoritative trends.

Identifying Migrant Needs

One of the key components of this consultation process was to meet with members of minority and migrant communities and explain the role that the National Migrant Integration Strategy holds in offering a blueprint for the future growth, recognition and inclusion of migrant populations and the successful integration into wider society.

The consultation team had hoped to engage in a widespread process covering the county, but found the arrival of the COVID crisis seriously curtailed the plans to host group discussions and meant that a greater reliance on one-to-one conversations, use of phone interviews and internet-based applications like WebEx and Zoom.

We place great store in the development of a participative engagement method, and we made every effort to maximise the shared experience of group discussion and enquiry to draw out ideas, experiences and issues of members of the communities we met with between February and September 2020.

During the consultation process meetings were held with a wide range of groups and organisations as well as informal groupings of people who were from a particular region or country but who may not have established any form of association either in the county. Some groups were connected with organisations based elsewhere in Ireland (and in some cases in Northern Ireland).

The range of meetings included the following participants:

The Igbo Association; The Ghana Union, Members of the Yoruba community; the African Students Society (LYIT); members of the Egyptian Community in Donegal; members of the Sudanese Community; a number of people of North African origin including Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia; The Filipino Association; The Indian Community, the Tamil Community; The Bangladeshi Community in Donegal; a number of people from South Africa and Zimbabwe; people from Somalia, Ethiopia and a number of African individuals, some of whom meet as the African Men's Group. We met with the Malaysian Student Society; representative of the Students Union at LYIT (including members of BME communities); members of the Polish Community, the Ukrainian Community, people from Croatia,

Belorussia, Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, France, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Spain, Netherlands, Albania, Georgia, Turkey, Slovakia as well as several members of the Syrian Community who arrived through the Resettlement Programme, members of the Roma Community and a number of workers who support and engage with the Roma and Syrian communities. Discussions took place with individuals from Central and South America including Cuba, Haiti, Mexico, Honduras, Argentina and Brazil.

We also met with the Islamic Association, Pastor Kofi and with the Diversity Committee of the Pramerica staff team and the Fáilte Isteach Groups (Volunteer-led English Language Conversation Workshops) in Stranorlar and Letterkenny.

For ease of comparison, we have grouped the key issues and expressed needs of members of the migrant communities and groups under the 11 headings used in the National Migrant Inclusion Strategy (with the exception of the 12th – Implementation and Follow-up.)

In addition we also included needs and issues that were identified by organisations that provide supports and services including the Resettlement Programme (DLDC); the Roma Outreach Worker (DTP), Building Intercultural Communities PEACE Project, Health Support Worker with Emergency Temporary Asylum Centre in Donegal, Members of the Donegal Intercultural Platform.

Issues, needs and concerns of Migrant communities and groups

These are all of the issues, ideas and concerns expressed through group discussion, interviews and on-line sessions and through completion of the One Page Response Survey

1. General Issues

- a) Many respondents and participants commented on the high cost of living in Letterkenny and its environs which posed a real challenge for low income people and families from BME communities.
- b) Transportation in its widest sense was raised by many, particularly the difficulty of accessing services and immigration appointments in Dublin and being prohibited from travelling through Northern Ireland.
Also access to a car and a driving license is a challenge for many migrants with non EU/EEA drivers licenses not being transferable and even the simple difficulty in learning to drive – accessing a friend with a full license to accompany learners as they gain experience.
- c) Faith issues. Many Muslims we spoke to cited the need to assist the local Islamic community identify and secure, by rental or purchase, a suitable building to establish a Masjid or mosque.
- d) Related to the Mosque issue many raised the importance for the Islamic Association having facilities to establish a Madrassa or school for Koranic learning and also for teaching and strengthening the Arabic language – particularly amongst young members and children.
- e) Finally in this theme – many Muslims commented on the need for Local Authority assistance in identifying a suitable public burial ground where there could be a dedicated plot for Muslims – currently there is not arrangement and just informal agreements with Catholic authorities or burial outside the county (like Derry) with challenges for travel and visas to cross the border to visit the graves of family members. In the context of COVID 19 this was of particular heightened concern.
- f) General comments were raised about the importance of good quality and accessible supports to promote confident English Language Conversation skills – currently provide by volunteer tutors in Letterkenny, Stranorlar and Carndonagh on an ad-hoc basis. Many regarded competence in English conversation as the key that unlocks many opportunities in the areas of employment, sporting engagement, social inclusion and community connectedness as well as an aid to combating loneliness and isolation.
- g) To complement the English language observations there were many references to the almost total absence of interpretation services and facilities in all aspects of life from Health settings to schools, government agencies and other service providers. Many commented that one cannot assume literacy in native languages – so posters in foreign languages may not be as easily understood as spoken word and this presents a challenge to services at all levels.

2. Visas, citizenship and residency

- a) The current restriction of spouse visas – where the spouse cannot take up any form of employment was seen as unfair and a real missed opportunity for greater inclusion and involvement of whole migrant families in the wider community.
- b) Many suggested that creating a Family discount for the cost of the Irish Residence Permit (IRP) would be a positive step.

- c) Restricted status visas also limits right of access to many courses in Further and Continuing Education settings, thus limiting opportunities for up-skilling and career improvement.
- d) The long distance from legal, governmental and other support and expert services like MRCI and the Immigrant Council, is made worse by visa restrictions on travel through Northern Ireland – simply for access to Dublin-based services for people travelling from Donegal.
- e) People also said longer duration visas would be very welcome to encourage family visits and strengthening family relationships.
- f) There was considerable support (over 60 % of participants) for the campaign calling for the extension of the rights of the Common Travel Area within the island of Ireland to all people residing on the island - in either jurisdiction. Examples were given of marriages where spouses had difficulty visit in-laws across the borders, challenges for Frontier Workers and rights to travel through NI to access the rest of the republic of Ireland. It was noted that this campaign is supported by the local authorities in Derry & Strabane and in Donegal.
- g) Participants commented on the slow nature and high cost of attaining Irish Citizenship and the problems of getting good advice about citizenship in Donegal.
- h) Many argued for an easier to stay and work in Ireland legally. There was praise for the local Garda Immigration service – but noted it was one Garda covering Donegal and Monaghan and access was really difficult. There were suggestions of an Immigration Office ‘Clinic’ in Donegal one a month with expertise set up from Dublin to speed and smooth the processes.
- i) A number of participants explained the vulnerabilities of work permits linked to specific employers or employments – how this put migrant workers a risk of exploitation and mistreatment and that workers should be free to move employers and register the move within a fixed and limited time period.
- j) 25% of participants referred to the complex and very slow process of family re-unification, with different rules for different countries of origin, different nationalities and regions. There were calls for expert assistance on these issues through the local authority in collaboration with the Intercultural Platform and organisations with expertise like Crosscare and Immigrant Council and the Irish refugee Council.

3. Access to Public Services – and Social Inclusion

- a) Housing was identified as an area of great difficulty for many members of Black and Minority Ethnic Communities – particularly the high cost of rents and the real challenges of being accepted as tenants by private letting agents and owners.
- b) Many spoke of ‘soft’ racism – where prospective tenants have been asked own many other friends would they allow in the house, would they be engaging in ethnic cooking. Where enquiries were made and then suddenly the house was no longer available when the prospective tenant showed up to view or discuss the deposit.
- c) Participants reported the lack of low-cost properties meaning tenants on low incomes were under extreme financial pressure to pay rents and there were few if any social housing options in the county. (Housing Associations) and this low-income situation made them at higher risk of homelessness. Homelessness reported as a great fear as many migrants believe they would not be able to avail of emergency housing supports.
- d) Access to the housing list with the local authority is closed to most migrant workers and long waiting lists were are a reality for everyone in the county seeking social housing.
- e) Public transport was raised by many – the relative poor public bus services and difficulties in affording a car, obtaining a license and getting trained and proficient at driving. This made

accessing work and other opportunities very difficult (and people acknowledged this was the case for members of the majority population as well).

- f) Participants spoke of their experiences with 'rude', unsympathetic and 'inflexible' counter staff in council offices, at Social Welfare offices and other agencies and services. Many agreed that awareness and competence training might help staff be more understanding and supportive of BME service users. Participants believed that some staff may harbour implicit bias or have absorbed stereotyping views and this taints their dealings with foreign nationals.
- g) Some of the participants were aware of the **Port na Fáilte** Intercultural resource Centre that was located in Letterkenny between 2010 and 2012, funded under PEACE III, and believe such a centre would help BME people to navigate the housing, social welfare, employment and immigration systems with a measure of support and empowerment.

4. Education

- a) People felt some schools were not very flexible in allowing time out of class during religious education and that there should and could be more flexibility – especially for people from non-Catholic and non-Christian faiths.
- b) There is little or no intercultural teaching in schools and some parents had heard this was planned – but believed that teachers were often not trained to deliver such classes. They spoke of the Yellow Flag initiative (yellowflag.ie) that Celebrates Diversity, Promotes Inclusion, and Challenges Racism in a school setting. There are currently no yellow flag schools in the county.
- c) Beyond some of the Access Courses offered at LYIT many participants explained that it is very difficult to make educational progress. The ETB guidance service is very good and well regarded but has some interpretation challenges and does not offer support to graduates and an extension of guidance supports for BME communities would be most welcome.
- d) English Language skills are needed in education institutions – many report that the ETB courses are a good initial grounding but many felt they don't progress and do not develop conversation and job/task specific spoken English that will help them progress in the fields of education or employment.
- e) Some argue that the Access department in LYIT could further develop a module or course for migrants that would include language and conversation tuition and assessment of English competence grades, offer inclusion introductions to Irish life, customs, history and general practices to better equip migrants to connect with local communities – and this course could reach out into local communities to facilitate local intercultural awareness and social contacts to build trust and relationships and combat prejudice and bias as well as address fears and myths in a personal, practical and human level.
- f) There should be a skills assessment initiative – potentially with SOLAS – targeting migrant and refugee communities to see if people can upgrade their skills or re-focus their skills area to help them eventually move into possible employment.
- g) More efforts to seek if there can be accreditation of qualifications or re-training skilled people so they can gain Irish qualifications and earn their living productively.

5. Employment and Pathways to work

- a) People spoke of the dependence of many migrant workers on the hospitality and catering sectors as well as social care and nurses and nursing assistants and that these were generally areas of seasonal and tenuous employment security and with the arrival of the COVID pandemic – they were even more at risk and vulnerable
- b) The visa linkage to a specific employer and job leave migrant workers at higher risk of exploitation and threat of dismissal.
- c) There should be an exploration of possible links between bodies like the LYIT Access courses and their growing relationships with migrant communities and SOLAS to see what can be done to identify and link educational abilities and skills to training and possible employment. For example are there possibly constructions skills needed in the house building industry that could be targeted through such an approach.
- d) Many migrants are afraid of self-employment due to fears that their English language skills could lead to confusion & miscommunication that could be costly in business. There could be an opportunity for construction and building companies and local authorities and other agencies to give work placement experience to help develop confidence in work practices and in English to equip them with the abilities move into self-employment if they so desire.
- e) Some migrants are remitting large sums of money back home to help with cost of education, acre and living and this is not always understood, this leaves some migrants on very low barely subsistence levels of income.
- f) There are very few migrant employment opportunities in the county in general, and particularly in the retail, sales, supermarket and department store sectors where in Dublin and UK cities many migrants usually find work. These levels are low in businesses and particularly so in locally owned businesses – but in some international employers in the grocery and household goods sector. This needs to be addresses through employer diversity awareness training and engagement at store level and through engagement with employers' organisations and the Chambers of Commerce.
- g) There are few part-time and accessible jobs for migrant students, a particular challenge with more foreign students being targeted and enrolled on courses in LYIT who then cannot find supplementary income through part-time work in the retail and hospitality sectors. This is made worse by the impact of COVID 19.
- h) Businesses are missing out on opportunities because they have not invested in a diverse workforce – a move that is demonstrably more creative and profitable.
- i) BME people commented on the almost total absence of Black faces and faces of colour in the various workforces with the exception of the large multi-national organisations and this needs to be addresses in a positive way.
- j) There is a role for the Local Authority to offer work placements and positive recruitment approaches that make a visible and real impact to diversity in their workforce that will send out a positive and inclusive message to migrants and majority communities that diversity is not an aspiration but real and evidenced.
- k) Other sectors like the armed forces and the Gardaí have to meet the diversity challenge as well. Some participants were part of the first ever diversity focused recruitment event in Letterkenny attended by over 30 young adults from BME communities and Travellers – and they remarked that Gardaí said it was the first time they had done something like that in the county! This sort of action must be repeated to both build relationships and open career opportunities for members of BME communities. The same challenge applies to An Post, Electric Ireland, Bus Éireann and other larger and state supported employers.

6. Health & Wellbeing

- a) Loneliness and mental health and even depression were identified as real and present concerns for many migrant communities.
- b) Rather like Ireland in the recent past, many BME communities do not speak about and can fear mental health issues and are very unlikely to seek medical assistance and this presents one challenge to the Mental health Services and the wider medical profession.
- c) This is compounded by the English language difficulties that some migrants experience, where many 'spoken word' therapies like counselling and Cognitive Behavioural Therapies and similar approaches are outside the reach of BME people.
- d) The stresses of family separation, distance from home, maybe challenges with English all can combine to contribute to a high level of distress and mental health difficulty that largely goes untreated and unmentioned.
- e) Many migrants may come from societies that do not have the range of supportive therapies and services beyond the familiar hospital and maybe a GP or clinic. Therefore many are not aware of the clinical and community based supports that may be of assistance.
- f) Furthermore newer services like the Social Prescribing Service rely in part on links to local activity groups, Men's and Women's Sheds, gardening and walking groups and many of these are not best equipped to reach out to BME communities or individuals and this needs to be addressed.
- g) Some migrants and also refugees have come here with historical poor, maybe poor diet and possible long term conditions that they either try and cope with or fear to speak of in case it undermines their working or visa status. They also fear the high costs of medical care and are more likely to self-medicate, purchase on-line medications and traditional remedies with all the potential for harm that these may bring.
- h) Also many migrant communities and families have no older relatives, no one to help care and advise in the rearing of young children and so many of the usual family supports and advice is missing and families may not know where to turn for advice and support.
- i) Medical costs and access (and even awareness of) Medical Cards is a challenge and can contribute to higher levels of chronic and persistent health conditions within migrant populations.
- j) There are also challenges within the medical profession and hospital and HSE services – where the use of an ethnic identifier could help on diagnosis and in the targeting of appropriate treatments and better health needs data for planning service delivery. Furthermore there may be a lack of awareness of medical conditions more common in different climates or the predisposition of certain medical conditions to particular ethnic groups that can present challenges for appropriate diagnoses and treatments. These issues are being raised by BME organisations and migrant support groups and present a challenge in the county and nationally.

7. Inclusion in the community

- a) Respondents and participants discussed the lack of non-pub social outlets and opportunities to enjoy entertainment and mix with the majority population
- b) There is a real lack of mainstream and local authority sponsored or supported intercultural arts and entertainments events. It is left to the Intercultural platform and its support with other BME groups like the Russian Community and the Bangladeshi Community to organise inter-community events but there is no council or arts supported programme of cultural events.
- c) People from BME communities comments on the difficulty they encounter trying to connect to the majority population, factors are challenges of competence and confidence in the English language; lack of shared social outlets and venues and the more recent impact of COVID and distancing and venue closure and caps on numbers of participants.
- d) There is an opportunity to fill the gap in school and community-based intercultural awareness programmes and events, exploring Diwali, the festival of Eid al Fitr; the celebration of St. Patrick's day and making for inclusive Halloween and Christmas / Winter celebrations.
- e) BME participants felt there needed to be concerted efforts to help communities understand and accept change in a positive way, greater diversity, rise in numbers of children in rural schools, the Irish story of emigration and sending money home mirrored to the migrant experience of the 21st century etc.
- f) One impediment to community inclusion is the barriers to family re-unification, the slow and complex process of visas for family visits and holidays from abroad, the lack of older people in many migrant populations and the challenges for child care and cultural continuity – of old stories, traditions carried by older people and grandparents, the cherishing and preserving of ethnicity and cultural inheritance.
- g) There needs to be a process of support and engagement with community groups like Men's Sheds, Women's groups, walking groups, craft and adult education groups – to help them reach out, engage and include members of BME communities in their midst. Processes like Social Inclusion week should break new ground with such actions rather than showcase existing activities that go no year-round.
- h) Often younger children do well in schools and in sports settings – but the older teens and adults can feel very isolated. Some community groups and leaders need to take the lead and actively link, invite and welcome 16s and up through to older age.
- i) There can be a fear or suspicion about the policing service and efforts need to be made to meet with communities, faith groups and BME community leaders to build relationships and explore relevant and appropriate points of contact.
- j) Many community connections are now made through the internet and social media and many BME communities use IT for 'internal' communications rather than reaching out. Majority populations also have opportunities to use their platforms to make and maintain connections, Facebook friends, share on-line groups and information channels.

8. Political Participation

- a) There many report of difficulties finding out voting rights and reports of being challenged and questioned about who voter registration forms were for.
- b) The voter registration workshop in Letterkenny in 2019 was very successful with Gardaí present to verify identities and generally celebrate getting people onto the register as a positive act of participation.
- c) Participants reported very little engagement from elected representatives, especially TDs but also local councillors. The positive duty responsibilities on council also encompass encouragement to engage, to build active and informed participation and hopefully representation of BME communities in the forums and structures of local government and civil society platforms and networks – this has not been undertaken in any meaningful way by the local authority to date.
- d) There seems to be no council-led education in the role and value of local representative democracy and there are opportunities to encourage all sections of society to connect with democratic processes and grass-roots participation in developing policies and taking action for positive change.

9. Combating racism – Promoting Inclusion

- a) Many reported ‘hidden’ or ‘quiet’ racism, houses for rent being withdrawn, people not being short-listed for interviews, people appearing pleasant on first meetings and then no follow-up or engagement at community level.
- b) People feel that racism and discriminatory speech and actions are on the rise in the county. Both in person on the street and in shops and on social media, radio and on digital news sites. Many referred to the council candidate and the Dail election candidate openly promoting a racist agenda and posting inflammatory election leaflets and newsletters through letter boxes as a new low point in community relations.
- c) Many said that Black Lives Matter was shown in the form of footballers taking the knee and saluting but few local manifestations of solidarity (made harder by Covid) just the BIC project event on the Community Centre football pitch was remarked upon – but one TD and no local councillors chose to come along and meet people or participate – this sends a message of possible indifference.
- d) There have been local actions to high-light the need for effective Hate Speech and Hate Crime legislation – which has even been called for in the Garda Diversity and Integration Strategy 2019 – 2021. Participants saw the need for legislative change as vital protection.
- e) Again there are no pro-active anti-racism or diversity awareness initiatives in workplaces and participants welcomed the **#DiversityAware** on-line training tool developed by Donegal Travellers Project and the intercultural Platform as part of the BIC project and hope it will be brought into organisations, agencies and workplaces.
- f) Many younger BME people said they do not feel safe in Letterkenny and that they travel and walk in groups to cinema, college etc. This has eased with movement restrictions due to COVID and much of the threat seems to be linked to alcohol and aggression which has been lessened due to COVID.
- g) Participants agreed that real efforts to build better relationships creates more allies and develops safer more welcoming communities – and that action is needed, change will not occur in a vacuum and that very vacuum is being exploited by right wing agitators and people and groups with openly racist agendas.

10. Volunteering

- a) The principle of volunteering is not widely understood and many BME people did not appreciate that volunteering can be a pathway into work, skills development, language competence and better social connections
- b) Many did not realise that employers recognise and value volunteering time and that skills developed in voluntary capacities are often transferable into the world of employment.
- c) There is a challenge to find ways for the Volunteer Centre and volunteer-based organisations to engage and promote welcomes for members of Black and Minority Ethnic communities to get involved and get to know people – and hosts and their organisations need to make conscious efforts to challenge bias and develop awareness and understanding.

11. Sport

- a) Participants feel there needs to be more outreach by sporting bodies and not just for children but teens and adults too
- b) Cricket offers opportunities for stronger links with South Asian, Southern African, British and Irish people to get active together.
- c) Clubs need to find ways to reach out to the parents too... to play, support and maybe help with stewarding, kit and all the related aspects that make sport an opportunity for engagement.
- d) Sports groups, the Sports Partnership and the Intercultural Platform and some of its affiliated member groups should create a forum to explore sporting possibilities and awareness-raising too.

Concerns and Ideas from Support Organisations

These points were presented through structured interviews with the support organisations.

BME Consultation

Roma Community Donegal Roma Outreach Project

1. General Social inclusion

in general terms there are many misconceptions about the history, culture and traditions of the Roma peoples and the Roma here in Ireland.

Access to spoken interpretation is a real challenge for many Roma, and written translations are not the sole answer as there are literacy issues, especially for older Roma and many are not from Romania but may actually be fluent in Romani or a third European language

there is no widespread diversity awareness and intercultural competence training available in schools at any level or in workplaces, and the provision of this could make a significant difference to understanding and meaningful communication between members of the Roma community and services and agencies, This would be especially useful in Social Welfare, County Council, Health / Medical and school settings

It is often forgotten that the overwhelming majority of Roma are EU citizens and have a right to be here and are here legally.

2. Health & Wellbeing

Many members of the Roma community have come from circumstances of great poverty and therefore there can be a high incidence of long term illness and many of the familiar effects of low income, poor diet, sub-standard accommodation and low levels of educational engagement or achievement

Many people from outside Ireland and Western European countries are not aware of the range of health and wellbeing supports and services in addition to GP and hospitals and this familiarisation is empowering.

There is a need some culturally appropriate housing stock and availability of culturally appropriate housing supports, where extended and multigenerational families prefer to live together or close to one another, which allows them to maintain and develop familial support networks.

Also if there were pop-up clinics where people with no PPSN and/or no medical card could access a GP, for example once a month, this would be useful (I forgot this yesterday, but it has been successful in parts of Dublin for Roma, and we had high uptake among Roma at the Health screening day at the Aura last year).

Access to medical cards – as stated many members of the Roma community live in very poor circumstances with high levels of relative poverty. The medical card application process is complex and thus many who could avail of a card do not which negatively impacts on uptake of necessary medic services.

3. Education

The provision of a support and link person – like Home School Liaison (HSL) role would help build links between families and the school

There are low levels of school uptake beyond Junior Certificate and promotion of Leaving Certificate Applied and other educational pathways would be of great value.

The secondary schools have come to expect Roma to leave when they reach junior cert level/age 16 or so and this has the possibility of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy then if expectations are low. Again, a mixture of diversity/cultural competency style training for teachers, and a designated role within the school of a liaison person to develop relationships with the young person and their families to support ongoing attendance and learning, would be helpful. Also worth saying that this wouldn't necessarily need to be a teacher- in primary schools the HSL role is filled by a teacher; in secondary the schools completion project isn't. Also, for Roma history and culture to be included on the school curriculum would be a huge benefit.

Illness can have a negative impact on school attendance – particularly in primary cycle – either due to illness of child or parent/carer, family links and HSL-style supports might help to address this.

In terms of adult education many (primarily women) do not want to leave their children in crèches and child care settings and the provision of on-site child-care is a real challenge for community education providers. However, such supports would positively encourage Roma women to consider short courses, personal development and language courses and possibly vocational training.

4. Employment

Most Roma are not engaged in the formal work force, instead many men are working in car washes and similar settings and women sell flowers and copies of the Big Issue. These are precarious and vulnerable situations. The absence of Roma people in the wider PAYE workforce compounds unfamiliarity and it also means Roma workers in these informal work environments do not have access to sick leave and sick pay and other benefits in the formal workforce.

The racism and discrimination that many Roma experience also act as a brake on any engagement in the formal workforce were some report a reluctance to 'take the risk' of looking for a regular job for fear of people's reactions to them.

The fact that Roma participate in the informal workforce means they do not accumulate PRSI contributions and then council directive 41/2012 becomes a barrier to them accessing housing support, including if they become homeless or in danger of homelessness. This is in spite of length of residency, otherwise acquiring right to reside etc.

5. **Racism and Discrimination**

Many Roma report high levels of discrimination and negative reactions from the wider community, partly based on ignorance of their history and traditions, on racial profiling and rejection from the white, settled majority community.

In terms of Racism and discrimination – it is worth noting that women in particular because of traditional dress, are most easily identifiable as Roma and therefore particularly vulnerable to experiencing racism and discrimination, so it is a gender issue as well.

The Islamic Association

The Islamic Association has been steadily growing in the county and there are now at least 1,000 Muslims in the county, mainly in the greater Letterkenny area.

In meeting with their representatives 5 key areas of concern were raised.

1. Faith Space

The Islamic Association have been looking for a suitable building to buy or to construct a new place of worship – but so far to no avail. They have spoken to the County council for help and guidance but there have been no solutions found to date. They aim to establish a Masjid or Mosque of sufficient size to provide space for Koranic study, room for the women and children to pray and space for all the people who turn up for Friday prayers. Currently they use a room that is much too small in Letterkenny Community centre but this is a stop-gap. The Association are seeking guidance and assistance from the County Council on this matter.

2. Burial Plot

Again, the Association explaining that there is no dedicated space for Muslim burials. They explained that in other cities and in the UK Muslims have designated plots in civic cemeteries and that is what they hope to achieve in Letterkenny. Again they have spoken to the County council but have not made any progress. They do not want to have to bury community members in Dublin or Derry (outside the jurisdiction – where many cannot travel to visit the grave). This is urgent for their community – especially in the COVID situation with fears that a death might present a real challenge.

3. Greater Intercultural engagement

The Islamic Association is very keen to see more events, meetings and presentations between all the communities in Donegal. They want to build links and form relationships of trust and respect and see the Intercultural Platform as the best vehicle for doing this.

4. Current pandemic

They see the COVID pandemic as making the resolution of all these issues an even greater priority. The Islamic community would see resolution of the burial issue or help with securing progress on the mosque plans as a real vote of confidence from the majority community.

5. Reaching out to new people

The Association has been very active in the many intercultural events we have been organising under the auspices of the Intercultural Platform but they see a real challenge to get beyond the several hundred regular faces and reach out in connect with and meet new people, maybe people who might harbour reservations or even fears of Muslims in their community. They believe that the council may be able to offer opportunities to help with this reaching out.

The Refugee Resettlement Programme

There have been a number of presentations from the Resettlement Programme staff to the County and Council and there are health-specific recommendations in Appendix 4

1. Education

Many schools did not take up the offer made by the Resettlement Programme (RP) to assist with intercultural Awareness sessions to ease the Syrian children and their families into the new school setting. Many schools were quite traditional in their approach, not very flexible in supporting non-participation in Catholic religious services. This may reflect a rather top down approach from the Department of Education. In short some Donegal schools were not very good supporting inclusion at local level. This also placed pressures on the TUSLA coordinators who were or not in a position of offer additional support to help settle the Syrian children.

2. Work

Language and conversational skills in particular are vital for employment or training, and once in a work situation many of the Syrian men noticed a speedy improvement in conversation skills. The RP staff have been able to link in the TÚS programme managed by DLDC and that too has benefits some men get on to the first rungs of the local employment ladder. Also people have been directed into the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme. Many Syrian men are fearful of making mistakes and ordering and talking with customers so none have actually started a business as yet.

RP staff also agree that volunteering really has a positive impact, on confidence, English ability and good links have been developed between some Syrian men through the Donegal Volunteer Centre.

3. Learning and education

We are not aware that many of the Syrian refugee families are not fluent in reading and writing Arabic and so there is a special struggle for some in trying to make the leap into a new language and writing system. It also means that many Arabic printed resources are not accessible to some.

4. Acceptance / Discrimination

These experiences depend so much on each individual family, how they reach out and try to connect to their local community. Many of the families are very traditional – with the man taking the lead and the woman dealing with the children, staying home and living in a house with closed curtains or blinds – so the women can remove their scarves and not fear being seen. Also behaviours and family practices from home and in some cases living in refugee camps mean levels of engagement and supervision of children differ widely. However the younger children – from 4 years to 12 or 13 are settling in very well and really becoming proficient in English and building freindships.

This is not always the case for the young teenage children, some who struggle with social skills, some don't have many friends and are between two worlds – that of their parents and that of their Irish peers. This can be a difficult and slow transition. The Donegal Youth Council has proved successful in engaging with some young Syrians and the RP staff hope this continues. Also some female young people are struggling with image and identity – and experience friction with their parents. This is to be expected and the RP staff do what they can to assist.

The staff team believe there is a special role for community celebrations and there should be help in organising shared festivities and find ways to bring in new members of the majority population – fellow parents at school, neighbours and work colleagues to help break the reserve both sides project.

Other Voices – Other Sources

In addition, the consultation team have drawn on the many proposals, ideas and recommendations that have arisen in the field of Intercultural Engagement over the past two years and have highlighted the key points here. The full reports from which these points are drawn have also been attached as appendices 1 to 4at the end of this consultation report.

Ends

Appendix 1

Recommendations arising from the Building Intercultural Communities (BIC) Project 2018-2020

Arising from our project experience and engagement the Building Intercultural Communities Project (BIC) recommends the following measures, going forward:

- Mandate the inclusion of Black Minority Ethnic Communities including Traveller and Roma representatives on all local bodies and within government structures including the following committees:
 - Local Community Development Committee
 - Local Development Companies (implementers of SICAP)
 - PPN Secretariat
 - Children and Young Persons Services Committee
 - Strategic Policy Committee
 - Donegal County Childcare Committee
- Social Inclusion – Celebrate Interculturalism Day in the county.
- Promote and include representation from BME communities, including Traveller and Roma, in arts events throughout the county.
- Public Sector Duty training to be provided to all public sector staff in the county.
- All education providers to support Teachers and Special Needs Assistants to participate in Diversity Aware Training.
- Anti-Racism Protocols to be developed for all candidates in future elections in the county.
- People living in Temporary emergency or Direct Provision to be provided with inter-agency resources and support with a view to ending Direct Provision within the next year and in line with the new Programme for Government.
- Ethnic Identifier to be introduced to all agencies and community-based organisations across the county.
- Interculturalism and social inclusion work with BME communities to be resourced and supported through the development of community development posts in the county.
- All public information materials, in particular health materials, to be made accessible in a range of languages across the county; our newly established Diversity Training tool to be promoted and staff to be supported to participate across the county.
- Housing and accommodation of all Traveller and Roma communities to be addressed by the state as recommended by the United Nations Committee on Eradication of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

Appendix 2



Donegal Travellers Project &
Donegal Intercultural Platform

Alternative Report

A Response to Ireland's Combined Fifth to Ninth Periodic Reports to the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

Donegal Report (CERD/C/IRL/5-9)

November 2019

Attached as separate document in PDF format

21 pages

Appendix 3

Healthy Ireland Community Engagement Project

January to March 2018

Attached as separate document in PDF format

50 pages

Particular interest pages pps 38 to 42

Appendix 4

Key outputs and findings from the Women Crossing Borders Seminar

An Grianán Hotel, Burt Co. Donegal 13th November 2019

Engaging Black and Minority Ethnic Women on the challenges and opportunities for cross-border experience-sharing and cross-border collaboration

Attached as separate document in PDF format

11 pages

Funded under the Building Intercultural Communities Project

Supported by the EU PEACE IV Programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body

Appendix 5

Intercultural Arts In Action Research Project

Donegal Intercultural Platform

A research and consultation project among the Black and Minority Ethnic communities in Donegal, undertaken by Donegal Intercultural Platform, in the context of a wider Cultural Diversity project, completed between 2018 and 2019 by Donegal County Council, Mayo County Council (Lead Partner) and South Dublin County Council, under the Arts Council's Invitation To Collaboration Scheme.

His research then fed into the 'Working in Intercultural Contexts – GUIDE for Local Authorities and Cultural Providers'. 2020 South Dublin County Council

Attached as separate document in PDF format

11 pages

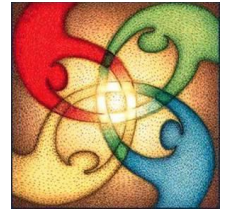
Recommendations pages pps 48 to 52

Funded Donegal County Council Arts Office

Appendix 6

Sample consultation survey form

Migrant Inclusion Questionnaire – Donegal Intercultural Platform



This survey is anonymous – do NOT write your name

1. Can you say 3 things that would make your life in Donegal better

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

2. Can you please tick ANY or ALL of these subject areas that are a CONCERN for you

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visa issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Re-unification | <input type="checkbox"/> English Language |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment/Unemployment | <input type="checkbox"/> Low Pay | <input type="checkbox"/> Housing Cost |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quality of Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Qualifications | <input type="checkbox"/> Racism/Discrimination |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loneliness | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical health | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Police/Immigration issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Safety | <input type="checkbox"/> Insecure Income |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER. _____ | | Please write it. |

3. Select the MOST IMPORTANT issue from the list above and tell us some more about it

I chose this issue because: _____

Thank you for helping with this survey

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