

# **Realising the potential of the Asylum and Migration Fund**

**A Position Paper from  
Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, Cross Care Migrant Project,  
NASC Immigrant Centre, Irish Refugee Council, Cultúr**

## **Introduction**

This position paper has been developed by organisations working at a local and national level on the integration, social inclusion, human rights and equality for asylum seekers, refugees, non EEA migrants and migrant workers in Ireland.

A Roundtable with over 25 organisations was held in February 2013 (see appendix I and II). The content for this position paper is drawn from the conclusions of this Roundtable.

The paper is intended to contribute to the successful development and implementation of the Asylum and Migration Fund in Ireland 2014 -2017. The analysis and recommendations presented stems from the experience of administering a range of EU funds including the European Integration Fund (EIF) and the European Asylum Fund (EAF), coupled with the experience of working with asylum, immigrant and migrant workers for over a decade during the most dynamic periods of inward migration Ireland has ever experienced. This paper does not address Returns or Resettlement as it this is outside the remit of participating organisations.

## **Context**

Over the last decade Ireland has experienced unprecedented levels of inward migration both voluntary and involuntary, in the context of asylum seekers and refugees. The latest census figures show an increase of 143% of non-Irish born nationals living in the state in the last nine years.

Ireland is now an increasingly diverse society. The growth in inward migration has increased since 2006 albeit at a slower pace. This shift in our population has, and will continue to have a profound impact upon our economy and society. The AMF Fund is welcomed as one funding stream. It has the potential to ensure to promote effective integration measures. We also welcome financial assistance provided through the fund to strengthen our integration and asylum systems, but contend that the fund should supplement and not become a substitute for all state funded actions in this area. This is particularly true when it comes to the states obligations to provide protection to those seeking asylum pursuant to our obligations under the Geneva Convention and the EU asylum *acquis*.

Integration is intertwined with social inclusion and anti-racism strategies. We note that Ireland currently does not have a proactive anti-racism policy framework. In addition the national social inclusion policy (NAP/INCL) with its *life cycle approach* does not specifically name migrants as a group who experience social exclusion and how this should be addressed. The reduction in core funding available to organisations working on the social inclusion, human rights and equality of asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and immigrant communities has also resulted in further isolation and distancing of highly vulnerable individuals and communities from mainstream services and supports.

### **Learning from previous Integration Funds**

Integration funds have been in operation in Ireland for many years. Significant learning has been gained during this time and can be summarised as follows:

- The integration process is complex and requires creative and innovative processes that address the social, economic, political and cultural dimensions of individual and group concerns. The Integration Funds have supported the generation of responsive, effective and innovative solutions focused on the creation of a society that is increasingly diverse and multi-cultural.
- Creating the conditions for immigrant communities to participate in processes supporting their integration is key. Pre-development work including outreach, information provision, and individual advocacy is essential to successful longer-term engagement and participation of highly vulnerable communities and individuals.
- Immigrants are not homogenous and have varied and differing experiences including gender, immigration status, economic participation, English language acquisition, family status, socio-economic status, geographical location, age, sexuality.
- Racism and discrimination are significant barriers to successful integration and social cohesion. Racism is experienced at an individual or direct level and at an institutional level through the design and delivery of services, policies, and media.
- Integration funds have allowed significant leverage and added value by enabling organizations to engage partners in actions and projects and in prioritizing an emphasis on integration and social inclusion within mainstream societal organizations for both civil society and state.
- New analysis and evidence has been generated that has in turn supported more effective state policy and practice nationally and locally. Issues and experiences have become visible and articulated in a format that supports effective governance.

- Immigrant and migrants have been supported to gain essential skills and capacity to become leaders and to engage with mainstream societal structures as 'active citizens' not just service users resulting in improved and effective service provision.
- Without a specific focus on integration and social inclusion the unique barriers facing immigrants and migrant workers will not be identified or addressed. In an increasingly challenging environment the withdrawal of vital supports at local and frontline level, as well as the loss of emphasis on participation and leadership development, is resulting in greater exclusion and isolation.

### **The Asylum Migration Fund - Priorities and approach**

The design and management of the AMF 2014 – 2017, will be critical to its ability to deliver impacts that are sustainable and meaningful. The following recommendations are presented with the intention of realizing the funds full potential and impact:

- A process of dialogue with civil society, local and national needs to inform the identification of state level priorities. Such a process needs to draw on the range and depth of expertise and experience developed through previous Integration funds.
- Increased weight should be given to the integration aspects of the AMF including the provision of supports to independent community sector organizations operating frontline services and supporting the participation of immigrant and migrant communities.
- Proritisation of projects that engage directly with asylum seekers, immigrant and migrant workers is essential. Integration occurs in communities and without the essential infrastructure in place to support participation and inclusion, higher level effective policy development, service planning and institutional engagement is compromised.
- Addressing the particular vulnerabilities of women, children and young people, experiencing poverty and multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion should be prioritized and funds targeted to address discrimination and inequality issues for specific groups.
- The AMF should be coordinated and monitored by a government intermediary with experience in both managing EU programmes and national programmes with a participation and community development dimension.
- The AMF needs to support the generation of both quantitative and qualitative evidence and information and in the development of priorities recognise the challenges in relation to data on very vulnerable groups and emerging issues.

- Multi annual funding is essential to ensure realistic and meaningful outcomes. Multi annual funding enables organisations to forward plan and maximize leverage in relation to other funding lines.
- Have realistic match funding requirements. Irish civil society exists in an environment of both shrinking public sector and private foundation funding. Match fund requirements could encompass a range of options including time and use of assets.
- Flexibility in the delivery and annual planning process is an important element of successful multi annual funding streams. The nature of the integration and social inclusion process requires adaptability and flexibility in responding to emerging and diverse issues often only identifiable through the process of the project implementation itself.
- Realistic and manageable reporting conditions would ensure maximum focus on delivering impact and outcomes. While fully recognising the importance of accountability for all funds used, onerous reporting requirements hinder progress towards realising goals.
- The AMF has considerable potential and will operate at many different levels. Careful monitoring and a process for identifying learning will be critical. A monitoring group should be established. Membership should be drawn from relevant public agencies, relevant experts in the field of social inclusion and equality and representation from the asylum, migration and migrant worker community.
- An evaluation framework that focuses on the achievement of impact, the generation of learning and the identification of good practice should support the fund.
- The development of partnerships is a valuable dimension of successful mainstreaming, engagement and institutional change and should be supported in the AMF. In fostering partnership approaches, recognition of the complex dynamics inherent in the development of successful partnerships needs to be reflected and facilitated in the AMF.
- Recognising the autonomy and independence of civil society organisations is an important dimension of a functioning democracy. Integration strategies are also focused on supporting a democratic and inclusive democratic society. The AMF should be framed in this context and resources made available to support independently organised and autonomous civil society organisations.
- Eligibility criteria to enable maximum participation of a wide range of civil society organisations should be prioritised. Many of the organisations that have strongest relationships and engagement with asylum seekers, immigrant and migrant communities are frequently

community based with complex and precarious funding arrangements. Failure to include organisations that have the most direct relationships with the target groups focused on integration and social inclusion will limit the AMF potential.

- Recognition of the role of civil society in relation to policy and structural change and in particular support for local and national linkage as well as strengthening of civil society cooperation should be prioritised.
- Mainstreaming is a core aspect of successful integration strategies. Successful mainstreaming approaches needs to be defined as:
  - Identifying emerging issues and experiences;
  - Generating good practice in responding to integration and social inclusion needs of immigrant communities;
  - Impacting on policy and decision making ;
- Successful mainstreaming requires innovative solutions and approaches to be identified and tried. The AMF provides the opportunity to pilot new and innovative projects that respond to the marginalised and unequal status of asylum seekers, immigrants and migrant workers.
- Generating institutional capacity should also be prioritised in the AMF. In this context the emphasis should be on strengthening capacity to respond to existing and emerging issues. This should also include a concern with structural policies, allocation of resources, monitoring and benchmarking progress.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has been developed on foot of a National Roundtable with organisations funded by the European Integration Fund, the European Refugee Fund and previous integration funds along with other organisations whose core work is in the area of integration of Immigrants in Ireland. It is the belief of organisations working directly with asylum seekers, immigrants and migrant workers that the AMF has significant potential to support an integration process that generates social cohesion, upholds and reinforces human rights and addresses inequalities. An approach that prioritises the human rights, social inclusion and equality for asylum seekers, immigrants and migrant workers will generate even wider impact in that Irish society and its institutions reflect diversity in society.

## Appendix I- Programme of the Roundtable

### Roundtable Discussion on the EU Asylum and Migration Fund

Thursday, 7th February, EU Commission Office, Dawson St., Dublin 2

- 1.00 Registration and Refreshments**
- 1.30 Welcome and Introduction**  
Hugh Frazer, Coordinator of EU Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion
- 1.35 Learning from integration funds - Discussion**
- 1.50 Priorities for Integration of asylum seekers, refugees and third country nationals – civil society perspective**  
Fiona Finn, NASC, Irish Immigrant Support Centre Cork
- 2.05 The Asylum and Migration Fund - The EU Commission Perspective**  
Stefano Manservigi, Director General of DG Home Affairs,
- 2.20 Discussion**
- 2.45 Concluding remarks** Siobhán O' Donoghue, Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
- 3.00 Close (Chairperson)**

#### Background

The aim of the Roundtable is to bring a range of stakeholders together to discuss and identify key priorities for the future development of the EU Asylum and Migration Fund in Ireland.

The Asylum Migration Fund 2014 – 2020 provides a valuable opportunity to promote the effective integration of third-country nationals, including of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protections.

## Appendix II- Participants

<b>BeLonGTo Youth Services</b>	<b>Dún Laoghaire Refugee Project</b>
<b>Business in the Community - EPIC Programme</b>	<b>Immigrant Council of Ireland</b>
<b>Cairde</b>	<b>The Integration Centre</b>
<b>Canal Communities Intercultural Centre</b>	<b>Irish Refugee Council</b>
<b>Canal Partnership</b>	<b>KASI Immigrant Support Centre</b>
<b>Clare Immigrant Support Centre</b>	<b>Mayo Intercultural Action</b>
<b>Council for Immigrants</b>	<b>Migrant Rights Centre Ireland</b>
<b>Crosscare Migrant Project</b>	<b>NASC Irish Immigrant Support Centre</b>
<b>Cultúr Migrants Centre</b>	<b>New Communities Partnership</b>
<b>Doras Luimní</b>	<b>South Dublin County Partnership LTD</b>