



## **STATEMENT OF STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE MIGRANT RIGHTS CENTRE IRELAND NOVEMBER 13<sup>TH</sup> 2020**

### **Migrant Rights Centre Ireland**

Founded in 2001, MRCI is a leading national community work organisation working at the intersection of immigration and employment policy and law with migrants predominantly in non-unionized low paid and precarious sectors of employment; we work directly with migrants who become undocumented, with people who have been trafficked for forced labour, with minority ethnic young people, and with migrant workers in domestic work, homecare, restaurants, hotels and catering, cleaning, agriculture and fisheries.

Our work combines frontline services, policy, and advocacy with a community development approach that builds deep connections with migrants and supports their participation and leadership on migrant rights issues. MRCI provides information, supports and advocacy on over 2,200 cases a year through our Drop-in Centre. For the past 20 years, MRCI has been bringing issues of discrimination, exploitation and social exclusion into public view.

### **1. Migrant Integration and Equality Policy**

Meaningful integration is about equality outcomes for people from a migrant background.

#### **Key recommendations include;**

- Recognition and inclusion of undocumented people and their families in the next Migrant Integration Strategy;
- Ensuring the Migrant Integration Strategy is target driven and can easily describe and measure progress;
- Building on the previous strategy, increase the target from 1% to 5% for the employment of EEA migrants and people from minority ethnic communities in the civil service, and allow for those from non-EEA countries to take up civil service employment. This issue is important in terms of improving the process of making the civil service representative of the broader population;
- Ensuring ongoing funding support to NGOs who assist undocumented migrants and other marginalised groups, as outlined in the National Intercultural Health Strategy<sup>1</sup>;

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/primarycare/socialinclusion/intercultural-health/intercultural-health-strategy.pdf>

- Amending the requirement of habitual residency so that individuals who do not have the right to reside in Ireland or do not meet the criteria can access homeless services;
- Ensuring access to the Maternity and Infant Child Scheme for all pregnant women living in Ireland, regardless of immigration status.

## 2. Anti-Racism

MRCI welcomes the establishment of an independently chaired Anti-Racism Committee (ARC) in June 2020 to develop a National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPAR) for Ireland within one year.<sup>2</sup>

MRCI's overarching recommendation is the establishment of an independently funded body with resources and expertise to tackle racism in Irish society and support the implementation of a future Anti-Racism strategy. This is of paramount importance if we are serious about tackling racism and promoting diversity in all its forms.

### **Key recommendations for the finalisation and implementation NAPAR include;**

- Ensuring the plan is target driven, measurable and can demonstrate progress;
- Ensuring engagement with young people and the youth sector directly to ensure the needs and lived experiences are informing the National Action Plan against Racism;
- Giving effect to protecting the rights of ethnic minority children, placing children at the centre of its policy development and implementation, making specific reference to undocumented children, children in the asylum process, Traveller and Roma children;
- Reflecting the needs of all children living in the State, across all government departments, spanning access to education, health, social service and protections;  
Ensuring a focus on tackling discrimination in the labour market which leads to better equality outcomes for individuals, families and children;  
Reforming school curricula to include modules on racism; anti-discrimination; equality and human rights;
- Ensuring legislative policies that need to be updated and amended with a focus on hate speech and hate crime;
- Develop analysis and response to Far Right activity in the state and make funds available for this work;
- Carrying out a meaningful consultation with stakeholders on the design and implementation, of the plan throughout the year.

## 3. Children and Young People

Children of undocumented families are impacted by their legal status. They are more likely to have poorer outcomes in terms of access to third level education and the labour market, and they are more at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

### **Key recommendations to include;**

- Committing to implementing the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child from 2016<sup>3</sup>;
- Adopting a comprehensive legal framework that is in accordance with international human rights standards to address the needs of migrant children in the State;

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/6bedb-action-plan-against-racism-for-ireland-to-be-drawn-up-by-new-independent-anti-racism-committee/>

<sup>3</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2016) Concluding Observations Ireland CRC/C/IRL/CO/3-4, para 68 (a, b,c)

- Ensuring this legal framework includes clear and accessible formal procedures for conferring immigration status on children and their families who are in irregular migration situations;
- Introducing independent legal advice and timely clarifications for children in irregular migration situation on their migration status;
- Introducing a processes for children who are currently in the state to undocumented parents, children who have aged out and children who will be born in the future to regularise their immigration status;
- Implementing the commitment, as outlined in the Programme for Government and how it proposes to treat dependents in this process;
- Commit to an inclusive approach to incorporate both a retrospective and prospective process to grant residency to undocumented families and their dependent children;
- Consult with NGO's and relevant stakeholders in the planning, design, and implementation of the PFG commitment to create new pathways for regularisation.

#### **Investment in young people and youth work**

- Protect and increase investment in diverse models of critical youth work which address the needs of migrant and ethnic minority young people and youth workers;
- Value the essential role that youth work plays in the lives of marginalised and seldom heard young people, in their development and meaningful participation in society;

#### **4. Gender Equality:**

##### **Key recommendations to include;**

- Adopting a policy, similar to the critical skills employment permit that allows spouses or de factor partner's full access the labour market, to enable this group progress and advance their careers;
- Implementing a policy specific to victims of domestic violence and gender-based violence that grants expedited independent residency status allowing access to services including social welfare, refuges/ housing;
- Increasing funding to facilitate more beds in safe houses and refuges, to overcome the limited spaces victims can access. There is also a rural dimension in terms of information and supply and ensuring information is provided in multiple languages;
- Introducing innovative practice in addressing, monitoring and targeting discrimination in the labour market. In doing so, addressing the disparity between migrant workers, and migrant women who are further marginalised;
- Inequalities experienced through gender discrimination, the gender pay gap, are compounded by immigration and residency status. There is an urgent need to introduce a regularisation scheme to enable undocumented workers to regularise their immigration status;
- Electoral (Amendment) Political Funding Act 2012: steps should include stricter penalties for parties who do not have 30% women candidates and increasing the percentage to 40%. Both of these measures would assist in breaking down the barriers that exist for women representing in public life.

Ends

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