Pre Budget Submission for Budget 2027: *Irish Residence Permit (IRP) Card Delays, Fees & Resourcing*

Summary of Budgetary measures sought

1. Additional resources should be allocated to immigration service delivery, in particular a substantial increase in staff is required on the current 93.1 FTE staff allocated to the registration division as of June 2026. MRCI recommends a 30% increase in resources allocated which would cost approximately €1.5 million[1] while providing 28.1 FTE staff.
2. The IRP card fee should be reduced in line with other similar Government registration services. ***First time registrations should be capped at a fee of €75 and renewals should be capped at a fee of €55.*** While this proposed fee structure would reduce income it would still generate approximately €16.1m annually, while only costing the state €5.45m in production costs – maintaining more than €10.7m in surplus.[2]

Background & Fee

The **fee for registration and renewal of immigration permission** and the issuing of an Irish Residence Permit (IRP) card in Ireland is **€300**. Non-EU workers such as nurses, chefs, engineers, IT specialists, agri-food workers, truck drivers, international students and each of their family members often have to pay this fee every year.

This fee takes advantage of people who have no other choice but to pay it. In the midst of the cost-of-living crisis, people are forced to make financial sacrifices just to register and renew.

This fee doubled in 2012 as an austerity measure[3] and has not been changed since. Every year thousands of people face the fee just for registering to live here. **While an IRP card costs a migrant €300, it only costs the state €20.44[4] to produce and deliver each card.** The fee is the same for both first time registrations and renewals which are normally required **every year.** The IRP card fee generates income for the state far beyond covering the costs of the associated processes. The income generated figure has grown year on year and is now **close to €80 million**

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[1] Comptroller and Auditor General, *Appropriation Account 2024, Vote 24 Justice* (Sept 2025), Note 5, pages: 37–38. Calculation = €1,513,185

[2] A €300 flat fee generates €79m from 263,333 fee-paying registrations. Applying the actual 2024 first-time/renewal split (30.6%/69.4%) to that same base, a €75/€55 structure would generate approximately €16.1m, while still covering production costs (€5.4m at €20.44/card) with a surplus of over €10.7m.

[3] Parliamentary Question No. 155 22 November 2012

[4] Parliamentary Questions No. 187 and No. 273 of 8th and 30th March 2023

annually[5]. There is no justification for this fee, it is simply **an unreasonable and disproportionate tax imposed on migrants**.

Other countries

The fee is much higher than the fees in other European countries for the same or similar service[6]. Below are some examples of fees that are significantly lower than in Ireland.

Country	**Fee for residence card issuing**
Greece	€16
Spain	€16.08 - €21.87
Switzerland	€42
Luxembourg	€80
Portugal	€85.80
Germany	€100
Ireland	**€300**

Similar Services

The issuing of an IRP card is a simple and inexpensive procedure just like renewing a passport. **In Ireland, a standard passport costs €75 and a driving license costs €65 with both typically lasting 10 years**. The price of an IRP card is more than three times as high and lasts for just one year. The equivalent cost for an IRP card for the same 10 year period would be €3,000.

Impact of High Fees

MRCI is aware of many migrant workers who struggle to pay this fee every year. Migrant workers are often in low paid, less regulated employment meaning their resources are stretched thin. They often have to forego essentials like groceries or clothing to pay this unnecessary fee.

IRP Delays

Throughout 2026 people are consistently waiting up to 16 weeks for their IRP application to be processed. While backlogs have been commonplace in previous years these were normally short lived and occurred during specific times of increased activity.

The delays being experienced at present are unprecedented and have been going on consistently since September 2025. There is no clear plan in place to resolve these delays, which are having a huge impact on people's lives.

While MRCI acknowledges that the demand for this service has increased substantially, (316,347 registrations in 2025 compared to 133,058 in 2021), this is not an excuse for such significant delays.

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[5] Parliamentary Question No. 418 For Written Answer on 18/06/2026: Revenue generated = €79,022,400

[6] Note: While other European countries operate different systems, in this table we compare the €300 with the corresponding fees in the respective countries for biometrics, fingerprints and the issuance of a residence card.

As migration increases additional resources should naturally be allocated to Immigration Service Delivery to deal with that increase and ensure a decent timely service. It should also be noted that much of this service has moved online which should also contribute to faster processing, yet delays have worsened rather than improved — further suggesting the bottleneck isn't format but in fact resourcing.

Resourcing is simply not keeping up with the additional demand. While applications increased by 138% from 2021 to 2025 resourcing increased by just 71%. The number of staff processing applications was 89.1 in 2024 and has increased by just 4 to 93.1 in 2026. A much greater increase in resources is required to deal with the demand on this service.

Impact of Delays in issuing IRP cards

Loss of employment
MRCI are aware of many examples of people losing their jobs or being suspended from work due to these delays. This can occur due to them still not receiving their IRP card after the end of the 12-week grace period currently provided by the Department, or it can occur because employers are unaware of the grace period. MRCI are also aware of many people losing job opportunities as a result of these delays.

This loss of employment causes significant financial hardship for a cohort of workers who are reliant on this permission and often have no alternative income or access to social supports.

Example: "*My renewal application was pending and despite multiple queries there was no update. As a result, my employer informed me that I was no longer permitted to continue working as the 12-week waiting period had been exhausted. This situation resulted in the loss of my employment and has created severe financial difficulty.*"

Emergency Travel/Financial Loss from Travel Cancellation:
MRCI are aware of many examples of people who have not been able to travel outside of Ireland even in emergency circumstances such as the death or illness of a family member. This can cause extreme hardship and stress for the person affected. In other cases people have already booked travel and had to cancel due to not receiving their card. This has led to significant financial losses for many people.

Example: *"My brother was getting married in Germany and we had to apply for a Schengen visa. We had already booked accommodation and flights. In the end our Schengen visa applications were refused due to lack of valid IRP cards. We couldn't travel, missed my brother's wedding and we lost a lot of money."*

Solutions

MRCI are deeply concerned about both the cost of IRP cards and the long delays people face in receiving them.

In the past the justification for the fee was to provide a decent service for migrants. This is not being provided but the fees remain the same. Migrants are paying extremely high fees and receiving an extremely poor service which has a knock-on detrimental effect on their lives.

We make the following calls as part of Budget 2027 in order to resolve this critical issue:

1. The IRP card fee should be reduced in line with other similar Government registration services. ***First time registrations should be capped at a fee of €75 and renewals should be capped at a fee of €55.*** This proposed fee structure would still generate approximately €16.1m annually, while only costing the state €5.45m in production costs – maintaining more than €10.7m in surplus.
2. Additional resources should be allocated to immigration service delivery, in particular a substantial increase in staff is required on the current 93.1 FTE staff allocated to the registration division as of June 2026. MRCI recommends a 30% increase in resources allocated which would cost approximately €1.5 million[7] while providing 28.1 FTE staff.
3. When delays exist in receiving IRP cards, workers should be given a grace period where they can legally continue working **until they receive their new card** once they applied before the previous card expired. (Previous grace periods have been confusing and insufficient)

ENDS

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[7] Comptroller and Auditor General, *Appropriation Account 2024, Vote 24 Justice* (Sept 2025), Note 5, pages: 37–38. Calculation = €1,513,185