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# THE INTEGRATION OF NON-EU MIGRANT WOMEN IN IRELAND

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An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt  
Department of Justice



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**September 2022**

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## ABOUT THIS REPORT

This EMN study examines the situation of migrant women in Ireland and the policies towards this group. It presents information collated by way of a common template for an EU-level report, which was published by the EMN, *Integration of migrant women in the EU: Policies and measures*, available at: [www.emn.ie](http://www.emn.ie).

*This report has been accepted for publication by the Institute, which does not itself take institutional policy positions. The report has been peer reviewed prior to publication. The authors are solely responsible for the content and the views expressed do not represent the position of the Economic and Social Research Institute, the Department of Justice, or the European Commission, Directorate-General Migration and Home Affairs.*



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## ACRONYMS AND OTHER TERMS USED

AkiDwa	Akina Dada wa Africa, meaning sisterhood in Swahili
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
An Garda Síochána	Ireland's national police service
CEDAW	Convention on Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
EEA	European Economic Area
EMN	European Migration Network
ESF	European Social Fund
HSE	Health Service Executive
Mná na hÉireann	Women of Ireland
Nasc	Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NWCI	National Womens Council of Ireland
PEIL	Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning
PPSN	Personal public service number (Irish social security number)
SICAP	Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme
Teachta Dála (T.D.)	Member of Parliament





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In 2020 there were almost 89,000 non-EU women and girls living in Ireland,<sup>1</sup> representing 3.5% of the resident female population. This study aims to assess if, and to what extent, the distinct situation of non-EU migrant women is considered in Irish national integration policies and measures. The specific focus on non-EU migrant women is in line with the scope of the European Migration Network (EMN). However, most of the policies and measures we discuss do not make this distinction. Migrant women may face a ‘double disadvantage’, which relates to being both a woman and a migrant. Non-EU women are subject to immigration conditions and different employment rules to their EU counterparts, resulting in a more precarious residence status in the State. Research shows the experiences of non-EU migrants can differ significantly both from those of Irish nationals and of migrants from within the EU.

The integration of non-EU migrant women remains a challenge in Ireland. Labour Force Survey (LFS) data indicate that non-EU women have higher rates of unemployment and lower activity rates than both Irish women and men, as well as migrant men. Other research indicates that this group of migrant women may face challenges in employment; for example, difficulties balancing caring duties, a lack of skills recognition and the risk of underemployment. Certain non-EU women have been found to face challenges accessing the labour market, due to, for instance, discrimination and inadequate training opportunities. The spouses of certain employment permit holders may not take up employment due to the immigration permission held.

In addition to labour market integration, non-EU migrant women may face other challenges. For example, survey data indicate that they are more likely to live in overcrowded conditions than Irish women, while health data show that certain groups of non-EU migrant women have a higher frequency of perinatal deaths than other groups. Both research findings and stakeholders consulted pointed to a range of additional integration challenges that some migrant woman from outside the EU may face, including: gender-based and domestic violence; discrimination; homelessness; and the vulnerability of women living within the Direct Provision system of accommodation. Migrant women are also at increased risk of trafficking in human beings than other groups.

The Migrant Integration Strategy is the main national integration strategy. It ran from 2017 to 2021 and a successor strategy will be developed. A cross-departmental approach to its implementation was adopted by Government, with

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<sup>1</sup> Irish migration policy applies to persons from outside the EEA. For the purposes of this study, EU and non-EU nationals are taken to include/exclude EEA nationals.

specific actions for local authorities; for example, the development of local authority migrant integration strategies. The Migrant Integration Strategy focuses on migrants generally and adopts a mainstreaming approach, with targeted initiatives for certain groups. Migrant women are not specifically addressed in it; neither does it involve a gender mainstreaming approach.

Despite this, a number of measures linked to the strategy have addressed issues related to the integration of migrant women. For example, while funding mechanisms generally do not specifically refer to migrant women, several projects that address the integration of migrant women have been funded under funding streams that support the implementation of the Migrant Integration Strategy at national level, including the Communities Integration Fund and the National Integration Funding Programme. Other funding streams which have funded projects on the issue include the Mná na hÉireann, Women of Ireland Recovery Fund, local authority funding and the Dormant Accounts Fund. Projects seeking to support the integration of migrant women have also been funded through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL). Four case studies of integration measures impacting on migrant women in Ireland were identified by stakeholders consulted and are highlighted here, including one policy measure – the HSE Second National Intercultural Health Strategy 2018–2023 – and three non governmental organisation (NGO) led projects: Nasc’s Gateway Women’s Project; AkiDwA’s Influential Migrant Women group; and the Irish Refugee Council’s International from Day One Women’s Employment Programme.

Integration policy goes further than the Migrant Integration Strategy; other relevant policies include the National Strategy for Women and Girls and the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy. A range of relevant sectoral policies in areas including labour market, education, health, language training, housing and civic participation are also examined in this study.

There is no specific mention of migrant women in the National Strategy for Women and Girls or in most sectoral policies reviewed. Gender mainstreaming is promoted by Government in a wider framework provided in the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017–2021. However, this strategy has been critiqued for its assumption of gender mainstreaming rather than the provision of a detailed approach to intersectionality and for the lack of complementarity of between it and the Migrant Integration Strategy. It is notable that the recently published Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (2022–2026) commits to an intersectional approach in seeking to properly address the complexities of individual identities and to ensure the inclusion of socially excluded groups. Migrants, refugees and international protection applicants as well as undocumented migrants are among those highlighted as potentially needing additional inclusion measures.

The Migrant Integration Strategy, the National Strategy for Women and Girls and the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy culminated in end 2021. Policymakers consulted for this study remarked on contextual changes that have occurred since the development of the current Migrant Integration Strategy and National Strategy for Women and Girls, due to societal shifts and government restructuring, and suggested that gender-related issues and intersectionality will be considered in the development of successor strategies. NGOs noted that these contextual changes since the current strategies were developed create a good opportunity to better address the integration of migrant women as a priority in future policies and measures.



## CHAPTER 1

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### Introduction

#### 1.1 OBJECTIVES AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

A gendered approach in migrant integration policies and measures is important (OECD, 2020) due to the ‘double disadvantage’ that a migrant woman may face, which relates to being both a woman and a migrant (Grubanov-Boskovic et al., 2020). Despite this, there is limited evidence of gendered approaches in national integration policies and action plans in Europe (EMN, forthcoming; FRA, 2017).

This study aims to assess if and to what extent the distinct situation of non-EU migrant women is considered in national integration policies and measures in Ireland. The report is part of an EU-wide study that looks at how the integration of migrant women is treated across several sectoral areas, namely education and training, employment and skills, health and housing, called *Integration of migrant women in the EU and Norway: Policies and measures* (EMN, forthcoming). This Irish study explores the consideration of non-EU migrant women’s integration in the current overarching and sectoral policies and measures. It also looks at examples of measures that support the integration of migrant women. A central focus of this study is the Migrant Integration Strategy, which ran from 2017 to 2020 but was subsequently extended until the end of 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) indicated that the consultation process to develop a new strategic policy for migrant integration will commence during 2022, and that work to draft the new strategy will take place in 2023.<sup>2</sup> Recognising that integration policy goes further than the Migrant Integration Strategy, other relevant overarching policies such as the National Strategy for Women and Girls and the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy are also outlined in this report. In addition, the treatment of migrant women’s integration is examined across a range of relevant sectoral policies. Measures which support non-EU migrant women’s integration are outlined, including European, national and local funding streams. Ireland is a signatory to important international policy instruments: the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. A detailed analysis of such international instruments is beyond the scope of this report, but in brief CEDAW defines discrimination against women and outlines the agenda to fight it on a national level. It also commits Member States to submitting national reports on measures taken, while Article 3 of the covenant commits them to ensuring the

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<sup>2</sup> Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2022). ‘Parliamentary question’, 2 June 2022, <https://www.oireachtas.ie/>.

equal rights of women and men ‘to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights’ specified in the Covenant.

The study focuses on non-EU female adult migrants (i.e., regularly staying migrant women aged at least 18 years) across several categories, including asylum seekers, labour migrants, students and family migrants. Unless otherwise stated, when referring to migrant women we refer to non-EU national women. In addition to policies and measures that focus specifically on migrants, the report also analyses broader policies and measures that include non-EU migrant women as part of a wider target group. For this study, integration is understood to include both integration and ‘inclusion’ policies, as well as measures addressing migrant women. These terms are often used interchangeably.

### 1.1.1 Defining integration

The EMN Glossary (2018, p. 214) defines integration in the EU context as ‘a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of EU Member States’. In Irish policy, integration relatedly is defined 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.* (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017c, p. 11)

Irish integration policy also recognises integration is a two-way process, something that encompasses participation in the economic, social, cultural and political life of the State, and recognises the right of migrants to give expression to their own culture in a way that does not conflict with the key values of Irish society (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017c). In Irish policy, social inclusion is understood to be related to a person’s ability to participate in society. The Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020–2025 provides a definition of social inclusion which underpins related policy responses in Ireland:

*Social Inclusion is achieved when people have access to sufficient income, resources and services to enable them to play an active part in their communities and participate in activities that are considered the norm for people in society generally.* (Government of Ireland, 2020b, p. 11)

This definition seeks to align with the ‘active inclusion’ approach adopted by the European Commission by ‘enabling every citizen, notably the most disadvantaged, to fully participate in society, including having a job’ (Government of Ireland, 2020b, p. 11). Clear overlaps can be seen between the Irish definitions of integration and social inclusion; however, the latter centres more clearly on the means by which an individual can participate and does not mention cultural identity.

### 1.1.2 Mainstreaming migrant and gender integration

From an academic perspective, a reflection on the gendered aspects of migration and integration has been evident in the debate for decades. However, recognition of the feminisation of migration is a relatively recent phenomenon, due to the increased availability of gender-segregated data (Degani and Ghanem, 2020). Moreover, while there is a growing body of literature on gendered aspects of migration, the joint treatment of migrant integration and gender equality still remains rare (Kofman and Raghuram, 2022). Mainstreaming has been one of the central concerns in the debates on migrant integration.

As mentioned by Scholten and van Breugel (2018), specifically targeted migrant integration policies have been gradually replaced by ‘generic policies that cut across various policy sectors and levels of government’ (p. 4). The authors note in their review that mainstreaming is vague and point to the need to distinguish between mainstreaming understood as a strategy that seeks to achieve specified goals, or mainstreaming as a set of methods and tools to implement such a strategy.

The intersection of migrant integration with other factors such as gender (as well as age, religion or disability) can make the development of targeted policies inefficient or too complex, due to the extensive heterogeneity of migrant groups (an issue sometimes referred to as ‘superdiversity’). Yet, as emphasised by Meier (2021), mainstreaming as an approach should not be seen as a resources-saving option; its successful implementation requires political support, financial and human resources as well as coordination and communication. Further, successful mainstreaming requires the collection of high quality data and creating and maintaining links with external experts. Meier also emphasises the role of monitoring and accountability in the process of mainstreaming implementation. An important point is that, unlike gender mainstreaming, migrant integration mainstreaming may be based on a strong assumption of inclusion rather than societal transformation. Further, as pointed out by Kotze (2020), mainstreaming projects (be they focused on gender equality or migrant integration) face the risk of not delivering if there is no widely shared understanding of their goals.

The remaining sections of this chapter provide a background to the report, including an overview of the trends related to non-EU migrant women’s integration, the policy context, methodology, scope and definitions.



## 1.2 OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

This section provides an overview of migrant women in Ireland, in particular their migration status based on available statistics.<sup>3</sup>

According to Eurostat data, the total population (stock) of non-EU individuals residing in Ireland in 2020 was 179,755.<sup>4</sup> This total non-EU population has grown steadily in recent years, up from 124,709 in 2016. The share of non-EU individuals in the total population also increased annually, from 2.6% in 2016 to 3.6% in 2020. The gender-specific shares followed this general trend. Accordingly, the share of non-EU women in the total population of women in Ireland increased from 2.6% (61,916) in 2016 to 3.5% (88,934) in 2020.

Throughout the entire period 2016–2020, men constituted a slight majority of non-EU individuals (not exceeding 51%). In 2020, 49.4% of the non-EU population resident in Ireland were women.

When it comes to net migration flows, estimations from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) were positive for both non-EU migrant men and non-EU migrant women between 2016 and 2020.<sup>5,6</sup> Accordingly, in 2016–2017, women had higher net flows, whereas between 2018 and 2020, the net flows were higher for migrant men. In 2021, more migrant women arrived in Ireland than left the state (0.4 thousand net), whereas there was a negative net flow for migrant men (-1.7 thousand). The 2021 situation was driven by significantly lower rates of immigration compared to previous years.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the non-EU population (both men and women) did not decline in 2020 according to the Eurostat data cited above. This may be partly due to the automatic extension of residence permits, which would otherwise have expired, as well as the presence of migrant workers in sectors of the economy that were particularly important during the pandemic, such as healthcare.<sup>7</sup>

The most recent CSO estimates for Ireland cover up to April 2021.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The areas analysed in this report follow the specification of the EU-wide EMN study based on the agreed research template.

<sup>4</sup> Population on 1 January by age group, sex and citizenship, MIGR\_POP1CTZ (nonEU28 nor reporting country), [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR\\_POP1CTZ/default/table?lang=en&category=demo.demo\\_pop](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR_POP1CTZ/default/table?lang=en&category=demo.demo_pop), 08.06.2022.

<sup>5</sup> The CSO uses the category 'rest of world', which encompasses individuals who are neither EU nor UK citizens.

<sup>6</sup> The data on migration flows are based on 'population and migration estimates', April 2021, <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-pme/populationandmigrationestimatesapril2021/mainresults/>.

<sup>7</sup> See Sheridan et al. (forthcoming).

<sup>8</sup> CSO (2011). 'population and migration estimates', April, <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-pme/populationandmigrationestimatesapril2021/>.

### 1.2.1 Residence permits

Eurostat data, as illustrated in Table 1.1, indicate that the number of first-residence permits issued to both men and women increased between 2016 and 2019. However, significant falls are seen in residence permits issued in 2020, likely reflecting the impact of restricted migration during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1.1 shows that in total more females than males were issued first permits in Ireland throughout the period 2016–2020. This is true across permits issued for family, education and other categories, in each of the years. ('Other' includes permits issued to beneficiaries of international protection, refugees, unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking and unspecified.) Males dominated permits issued for work reasons in each year 2016–2019. Overall, education, followed by remunerated activities, were the main reasons for receiving a permit in that period. For women, the most important categories were education (56% of permits between 2016 and 2020), followed by other (19%). Remunerated activities counted for 17% of first permits issued to women across the period, compared to 24% of such permits issued to men.

In terms of trends, a notable (and increasing) gap exists between men and women in relation to permits issued for 'other reasons'. In 2016, 3,282 of such permits were issued to men (17% of all permits issued to men in 2016), compared to 4,634 to women (21% of all permits issued to women). The year 2019 saw a decline in the share of such permits, to 12% of all permits issued for men, and to 17% for women. In 2020, 6,686 permits were issued, out of which 3,764 were issued to women and 2,914 to men. Fahey et al. (2019) commented on the difficulty in interpreting data on permits issued for 'other reasons' because the category contains a diverse group of permits that do not fit into the main categories.

Finally, when it comes to permits issued for family reasons, the opposite trajectory can be observed. In the case of men, in 2016 a total of 1,934 permits were issued (10% of all permits issued to men), declining to 1,501 permits (5% of all permits issued to men) in 2019. The number of permits issued for this purpose was lowest in 2018 (1,127 permits, less than 5% of all permits issued to men). In the case of women, the trend was different: in 2016, 2,166 permits for family reasons were issued to women (approximately 10% of all permits issued to women), dipping in 2018 (1,654 permits, 6% of the total) and recovering to 2,170 in 2019 (7%). In 2020, 1,131 permits issued for family reasons were granted to women and 697 to men (gender was unknown for seven persons).

Information regarding the top three nationalities receiving first permits is only available for 2016 and 2017 as more recent data are not available. In 2016, the top three countries of nationality among migrant women were Brazil (4,249), the US (4,127) and India (1,850). The same order was noted in 2017 (6,068 from Brazil, 4,070 from the US and 2,564 from India). Among migrant men, in 2016 the top

three nationalities were Brazil (4,073), India (2,469) and the US (1,808). Again, the same order was found for 2017 (5,833 from Brazil, 3,313 from India and 1,833 from the US).

**TABLE 1.1 FIRST PERMITS ISSUED IN IRELAND BY REASON AND GENDER, 2016–2020**

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total 2016-2020
<b>Males, total</b>	19,270	21,906	23,807	28,819	14,676	108,478
<b>Females, total</b>	22,009	25,995	26,132	30,459	15,690	120,285
<b>Males, family</b>	1,934	1,213	1,127	1,501	697	6,472
<b>Females, family</b>	2,166	1,845	1,654	2,170	1,131	8,966
<b>Males, education</b>	9,651	12,714	14,490	16,840	7,046	60,741
<b>Females, education</b>	11,770	14,874	15,703	17,895	7,684	67,926
<b>Males, work</b>	4,403	5,044	5,261	6,852	4,019	25,579
<b>Females, work</b>	3,439	4,354	4,219	5,197	3,111	20,320
<b>Males, other</b>	3,282	2,935	2,929	3,626	2,914	15,686
<b>Females, other</b>	4,634	4,922	4,556	5,197	3,764	23,073

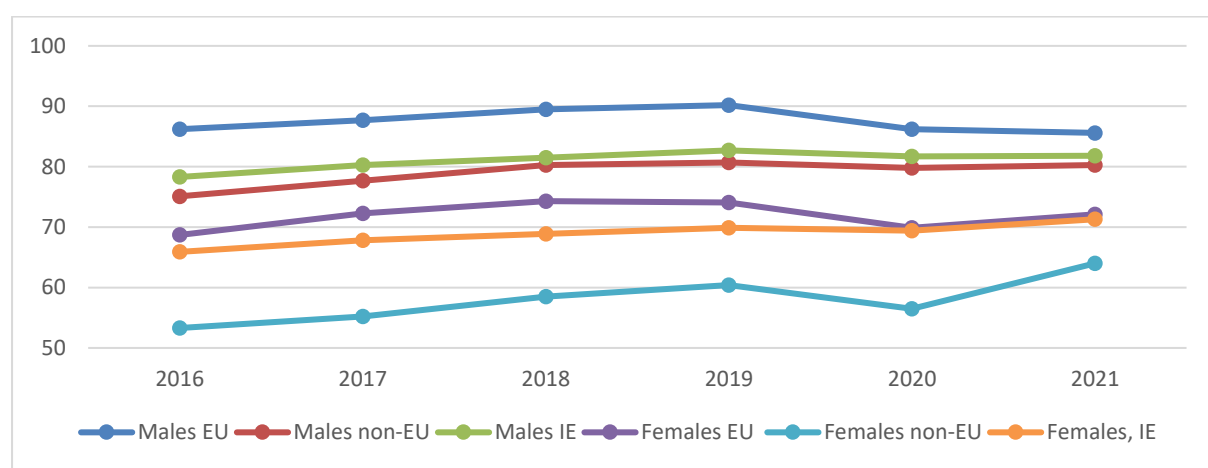
Source: Eurostat, 'First permits by reason, age, sex and citizenship [migr\_resfas]', [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr\\_resfas&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_resfas&lang=en) and 'First permits issued for other reasons by reason, length of validity and citizenship [migr\_resoth]', [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr\\_resoth](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_resoth).

### 1.3 PROFILE OF NON-EU MIGRANT WOMEN

In 2020 there were almost 89,000 non-EU national women and girls living in Ireland, representing 3.5% of the female population.

According to Eurostat data,<sup>9</sup> while the employment rates of non-EU migrant women increased between 2016 and 2021, they remained consistently lower than those of Irish women. In 2016 the employment rate of non-EU migrant women was 53.3%, increasing to 64% in 2021. For Irish women, the respective employment rates were 65.9% and 71.3%. The gap between non-EU migrant men and Irish men was smaller, with respective employment rates of 80.3% and 81.8% in 2021.

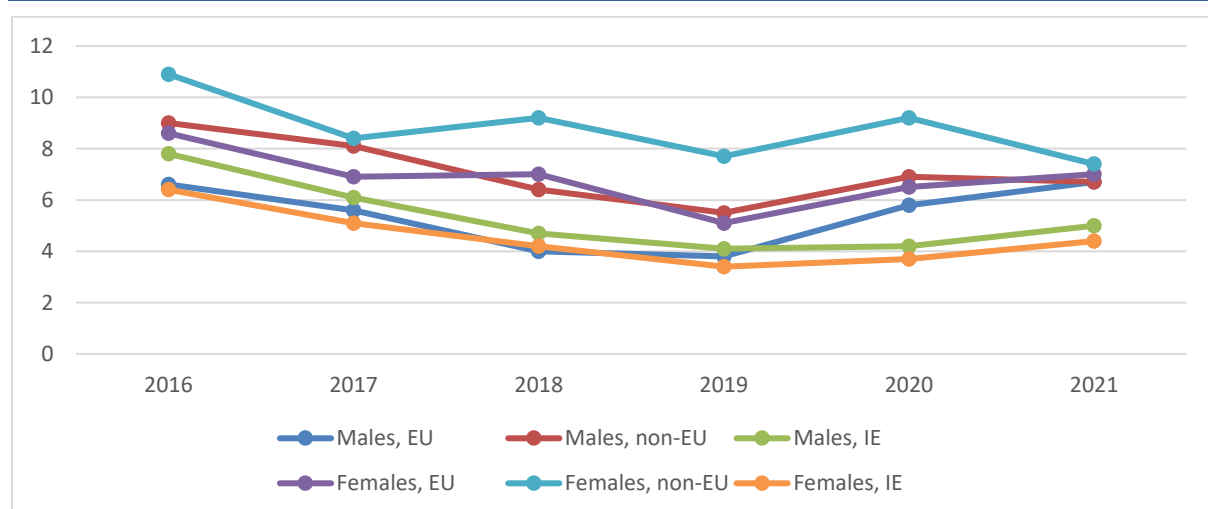
<sup>9</sup> Eurostat, employment rates by sex, age, educational attainment level and citizenship, 20-64 years of age. For non-EU nationals, the 'non-EU27 countries, not reporting country' variable is used.

**FIGURE 1.1 EMPLOYMENT RATES, WOMEN AND MEN, 25-64 YEARS, BY THE REGION OF CITIZENSHIP, 2016–2021.**

Source: Eurostat, 'Employment rates by sex, age and citizenship, LFSA\_ERGAN'.

Note: Non-EU variable: Non-EU27 nor reporting country. EU variable: EU27 except for reporting country.

Eurostat data show that non-EU migrant women in Ireland displayed consistently higher unemployment rates when compared to Irish national women.<sup>10</sup> Whereas the unemployment rate of Irish women declined between 2016 and 2019 (when it reached 3.4%), the unemployment rate of non-EU migrant women declined from 10.9% in 2016 to 8.4% in 2017, before increasing to 9.2% in 2018. In 2019 the unemployment rate was as low as 7.7%, before increasing to 9.2% in 2020 and decline again to 7.4% in 2021.

**FIGURE 1.2 UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, WOMEN AND MEN, 25-64 YEARS BY REGION OF CITIZENSHIP, 2016–2021.**

Source: Eurostat, 'Unemployment rates by sex, age and citizenship, LFSA\_URGAN'.

Note: Non-EU variable: Non-EU27 nor reporting country. EU variable: EU27 except for reporting country.

<sup>10</sup> Eurostat, 'Unemployment rates by sex, age and citizenship [LFSA\_URGAN]'. For non-EU nationals, the 'non-EU27 countries, nor reporting country' variable is used. The data refer to the age group 20-64. See [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/LFSA\\_URGAN\\_\\_custom\\_2884281/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/LFSA_URGAN__custom_2884281/default/table?lang=en).

It is important to note gender differences in employment rates across different nationalities and this is demonstrated in the studies discussed below. The Integration Monitor 2016 showed, for example, that African females displayed both higher unemployment and lower employment rates when compared to African men. The employment gap between women and men in this population was 19 percentage points (31% versus 50% individuals in employment).

O'Connell (2018) found that for all non-EU residents in Ireland, employment rates were higher for men when compared to women. However, the research indicated that the employment rate of African persons was particularly low and showed the biggest employment gap between men and women. Accordingly, the employment rate of African men was 50.2% whereas that of women was lower, at 37.8%. Africans also experienced the highest unemployment rates, with 32.9% of African men and 36.9% of women unemployed.<sup>11</sup>

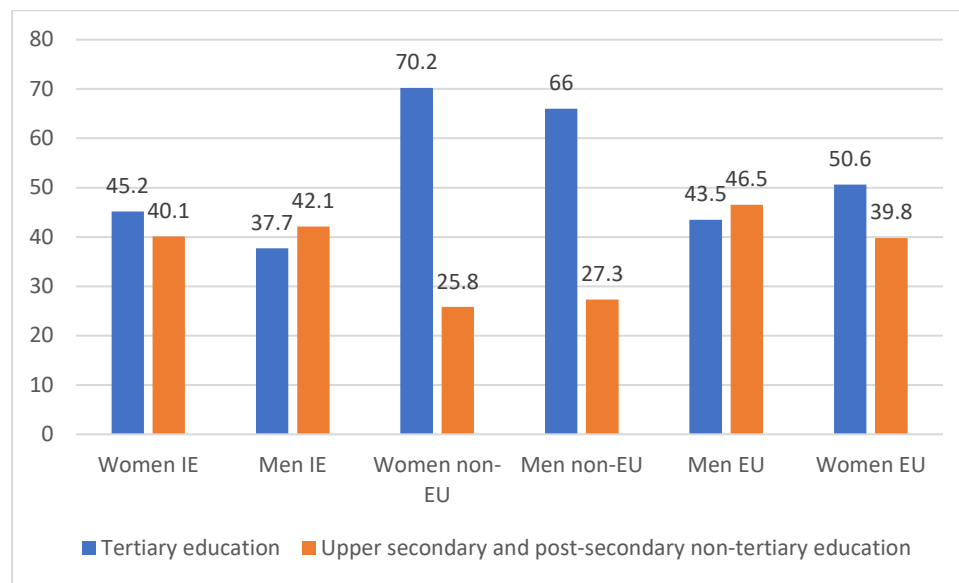
Cronin et al. (2018) found that, in 2016, in all analysed nationality groupings, men dominated among jobseeker claimants. In the non-EU subpopulations, the proportion of female claimants was found to be lowest among individuals with an African background (38.2% of all claimants), followed by those in the 'rest of the world' category (39.7%). In the Irish population, the share of women among claimants was 35.6%. One of the explanations for such gender imbalances provided by the study was international protection applicants' lack of access to the labour market (Nasc, 2018).<sup>12</sup> Another explanation might relate to the 'qualified adults' rules regarding couples; female partners may not be claiming unemployment benefits independently but as a dependent of the male partner. The *Report of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality* (Citizens' Assembly, 2021) indicated that the majority (90%) of those availing of the 'qualified adults' rule are women.

Eurostat data showed that the share of non-EU migrant women with tertiary education in 2019 was higher (70.2%) than that of non-EU migrant men (66%) and of Irish women (45.2%). Related to this, in regard to upper secondary and post-secondary attainment, in 2019 non-EU migrant women showed lower levels (25.8%) than migrant men (27.3%) and Irish women (40.1%).

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<sup>11</sup> Note that the research is based on the 2011 Census of Population data, a year when the unemployment rate for the Irish-born individuals was also high: men 22.6%, women 13.7%.

<sup>12</sup> Since July 2018, a labour market access permission may be issued to eligible protection applicants who have not received a first-instance recommendation on their international protection; currently this can be done after a period of six months.

**FIGURE 1.3 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY GENDER, AND THE REGION OF CITIZENSHIP, 2019**

Source: 'Eurostat Population by educational attainment level, sex, age and citizenship (%)', EDAT\_LFS'.

Note: Non-EU variable: Non-EU28 nor reporting country. EU variable: EU28 except for reporting country.

Eurostat data give an insight into the issues facing non-EU migrant women regarding unmet medical needs.<sup>13</sup> Despite a decline in the share of migrant men and Irish women with unmet medical needs from 2016 to 2019, the share of non-EU migrant women with unmet medical needs increased from 0.8% in 2016 to 10% in 2019.<sup>14</sup>

In general, migrants can experience challenges regarding adequate housing (Russell et al., 2021). Migrant women may face particular difficulties. While it is important to keep in mind the small sample sizes, EU-SILC data allow us to look at the situation of non-EU migrant women regarding living in overcrowded households. The data demonstrate that such migrant women fare significantly worse than their Irish counterparts in this regard. A considerably higher share of migrant women indicated overcrowding than Irish women.<sup>15</sup> In 2016, 17.8% of non-EU migrant women indicated overcrowding compared to 2.8% of Irish women the same year. For migrant women, the share declined to 12.3% in 2017, only to return to 16.3% in the following year. By contrast, the proportion of Irish women living in overcrowded conditions continued to fall, to 2.1% in 2017 and 1.3% in

<sup>13</sup> Eurostat, EU-SILC, 'Self-reported unmet needs for medical examination by sex, age, main reason declared and groups of country of citizenship', age group 20-64. For non-EU nationals, the 'non-EU28 nor reporting country' variable is used.

<sup>14</sup> It should be stated that the representativeness of the statistics should be treated with caution due to the small sample size and the nature of responses (unmet needs) with only a small share of positive answers. The minimum effective sample size for Ireland used in the cross-sectional component of the survey is 3,750 households and 8,000 individuals.

<sup>15</sup> Eurostat provides the following definition of overcrowding: 'A person is considered as living in an overcrowded household if the household does not have at its disposal a minimum of rooms equal to: - one room for the household; - one room by couple in the household; - one room for each single person aged 18 and more; - one room by pair of single people of the same sex between 12 and 17 years of age; - one room for each single person between 12 and 17 years of age and not included in the previous category; - one room by pair of children under 12 years of age'. See <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/tessi170>.

2018. The situation for non-EU migrant men was more stable, with the share of migrant males reporting overcrowding increasing from 10% in 2016 to 10.3%–10.4% in subsequent years.<sup>16</sup>

These results are consistent with research by McGinnity et al. (2022), based on an analysis of Census 2016 data, which finds the risk of overcrowding to be significantly higher among non-Irish-born individuals.<sup>17</sup> The highest proportions of individuals living in overcrowded households are found among persons born in the following regions: South Asia (41%); sub-Saharan and other African countries (39%); Middle East and North Africa (MENA); and east Asia (37%). Among other non-EU migrants, the smallest proportions were found among those from North America and Oceania (5%), the latter category being the only one with a lower incidence of overcrowding than that found in the Irish population. After controlling for socio-economic characteristics, the odds of living in an overcrowded household are highest for those from east Asia. As for gender, the odds of experiencing overcrowding are lower for women than for men. Yet, when it comes to ‘one parent with children’ households, which are female-dominated, the odds of overcrowding among all migrants are significantly higher than for those born in the UK or Northern Ireland (ibid.).

Regarding homelessness, McGinnity et al. (2022) found that 25% of all females experiencing homelessness in 2016 were non-Irish, despite the fact that non-Irish nationals constituted 11.1% of the female population. As regards the non-EU group, McGinnity et al. (2022) found that women in the ‘Asian’ or ‘Nigerian, Somali and Other African’ nationality groupings are overrepresented among homeless persons relative to their proportion in the Irish population (ibid.). See Section 2.6 for further discussion.

Women constituted a minority of asylum applicants in the period 2016–2020. According to Eurostat data,<sup>18</sup> the share of women among first-time applicants was in the range of 38% in 2016 and less than 36% in 2019.

Men constituted the majority among international protection accommodation service (IPAS) accommodation residents.<sup>19</sup> In December 2021, out of 6,887 individuals residing in the international protection accommodation system (including children), there were 2,882 females (42%) and 4,005 males (58%) (DCEDIY, 2021). For comparison, in October 2018, out of 6,405 residents, 2,649

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<sup>16</sup> It should be stated that the representativeness of the results based on the EU-SILC survey should be treated with caution in this case due to the small sample size.

<sup>17</sup> McGinnity et al. (2022) use a different definition of overcrowding – a situation where the number of individuals in a household exceeds the number of rooms – and focuses on private households only.

<sup>18</sup> Eurostat, ‘Asylum and first time asylum applicants – Annual aggregated data’, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/tps00191>.

<sup>19</sup> International Protection Accommodation Services is a division of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, responsible for the provision of accommodation and related services to international protection applicants. The international protection accommodation system is also referred to as ‘Direct Provision’.

(41%) were female and 3,756 (59%) were male. Among adults only (4,627), in October 2018 there were 1,794 (39%) females and 2,833 (61%) males (Department of Justice and Equality, 2018).

#### 1.4 POLICY BACKGROUND: IRELAND AND THE EU

In light of the ‘double disadvantage’ non-EU migrant women may face, the need for a gendered approach to integration policy has become increasingly recognised at EU level. The European Commission’s Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027, for instance, has acknowledged the need for gender-specific processes and targeted integration supports addressing gender-related challenges (European Commission, 2021). Similarly, the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 emphasises the need for policies that include both gender mainstreaming and targeted measures (European Commission, 2020). However, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) has found that national integration policies and action plans show limited evidence of a gendered approach (FRA, 2017). EMN (forthcoming) also finds that while a majority of EU Member States have national integration policies in place, few specifically address women.

In Ireland, integration policy does not distinguish between migrants from EU and non-EU regions. Here the term ‘migrant’ refers to the broader group. Integration is a shared competency across all government departments. While responsibility for coordinating migrant integration policy at the national level sits within the DCEDIY, the delivery of integration services rests with individual government departments and agencies. Various initiatives and projects relevant to integration also take place at local level/within the community, often as part of social inclusion activities; for example, those funded under the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP).

The key policy framework for integration in Ireland is the Migrant Integration Strategy, which originally ran from January 2017 to December 2020, but was extended to end 2021 due to COVID-19.<sup>20</sup> DCEDIY has indicated that a consultation process to develop a new strategic policy for migrant integration will commence during 2022, and that work to draft the new strategy will take place in 2023.<sup>21</sup> The original strategy comprises a framework for government action, with the aim of enabling all migrants to actively participate in Irish communities, workplaces and politics. The primary focus is on ensuring the equitable provision of public services within a mainstreamed system. All European Economic Area (EEA) and non-EEA

<sup>20</sup> Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2020). ‘Minister O’Gorman marks International Migrants Day with €2.2m funding for integration projects’, December 2020.

<sup>21</sup> Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2022). ‘Parliamentary question’, 2 June, <https://www.oireachtas.ie/>.



nationals, as well as second-generation Irish nationals, fall within the scope of the Migrant Integration Strategy (Arnold et al., 2019).

The current strategy notes that the principle of mainstreaming integration in public services has been established policy since 2008 (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017c). In previous EMN research, the cross-departmental approach was highlighted by an official from the (then) Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration within the Department of Justice as an important and challenging aspect of ensuring collective implementation of the strategy and integration policy in general (Arnold et al., 2019).

The needs and challenges of migrant women have been recognised in certain other national policies and measures developed, including the Intercultural Health Strategy. While there is no specific focus on integration, the measures laid out in Ireland's Third Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security for the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, based on UN Resolution 1325,<sup>22</sup> is also strongly focused on migrant women and girls. As with the Intercultural Health Strategy (discussed in detail in Chapter 3), this may reflect a consultation process which engaged closely with black and minority ethnic women.<sup>23</sup> Other relevant strategies to the integration of migrant women include the National Women and Girls Strategy 2017–2020 (extended to 2021) and the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017–2021. As discussed later in this report, local integration strategies and sectoral policies in Ireland may take account of the integration needs of migrant women, though this does vary.

## 1.5 SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The information used to produce this report was gathered as part of the EMN work programme for 2021 and according to study specifications which aim to support cross-country comparability in the information collected. Each EMN National Contact point produces a national report, following which a comparative synthesis report is published, in which the key findings of the national reports are collated to provide a wider EU and Norway perspective. The synthesis report for this study is called *The integration of migrant women in the EU and Norway: Policies and measures* (EMN, forthcoming). The wider EMN study focuses on the integration of migrant women in the main sectoral areas covered by the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027 (European Commission, 2021); these include education and training, employment and skills, and health and housing, which are considered to form the basis for societal integration.

This national study aims to assess if and to what extent the distinct situation of non-EU migrant women is considered in national integration policies and

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<sup>22</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/#resolution>.

<sup>23</sup> See <https://dfa.ie/media/dfa/ourrolepolicies/womenpeaceandsecurity/Third-National-Action-Plan.pdf>.

measures. Integration policies include targeted strategies and action plans on integration, as well as broader policy mechanisms relevant to migrant women's integration; for example, sectoral government programmes (concerning health, education, labour market, civic participation, etc.). Policies within the scope of the study include those that were in place in 2021 as well as upcoming or planned policy developments. Measures within the scope of the study include systemic initiatives, projects and legislative measures which support the implementation of integration policies.

This study defines migrant women as non-EU national female adult migrants (i.e., regularly residing female migrants aged 18 and above). Policies and measures that do not exclusively target non-EU nationals, but which include migrant women as part of a wider target group (e.g. women in general; or non-Irish women in general, which may include EU citizens with a migrant background) are also within its scope.

Desk research was undertaken at the beginning of the research for this study, including a review of the academic and policy literature. Information was accessed via government websites and publications, as well as non-governmental organisation (NGO) reports and submissions to government. Six interviews were conducted with representatives of two units within the DCEDIY, as well as representatives of the following NGOs: Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre; the Irish Refugee Council; and AkiDWA. In November 2021, input was given by representatives of New Communities Partnerships and officials from the HSE Social Inclusion Office and the Department of Justice. The report was reviewed internally and externally.

This report presents four case studies of integration measures impacting on migrant women in Ireland. As set out in the common study specifications, the selection of the four integration measures was made by an expert working in the field (such as a policymaker, service provider or representative of a civil society or migrant organisation).

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) defines 'intersectionality' as an 'analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination'.<sup>24</sup> In this report, the term 'intersectionality' is used to capture the specificity of a migration status and gender intersection. Whenever additional characteristics are included, this is clearly indicated in the text.

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<sup>24</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality, 'Intersectionality', Thesaurus and glossary, <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1263>. Accessed June 2022.

## **1.6 STUDY STRUCTURE**

Chapter 2 examines the research and policy debates regarding opportunities and challenges for the integration of non-EU migrant women in Ireland. Chapter 3 investigates how non-EU migrant women are addressed in national integration policy and sectoral policies. Chapter 4 focuses on integration measures, particularly funding mechanisms that address the integration of non-EU migrant women. It also highlights four case studies. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the report and reflects on the future outlook for Irish policy and measures.

## CHAPTER 2

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### Challenges for the integration of non-EU migrant women

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The main public and policy debates regarding non-EU migrant women's integration in Ireland relate to: challenges accessing employment (for example relating to under-employment, discrimination, skills recognition, language skills and childcare); trafficking; gender-based violence and the vulnerability of victims of domestic violence whose residence status is dependent on their spouse/partner; and challenges faced by migrant women in the Direct Provision system of accommodation.<sup>25</sup> Available research provides certain insights into the challenges to non-EU migrant women's integration in Ireland, particularly regarding employment and health. Research has also pointed to certain housing challenges facing migrant women. The focus of this chapter is on challenges faced by non-EU women but, to add context, we refer to selected evidence on challenges faced by migrant women in general.

The recent public consultation accompanying the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality provides a useful overview of important debates regarding migrant women's integration, with several submissions from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) focused on the situation of non-EU migrant women, while others identified migrant status as an additional challenge faced by women.<sup>26,27</sup> For example, the submission of the Abortion Rights Campaign (2020) indicated migration status or living in a reception centre as 'especially onerous' barriers in accessing abortion under the Health Act 2018. Another example can be seen in the submission by ActionAid, which emphasised the issue of female genital mutilation, pointing out that 'CSO (2016) statistics estimate that 5,790 women and girls in Ireland have survived genital mutilation and there are 1,632 at high risk of being cut' (ActionAid Ireland, 2020). The challenges facing non-EU migrant women and relating to their integration, as detailed in submissions, Irish research and stakeholder interviews, are discussed in more detail in the following subsections.

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<sup>25</sup> Direct Provision refers to the system of accommodation and supports offered to applicants for international protection in Ireland by the International Protection Accommodation Service.

<sup>26</sup> The Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality was established by an Oireachtas resolution in July 2019 to consider gender equality and make recommendations to the Oireachtas to advance gender equality.

<sup>27</sup> Submissions included those made by AkiDwA, the Immigrant Council of Ireland, Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, New Communities Partnership; a joint submission from the Immigrant council of Ireland and Ruhama; and a joint submission from Akidwa, Stamp-3-Association, Ruhama, Nasc and Sexual Violence Centre Cork.

## 2.2 EMPLOYMENT

### 2.2.1 Challenges and barriers to employment

A recent survey by the New Communities Partnerships of 409 migrant women, in which no distinction was made between non-EU and EU nationals, indicated that 64% of surveyed women were employed, approximately one-third of whom (37%) were employed in a role related to their education (Sata and Ruiz Moriana, 2020).<sup>28</sup> Some 86% of surveyed women indicated that they face barriers in accessing employment in Ireland. The most common barriers mentioned were work permits, followed by childcare, language knowledge and qualifications recognition.

A study by McGinnity et al. (2020), based on the 2016 Census data, explored the context of high-skilled employment of migrants, in which high-skilled was defined as involving a professional or managerial role. Comparing EEA and non-EEA groups of migrants, the study pointed to the higher odds of being in high-skilled employment found among non-EEA individuals as compared to EEA workers. Language proficiency is related to higher chances of high-skills employment. In the general migrant population, men have higher odds (1.18) of such employment than women. As for EEA and non-EEA differentiation, in the EEA migrant population, men have higher odds of being in high-skilled employment compared to women, whereas in the non-EEA group it is women who have a slightly higher probability of such employment.

A submission to the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality from the New Communities Partnership (New Communities Partnership, 2020) highlighted barriers to migrant (broadly defined) women's employment and career progression, pointing to the intersectional nature of disadvantage, where gender and ethnic origin both play a role. This echoes European research that indicates migrant women face particular disadvantage due to intersectionality related to being a woman and their status as a non-EU born migrant (Grubanov-Boskovic et al., 2020). According to the New Communities Partnership submission, migrant women experience occupational segregation, discrimination and a gender pay gap. A submission by AkiDwA (2020b) similarly outlined the 'multiple discriminations based on race, gender and religion' faced by migrant women of African descent. At the same time, research by McGinnity et al. (2018b) provided insights into workplace discrimination faced by migrant women, showing that while White Irish, West European and East European women experience more discrimination in the workplace compared to men with the same ethnic and nationality background, this

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<sup>28</sup> The survey might not be representative and the results cited should be treated as illustration of challenges to employment rather than indicating the magnitude of such challenges.

is not the case for UK, Black, Asian or other non-Irish women in relation to their male ethnic counterparts.<sup>29</sup>

The AkiDWA submission to the Citizens' Assembly indicated that other barriers facing migrant women include a lack of skills recognition, challenges related to a lack of experience in the Irish labour market, and problems reconciling work and childcare. A submission from the New Communities Partnership (2020) also emphasised the lack of access to childcare as a barrier to gainful employment, especially in the context of absent extended families. Local focus group research conducted for Longford County Council's intercultural strategic plan found that migrant women may be parenting alone and that migrant (broadly defined) women were more likely to have multiple part-time jobs and to earn less than men (Longford County Council, 2018). A lack of employment can also increase the vulnerability of non-EU migrant women, particularly for lone parents.<sup>30,31</sup>

The submission by the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI, 2020) highlighted a further barrier: the issue whereby the spouses or de facto partners of those with a general employment permit generally receive a Stamp 3 permission, which does not provide the right to work. The Nasc representative also discussed the constraints of the Stamp 3 immigration status, which precludes the holder from accessing the labour market without an employment permit, and recommended that an autonomous permit should be granted to spouses/partners of all employment permit holders.<sup>32,33</sup> While the situation was amended in 2019 in the case of those whose spouse/partner holds a critical skills employment permit,<sup>34</sup> the situation remains unchanged for those whose spouse/partner holds a general employment permit.

## 2.2.2 Impact of challenges on migrant women's employment

Several stakeholders consulted identified access to employment as a potential challenge for non-EU migrant women.<sup>35</sup> The particular impact of various challenges on this group of migrant women is now recognised within Irish public policy

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<sup>29</sup> It should be mentioned, nonetheless, that the highest levels of workplace discrimination in general were found for the 'Black non-Irish group' among all groups studied (McGinnity et al., 2018b).

<sup>30</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDWA, 7 October 2021.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, 13 October 2021.

<sup>32</sup> This solution would follow the logic of the critical skills employment permits, described in footnote 33.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with a representative of Nasc, 18 October 2021.

<sup>34</sup> Critical skills employment permits were introduced by the Employment Permits Regulations 2014, which came into effect on 1 October 2014. Since 6 March 2019, spouses and partners of critical skills employment permits holders are granted Stamp 1 permission, which provides direct access to the labour market. As indicated by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, this change was introduced to 'streamline existing processes and result in a more attractive offering for both investors and international talent'; See <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Workplace-and-Skills/Employment-Permits/Permit-Types/Dependant-Partner-Spouse-Employment-Permit/>. Spouses and partners of general employment permits holders must apply for a separate employment permit.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with DCEDIY official, Equality and Gender Equality Division, 14 October 2021; Interview with a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, 13 October 2021; Interview with representatives of AkiDWA, 7 October 2021.

discourse.<sup>36</sup> A DCEDIY official stated that employment is a particularly important aspect of migrant women's integration in Ireland and stressed the importance of stable, appropriate employment.<sup>37</sup> However, an AkiDwA representative remarked that, despite the importance of, and challenges related to, labour market integration facing non-EU migrant women, there are no policies or measures which have a specific focus on the employment of migrant women.<sup>38</sup>

NGOs highlighted that many of their migrant female clients are employed in 'traditional' caring occupations, due to limited opportunities to work in other sectors,<sup>39</sup> and that they are often underemployed relative to their educational attainment.<sup>40</sup> The Migrant Rights Centre Ireland submission to the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality (2020) also outlined the vulnerable situation of non-EU migrant women in the domestic work and care sector, noting that those concerned may face substandard conditions of employment in terms of pay, working time or contractual arrangements. AkiDwA's submission (AkiDwA, 2020b) welcomed the recent opening of the labour market to international protection applicants,<sup>41</sup> but argued that the measure is insufficient in scope. At interview, AkiDwA commented that insufficient targeted employment supports exist for migrant women. They added that where training programmes are provided, migrant women may not be able to secure employment due to systemic discrimination.<sup>42</sup>

The impact of the various barriers and challenges facing migrant women in the labour market can be seen in statistics regarding activity and unemployment rates of migrant women in Ireland. For example, according to Eurostat data, activity rates among non-EU migrant women increased between 2016 and 2019, yet the difference between non-EU migrant women and Irish women remained significant.<sup>43</sup> The largest gap – the difference in activity rates expressed in percentage points – was observed in the first quarter of 2016 (18.7 percentage points) while the smallest one was seen in the fourth quarter of 2018 (7.5 percentage points).

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with DCEDIY official, International Protection Accommodation Policy, Disability Policy and Anti-Racism Policy, 30 September 2021.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with DCEDIY official, Equality and Gender Equality Division, 14 October 2021.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDwA, 7 October 2021.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, 13 October 2021; Interview with a representative of Nasc, 18 October 2021.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDwA, 7 October 2021; Interview with a representative of Nasc, 18 October 2021.

<sup>41</sup> Since July 2018, a labour market access permission may be issued to eligible protection applicants who have not received a first-instance recommendation on their international protection; currently this can be done after a period of six months.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDwA, 7 October 2021.

<sup>43</sup> Eurostat defines the activity rate as the percentage of the economically active population (employed individuals and unemployed individuals) aged 15-64 on the total population of the same age. See <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TIPSLM60/default/table?lang=en>.

The research by McGinnity et al. (2020) demonstrates that the odds of being unemployed among EEA citizens in Ireland are 78% relative to the odds of non-EEA individuals. For both sub-populations, language proficiency is the predictor of lower unemployment odds. When it comes to gender distinctions, in the general migrant population, men have lower odds of unemployment compared to women. These results hold for both EEA and non-EEA migrants, and for the latter group the odds are smaller.

### 2.3 EDUCATION

Proficiency in the language of a host country is a strong predictor of migrant integration, as discussed in the previous subsection. In addition to this, higher educational attainment is related to lower unemployment as well as higher employment chances. While, as mentioned in Section 1.3, a higher share of individuals with tertiary education can be found in the non-EU migrant population as compared to Irish nationals, the group is not homogenous in this respect. McGinnity et al. (2020) showed that high educational attainment can be found among migrants from North America, Australia, Oceania as well as western Europe. Yet for some groups, such as those from Asia or Africa, considerable within-group differences were noted.

The same study looked at English language proficiency in the migrant population. Again, significant within-group differences were noted in the case of migrants from Asia, Africa or the ‘rest of the world’ (ibid.).

Language challenges facing migrant (broadly defined) women have been highlighted by some local authorities; for example, language difficulties are linked to isolation among migrant women in the Offaly Integration Strategy (Offaly County Council, 2020) and the Meath and Louth Joint Integration Strategy (Meath County Council, 2019). A representative from the Irish Refugee Council expressed the view that language classes do not sufficiently cater for learners past intermediate level.<sup>44</sup> The representative commented that classes offered by the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) are not intensive and are infrequently offered at higher levels (above B1 level).

Migrant women wishing to attend education also have gendered support needs, such as childcare, which according to the Irish Refugee Council representative are not adequately met.<sup>45</sup> Limited childcare supports particularly impact on low-earning women.<sup>46</sup> While there are some subsidised childcare schemes, such as the Childcare Employment and Training Support (CETS) scheme, criticisms have been made; it is not available for all courses, and the schemes are highly difficult to use

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<sup>44</sup> Comments from a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, November 2021.

<sup>45</sup> Comments from a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, November 2021.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, 13 October 2021.



due to lack of available childcare places.<sup>47</sup> It was also underlined that ETB provision should take account of gendered support needs, for example related to childcare.<sup>48,49</sup> The submission from the Immigrant Council of Ireland (2020) to the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality called for 'additional supports to fully participate in Irish society', including English language classes and affordable childcare.

## 2.4 HEALTH

Barlow et al. (2021) show that while in terms of healthcare use there is no statistically significant difference between individuals born in Ireland and the UK, such differences could be noted in the case of other migrants (born neither in Ireland nor the UK). Maître (2020) shows that all non-Irish groups have bigger shares of 'good' or 'very good' self-assessed health status as compared to the Irish population. However, when controlling for age and educational attainment, the odds for reporting such positive health status remain higher for EU migrants, while becoming smaller for non-EU migrants, as compared to the Irish reference group.

Eurostat data give an insight into the issues facing non-EU migrant women regarding unmet medical needs.<sup>50</sup> Despite a decline in the share of migrant men and Irish women with unmet medical needs from 2016 to 2019, the share of migrant women with unmet medical needs increased from 0.8% in 2016 to 10% in 2019.<sup>51</sup>

In the field of healthcare, NGO research points to several specific challenges facing migrant women, including a higher proportion of maternal deaths, unmet medical needs, mental health difficulties and limited access to information regarding services available, which leads to under-utilisation of adequate services (AkiDWA, 2020b).

Regarding perinatal deaths, media and NGOs have reported that African women face relatively high perinatal mortality rates.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, the Health Services Executive (HSE) report on perinatal statistics, published in June 2021 (HPO, 2021)

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<sup>47</sup> Comments from a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, November 2021.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, 13 October 2021.

<sup>49</sup> An ongoing debate, which is not specific to migrant women, concerns access to reduced fees for third level education. Non-EU migrants holding a Stamp 3 residence permission (for example, the family members of general employment permit holders) must pay full 'non-EU' fees to access third level and are not eligible for the Student Universal Support Scheme (SUSI).

<sup>50</sup> Eurostat, EU-SILC, 'Self-reported unmet needs for medical examination by sex, age, main reason declared and groups of country of citizenship, age group 20-64'. For non-UE nationals, the 'non-EU28 countries, not reporting country' variable is used.

<sup>51</sup> The representativeness of the statistics should be treated with caution due to the small sample size and the nature of responses (unmet needs), with only a small share of positive answers. The minimum effective sample size for Ireland used in the cross-sectional component of the survey is 3,750 households and 8,000 individuals.

<sup>52</sup> Martin, N. (2021). 'Perinatal mortality within African community in Ireland needs "urgent" investigation', *The Irish Examiner*, 8 May, <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-40283846.html>.

and covering 2018, demonstrates that women with a migrant background face higher risks surrounding pregnancy and childbirth.<sup>53</sup> Accordingly, while the stillbirth mortality rate for Irish-born women was 3.0 (that is, three stillbirths per 1,000 births), the equivalent rate for women from Africa was 4.8, and for women from Asia it was 5.5. By contrast, the rate for women from North America was 1.0. The early neonatal mortality rate was 1.6 for Irish women, 2.8 for African women and 1.2 for women from Asia, as compared to 3.0 among women from North America. Therefore, the perinatal mortality rate among the analysed categories of women was highest among those from Africa (7.6), followed by those from Asia (6.7). The rate for American women was 4.0 whereas for Irish-born women it was 4.6. It should be stated that the perinatal mortality rate has declined for some categories in recent years – in 2016 it was 9.0 for women from Africa, 5.1 for those from Asia and 5.6 for Ireland-born women (HPO, 2018).

The mental health challenges and needs of migrant women have been acknowledged at national level, for example in the *Briefing on women's mental health in Ireland 2020* by the Women's Health Taskforce (National Women's Council of Ireland, 2019).<sup>54</sup> A 2020 AkiDwA report (AkiDwA, 2020a) on the mental health of migrant women, based on focus groups and individual interviews, provides evidence on stressors, identifying the post-migration period as problematic. The study identified three main themes related to stress: the practical challenges of everyday life; powerlessness and lack of agency; and grief and loss. The same report identified that the statuses of international protection applicant and refugee have a negative influence the mental health of migrant women. The submission by AkiDwA (2020b) to the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality echoes these results, indicating that for women residing in Direct Provision, loss of agency and autonomy as well as detachment from home countries and families have contributed to mental health difficulties. A study by Huschke et al. (2020) found that there is an absence of women's voices in the current approach to perinatal mental health, especially those of women of colour, ethnic minorities or migrant women.

## 2.5 DOMESTIC, SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

A recent study by O'Reilly et al. (2021) that analysed law and policy documents related to Ireland's policy response to gender-based violence points out that the State's policy response did not reduce vulnerabilities related to such violence. Focusing on migrants, the authors stated they 'have identified a pattern of

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<sup>53</sup> The HSE study definition includes in perinatal deaths both stillbirths and early neonatal births. The perinatal mortality rate is calculated as follows: (Number of stillbirths and early neonatal deaths) X 1,000/Total number of live births and stillbirths. See HPO (2021).

<sup>54</sup> This taskforce was established by the Department of Health in 2019 to improve women's health outcomes and experiences of healthcare.

exclusion, minimization and inaction in the state's policy response in the nexus of migration and gender-based violence' (O'Reilly et al., 2021, p. 13).

Violence against migrant women was highlighted in several NGO submissions to the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality as a key concern. The feminisation of the risks of exploitation and violence was emphasised in the submission by the Immigrant Council of Ireland, for instance (ICI, 2020). The submission stated that women constitute the vast majority of individuals being trafficked and highlighted the issue of domestic abuse. With a specific focus on violence against women, a joint submission by the Immigrant Council of Ireland, AkiDWA, Stamp-3 Association, Ruhama, Nasc and Sexual Violence Centre Cork (ICI et al., 2020) stated that certain forms of violence, such as 'sex trafficking and prostitution, female genital mutilation, forced marriages, honour-based violence, exploitative surrogacy, sale of babies, sale of eggs and other less known forms [of] exploiting the sexual and reproductive rights of migrant women', overwhelmingly affect migrant women. This submission indicated that violence specific to migrant women is ignored by the State, and that the response is not mainstreamed: 'Apart from domestic sexual violence, the current National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence 2016 ... does not address other forms of violence, as outlined in the standard definition'.<sup>55</sup> (For a summary of the new strategy introduced in 2022, see Sub-section 3.2.2.5.) Further, the submission raised concern that the trafficking of migrant women for sexual exploitation is not categorised as a form of violence against women and that the victims of such practices are accommodated within the Direct Provision system, which is not a suitable environment. Finally, the issue of domestic violence towards women with a dependent migration status was raised.

The latter issue was also raised in a submission by the Immigrant Council of Ireland, which highlighted the vulnerability of migrant women whose migration status depends on a husband or partner ('primary migrant'), who are faced with the possibility of becoming 'undocumented, homeless and without means of support' (Immigrant Council of Ireland, 2020). A submission by Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (2020) similarly raised concern that a victim's immigration status may be dependent on that of the perpetrator, noting that the vulnerability of a person in this situation is heightened in the context of a lack of family and community support.

In its submission, the Immigrant Council of Ireland pointed to the existence of immigration guidelines for victims of domestic violence,<sup>56</sup> which allow victims to

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<sup>55</sup> In the meaning of the Victim's Rights Directive (Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA).

<sup>56</sup> See <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/my-situation-has-changed-since-i-arrived-in-ireland/immigration-guidelines-for-victims-of-domestic-violence/>.

be granted an independent immigration status. While a largely welcomed measure for migrant women who are particularly at risk of domestic violence, certain NGOs have critiqued the gaps in these guidelines, which are seen to not go far enough to protect migrant women (Immigrant Council of Ireland, 2020).<sup>57</sup> According to the Immigrant Council of Ireland submission to the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality, the scheme falls short of being a legislative measure, with permits granted under ministerial discretion (Immigrant Council of Ireland, 2020). In the same submission, the Immigrant Council of Ireland argues that improvements are needed in regards to the right to work as the residence permit issued may not carry access to the labour market. Similarly, despite finding these guidelines to represent a good first step, the Nasc representative stressed that such measures should go further by better addressing coercive control, an issue that is not mentioned in the guidelines.<sup>58</sup> In addition, the NASC representative felt that the required documentation is not reflective of the experience of migrant women as they may not, for example, have a safety or protection order in place against the perpetrator.<sup>59</sup>

NASC highlighted the barrier that can be posed by the habitual residence condition for non-EU migrant women who are victims of domestic violence seeking to secure independent means.<sup>60</sup> The habitual residence condition is an eligibility condition applied to certain social welfare payments in Ireland, which aims to assess the permanence of an applicant's residence in the State. Unless an individual has been resident within the Common Travel Area for two years prior to making an application, or there are other clear indications that he or she is 'habitually resident', their application may be assessed under the habitual residence condition (Quinn et al, 2014). As argued by Reilly et. Al (2021), the requirements of the habitual residence condition might be difficult to meet for migrants who have an inferior position in terms of accommodation (for example, they may lack formal rental contracts) and the labour market (lack of or unstable employment – part-time employment, fixed-term contract). Meeting the condition is required in order to access a range of benefits including Supplementary Welfare Allowance.<sup>61</sup>

A joint submission by the Immigrant Council of Ireland and Ruhama (Ruhama and ICI, 2020) highlighted the issues of prostitution and trafficking of women. This submission emphasised the impact on women with a migrant background: up to 97% of women in prostitution (approximately 1,000 women) are migrant women, many of them having been trafficked to Ireland. The contribution highlighted structural factors such as poverty, precarious immigration status or inadequate housing (Ruhama and ICI, 2020). Along with calls for reducing barriers to leave

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<sup>57</sup> Interview with a representative of Nasc, 18 October 2021.

<sup>58</sup> Comments from a representative of Nasc, November 2021.

<sup>59</sup> Comments from a representative of Nasc, November 2021.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with a representative of Nasc, 18 October 2021.

<sup>61</sup> For an account of the experience of Roma women in relation to the habitual residence condition see Curran (2019).

prostitution, the submission indicated a need for more efficient implementation of the existing legislation.

Finally, a submission by AkiDwA (2020b) emphasised the additional barriers migrant women face in accessing specialised services that tackle gender-based violence. These barriers included ‘language barriers, cultural norms and stigma, knowledge of services, immigration status dependency, lack of staff training, and the Habitual Residence Condition’. AkiDwA’s contribution also raised the issue of female genital mutilation and stressed the vulnerability of (non-EU) women residing in Direct Provision when it comes to domestic violence and sexual harassment.

## 2.6 HOUSING

McGinnity et al. (2022) showed that Irish-born people are more likely to live in houses and to be owner occupiers than those who are not Irish born. Further, whereas 13% of Irish-born people lived in private-rented accommodation, the share for non-Irish born was 56%. The highest share of migrants living in private-rented accommodation was identified among people from Poland (75%), other east European countries, (73%) as well as those from Central America and South America (73%) (ibid.).<sup>62</sup>

McGinnity et al. (2022) show that while in terms of access to private rental housing or social housing, gender differences within the migrant population are smaller than differences between migrants and the Irish population, some issues are gender specific. Women born outside of Ireland in all regional categories have smaller odds of private renting than men originating from such regions, with the lowest odds found for women from Central America and South America. Women from those regions were also found to have the lowest odds of living in social housing.

As discussed in Section 1.3, EU-SILC data suggest that non-EU migrant women fare significantly worse than their Irish counterparts as regards housing. While it is important to keep in mind the small sample sizes, the data show that a considerably higher share of migrant women indicated overcrowding than Irish women.<sup>63</sup> In 2016, 17.8% of migrant women indicated overcrowding compared to

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<sup>62</sup> Buczkowska and Ní Chonail (2019), analysing racist incidents in social housing in the period 2014–2014, indicated that 46% of such incidents were experienced by individuals of African descent, followed by migrants from eastern Europe (24%) and migrants from Asia (12%) The authors stated there were no differences regarding the gender of individuals affected.

<sup>63</sup> Eurostat provides the following definition of overcrowding: ‘A person is considered as living in an overcrowded household if the household does not have at its disposal a minimum of rooms equal to: - one room for the household; - one room by couple in the household; - one room for each single person aged 18 and more; - one room by pair of single people of the same sex between 12 and 17 years of age; - one room for each single person between 12 and 17 years of age and not included in the previous category; - one room by pair of children under 12 years of age’. See <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/tessi170>.

2.8% of Irish women the same year. For migrant women, this share fell to 12.3% in 2017, only to return to 16.3% in the following year. However, for Irish women overcrowding continued to fall in 2017 (2.1%) and again in 2018 (1.3%). The situation for migrant men was more stable, with the share of migrant males reporting overcrowding increasing from 10% in 2016 to 10.3%–10.4% in the following years.<sup>64</sup>

Using Census 2016 data, McGinnity et al. (2022) show that non-EU migrant women may also face particular risks of homelessness. As discussed in Section 1.3, women falling into the 'Asian' or 'Nigerian, Somali and Other African' nationality groupings were found to be overrepresented among homeless persons relative to their proportion in the Irish population (ibid.). The research identifies African females as a migrant group particularly vulnerable to homelessness and, with reference to Parker (2021), further suggests these women may represent families with children. Parker (2021), in her analysis of family homelessness, found that 60% of families of migrant origin accessing emergency homeless services in Dublin were from African countries. A qualitative study by Mayock and Sheridan (2012) indicated that migrant women born outside of Ireland or the UK may face particular difficulties in exiting homelessness as a result of limited access to housing, experience of domestic violence, their immigration status and their economic circumstances. The study also suggested that other factors, such as proficiency in the English language and childcare challenges, may impact on housing stability for migrant women.

In addition to these challenges, non-EU migrant women may face housing discrimination. In an analysis of ethnic discrimination in the housing market based on the first field experiment on housing in Ireland, Gusciute et al. (2020) showed that discrimination in the housing market is widespread towards non-Irish nationals but also indicated gender and ethnic differences among migrants. In general, women were more likely to be invited to view an apartment than men. For example, the experiment results demonstrated that while Nigerian women had a higher chance of seeing an apartment than Nigerian men, their chances of viewing an apartment were lower when compared to Polish nationals and Irish nationals (who had the highest chance of seeing an apartment). However, in general, women covered in the study were more likely to be asked (by potential landlords) whether or not they were renting alone or with a partner and if they had children.

Despite the challenges that non-EU migrant women face in regards to housing, an AkiDwA representative suggested that certain policies linked with access to housing, although not focusing specifically on migrant women, represent good

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<sup>64</sup> The representativeness of results based on the the EU-SILC should be treated with caution in this case due to the small sample size.

practice, particularly those that target women transitioning from Direct Provision accommodation to housing support from local authorities.<sup>65</sup>

## 2.7 OTHER

Intersectionality is a key aspect to consider in regards to integration for migrant women and is, for example, stressed by the National Women’s Council of Ireland (NWCI) in their submission to the Anti-Racism Committee’s consultation on the national action plan against racism. The NWCI recommends that intersectionality (analysis of the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities) should be better understood and embedded in policy from the start in order to meet the complex needs of a diverse society (NWCI, 2021).

A DCEDIY official interviewed for the purpose of this study emphasised the importance of the availability of equality data in the context of monitoring a mainstreamed integration system.<sup>66</sup> A current policy debate on the availability of equality data and intersectional equality data is of central importance to the integration of migrant women. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and the National Women’s Council of Ireland, in their submissions to the public consultation on the National Action Plan Against Racism, emphasise that the availability of data must be prioritised (National Women’s Council of Ireland, 2021; Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2021). An equality data audit for 2020 by the CSO mapped the availability of equality data in existing administrative and survey datasets. It found that gender was the most common equality dimension under which data are collected. The report recommended that intersectional data need to be made available so that the impact of policy interventions for various sub-groups can be assessed.<sup>67</sup>

The political underrepresentation of migrant women has been highlighted by NGOs, in a submission to Government by Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (2020), and by representatives interviewed for this study, as well as in a NWCI study (Cullen and McGing, 2019). NGO representatives considered the lack of consultation of migrant women in policy formulation to be a challenge,<sup>68</sup> as well as a lack of visibility of migrant women in elected or leadership positions.<sup>69</sup> An AkiDwA

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<sup>65</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDwA, 7 October 2021.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with DCEDIY official, International Protection Accommodation Policy, Disability Policy and Anti-Racism Policy, 30 September 2021.

<sup>67</sup> See <https://www.cso.ie/en/methods/methodologicalresearch/rp-eda/equalitydataaudit2020/> for the report on the equality data audit.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDwA, 7 October 2021.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, 13 October 2021.

representative, for example, remarked that there is a lack of national policy focused on the active participation and engagement of migrant women.<sup>70</sup>

## **2.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has presented the main challenges outlined in the current literature and data on migrant women in Ireland, as well as those discussed by NGO representatives and policy officials during interviews for this research. These challenges centred on five key areas: employment; education; health; domestic, sexual and gender-based violence; and housing. It has also outlined the challenges and opportunities related to intersectionality and political participation. This discussion sets the scene for the chapters that follow, which examine how migrant women are addressed in Irish integration policy and measures.

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<sup>70</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDwA, 7 October 2021.





## CHAPTER 3

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### Addressing non-EU migrant women in national policies

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to assess the extent to which non-EU migrant women are addressed in existing national policies on integration. The issue of gender mainstreaming in integration policy in Ireland is discussed, followed by a consideration of the treatment of women within the Migrant Integration Strategy, with sections particularly relevant to the situation of migrant women highlighted. Finally, sectoral integration policies relevant to the integration of migrants are discussed. Several such policies mention vulnerable sub-groups of migrants among their target groups, while others, such as the Second National Intercultural Health Strategy, address the specific needs of migrant women directly. As discussed in Chapter 1, integration policy in Ireland does not distinguish between migrants from EU and non-EU regions. Unless otherwise stated, in this chapter non-EU nationals are discussed as part of the broader ‘migrant’ group, comprising EU and non-EU nationals, and second-generation Irish nationals.

#### 3.2 GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN NATIONAL AND LOCAL INTEGRATION POLICY

The European Institute for Gender Equality defines gender mainstreaming as:

*a strategy to achieve equality between women and men. It involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination.*<sup>71</sup>

In Ireland, gender mainstreaming and gender-specific measures remain a challenge in terms of Ireland’s efforts to promote the integration of migrant women. NGOs consulted for this study pointed in particular to the fact that migrant women are not specifically addressed in the Migrant Integration Strategy,<sup>72</sup> and that gender is not mainstreamed in national migrant integration policy.<sup>73,74,75</sup> The representatives from AkiDWA, the Irish Refugee Council and Nasc noted that there is a lack of policies focused specifically on the integration of migrant women. Representatives of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)

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<sup>71</sup> EIGE ‘What is gender mainstreaming?’, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming>.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, 13 October 2021.

<sup>73</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDWA, 7 October 2021.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, 13 October 2021.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with a representative of Nasc, 18 October 2021.

commented that while there is recognition and awareness among national policymakers of the particular integration challenges faced by migrant women, this is not explicit in current overarching policies such as the Migrant Integration Strategy or the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017–2020, both of which concluded at the end of 2021.<sup>76,77</sup>

At local level, there is variation in the extent to which local integration strategies address migrant women specifically. The Longford Intercultural Strategy identifies particular challenges among migrant women and mothers, with stated actions including expanding literacy and language supports (Longford County Council, 2018). Under the theme of ‘information and advice’, the integration plan for Limerick (city and county) undertakes to increase supports for women in the home or in isolated locations, as well as trafficked women (Limerick Integration Working Group, 2018). However, other local integration strategies do not make specific mention of migrant women (see Section 4.2). The South Dublin County Council Integration Strategy 2019–2023 (South Dublin County Council, 2019) is an example of a local integration strategy in which migrant women are not mentioned.

While gender mainstreaming is not explicit in the key integration policy, the Migrant Integration Strategy, the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017–2021 demonstrates a stronger commitment to gender mainstreaming through, for example, a specific section on gender equality. The actions that target women come under two themes: addressing multiple disadvantages faced by these groups; and supporting them in key areas such as education, employment and economic development (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017b).

A DCEDIY official noted that while government policy on gender mainstreaming does not extend to national integration policies, promoting and advancing gender equality is nonetheless taken forward by a whole government policy framework.<sup>78</sup> The framework for this is understood to be provided in the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017–2020 (extended to end of 2021). This strategy reflects the priorities of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is the latest policy framework adopted to support Ireland’s implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.<sup>79</sup> It also outlines measures to monitor and

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<sup>76</sup> Interview with DCEDIY official, International Protection Accommodation Policy, Disability Policy and Anti-Racism Policy, 30 September 2021; Interview with DCEDIY official, Equality and Gender Equality Division, 14 October 2021.

<sup>77</sup> Responsibility for integration transferred from the Department of Justice and Equality (now the Department of Justice) to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) in November 2020. The latter is the first government department to include integration in its title, which may indicate increased prominence for integration policy more generally. Interview with DCEDIY official, International Protection Accommodation Policy, Disability Policy and Anti-Racism Policy, 30 September 2021.

<sup>78</sup> DCEDIY (2021). ‘Gender equality: National policy and strategies’, <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a70fc-gender-equality-national-policy-and-strategies/>. This was confirmed in interview with a DCEDIY official, Equality and Gender Equality Division, 14 October 2021.

<sup>79</sup> The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is the ‘most comprehensive global policy framework for the rights of women’. It was adopted in 1995 by the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing. More

report on the implementation of government policies on a gender disaggregated basis. Consultations on its successor strategy will begin in 2022.<sup>80</sup>

According to the National Strategy for Women and Girls, the implementation of government strategies on integration, including the Migrant Integration Strategy and the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, should be monitored and reported on, on a gender-disaggregated basis. Existing strategies do not have formal intersections, however; that is, they do not look at migration alongside Traveller and Roma status, they do not disaggregate by gender, and migrant women are only briefly mentioned in the National Strategy for Women and Girls, when they are included in a list of women disadvantaged groups regarding employment and access to resources. The Government's commitment through the Migrant Integration Strategy to advance migrant women's socio-economic situation, and to promote effective participation in public life, is referenced. Migrant women are also referred to in the context of combating violence against women (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017a).

A representative of the DCEDIY commented that there could have been greater complementarity between the National Strategy for Women and Girls, the Migrant Integration Strategy and the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy. It was noted that while migrant women are referenced in the National Strategy for Women and Girls, there is little detail in terms of actions that would address their 'double disadvantage'); the basis for relevant actions is one of gender mainstreaming rather than the more nuanced concept of intersectionality. It was further commented that while Government does recognise intersectionality and the challenges migrant women face, the lack of data and absence of monitoring measures mean that the effectiveness of mainstreaming cannot yet be tested.<sup>81</sup>

Despite the limitations of the current policy framework in regards to gender mainstreaming, a DCEDIY official stated that the integration of migrant women is a policy priority in Ireland.<sup>82</sup> Both the Nasc and Irish Refugee Council representatives considered that increasing efforts are being made regarding gender mainstreaming in integration policy, and perceived greater political interest in regard to gender mainstreaming than previously.<sup>83,84</sup> According to the Nasc

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on the declaration and platform in the EU context can be found here:

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/646163/EPRS\\_BRI\(2020\)646163\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/646163/EPRS_BRI(2020)646163_EN.pdf).

<sup>80</sup> DCEDIY has commissioned a study to evaluate the processes for implementation of three equality strategies: the National Strategy for Women and Girls, the Migrant Integration Strategy, and the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy. Consultations in regard to the successor National Strategy for Women and Girls will commence during 2022. Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. Parliamentary question, 24 May 2022.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with a DCEDIY official, International Protection Accommodation Policy, Disability Policy and Anti-Racism Policy, 30 September 2021.

<sup>82</sup> Interview with DCEDIY official, Equality and Gender Equality Division, 14th October 2021; Interview with a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, 13 October 2021; Interview with representatives of AkiDwA, 7 October 2021.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, 13 October 2021.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with a representative of Nasc, 18 October 2021.

representative, public policy discourse on the integration of migrant women is changing. With an increased focus on gender equality in policymaking, alongside the growing feminisation of migration, policy can no longer solely address migrant women as a vulnerable group (for example, in relation to trafficking or domestic violence).<sup>85</sup>

The DCEDIY noted the relevance of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, which requires all public policy to be examined with an equality that includes gender and other groups.<sup>86</sup> The representative also highlighted the work conducted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) in terms of expanding equality-budgeting metrics to more government departments.<sup>87</sup>

The recently published Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (see Section 3.2) commits to an intersectional approach, paying specific attention to vulnerable groups within the migrant population.

### 3.3 MIGRANT WOMEN IN NATIONAL INTEGRATION POLICY

While the relevance of the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy and the National Women and Girls Strategy to the integration of migrant women is acknowledged in this study, the Migrant Integration Strategy is the key integration policy for migrant women in Ireland. For this reason, this section focuses solely on this strategy. While non-EU migrant women are addressed therein, as part of the wider group of migrants, the Migrant Integration Strategy does not directly address women, or non-EU nationals specifically.

There are several possible reasons for why migrant women are not specifically addressed in the Migrant Integration Strategy and these were discussed in the interviews. Firstly, it may be due to the fact that it was developed during the same time period as the National Strategy for Women and Girls.<sup>88</sup> The Nasc representative consulted considered it to be particularly focused on public service departments, such as those concerning social protection and health, rather than having a broader reach.<sup>89</sup> The representative remarked on the gender mainstreaming limitations of the strategy, where specific services for certain

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<sup>85</sup> Interview with a representative of Nasc, 18 October 2021.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with DCEDIY official, Equality and Gender Equality Division, 14 October 2021.

<sup>87</sup> More information available at [https://merrionstreet.ie/equality\\_will\\_be\\_put\\_at\\_the\\_heart\\_of\\_policy\\_making\\_-\\_ministers\\_mcgrath\\_o\\_gorman\\_and\\_donohoe.167736.shortcut.html](https://merrionstreet.ie/equality_will_be_put_at_the_heart_of_policy_making_-_ministers_mcgrath_o_gorman_and_donohoe.167736.shortcut.html).

<sup>88</sup> Interview in interview with DCEDIY official, Equality and Gender Equality Division, 14 October 2021.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with a representative of Nasc, 18 October 2021.

migrant groups are delivered through state measures. However, in practice, NGOs and civil society tend to both identify and deliver targeted initiatives.<sup>90</sup>

A DCEDIY official noted that mainstreaming in a general sense is the basis for integration policy, rather than gender mainstreaming specifically – migrants access mainstream services, are assisted to do so where necessary and, on a needs basis, targeted (migrant specific) services may be put in place to fill gaps. Rather than targeting specific groups, the focus is on developing policies and measures for all, which address the needs of diverse groups through universality.<sup>91</sup> AkiDwA representatives also echoed this explanation, noting that a ‘one size fits all’ approach is taken,<sup>92</sup> instead of one that focuses on the particular challenges faced by some migrant women. As one such example, they cited refugee women who may previously have spent extended periods in refugee camps, where they may have experienced gender-specific harm, and who have no or a low level of education. According to AkiDwA, there is a need to consider the varied experiences of migrant women and to assess their skills and capacity to benefit from supports across all aspects of the policy, including entrepreneurship, for example.<sup>93</sup>

The omission of migrant women in integration policies may relate to the extent of participation of migrant women and their representative organisations in the policymaking processes. NGOs noted limited inclusion and opportunities for engagement of migrant women in the development of integration policies, measures and public or policy debate,<sup>94,95</sup> as well as a lack of civic dialogue.<sup>96</sup> Both AkiDwA and Nasc highlighted the importance of involvement of migrant women in policy development. The Nasc representative noted there may be opportunities for the future, pointing to the emerging impact of highly effective migrant women voices such as Stamp 3 Association Ireland.<sup>97,98</sup> Finally, other soft barriers, such as assumptions inherent in mainstreaming, may partly explain the absence of specific references to migrant women in the Migrant Integration Strategy.<sup>99</sup>

Despite the lack of gender mainstreaming in the Migrant Integration Strategy, some gender mainstreaming initiatives have developed via several of the measures arising from, and flowing out of, the strategy (for example, funding streams,

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<sup>90</sup> Comments from a representative of Nasc, November 2021.

<sup>91</sup> Interview with DCEDIY official, International Protection Accommodation Policy, Disability Policy and Anti-Racism Policy, 30 September 2021.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDwA, 7 October 2021.

<sup>93</sup> Comments from an AkiDwA representative, November 2021.

<sup>94</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDwA, 7 October 2021.

<sup>95</sup> Interview with a representative of Nasc, 18 October 2021.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, 13 October 2021.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with a representative of Nasc, 18 October 2021.

<sup>98</sup> Stamp 3 Association Ireland’s goal is to ‘strive to reform Stamp 3 in line with the best practice model followed by UK and other EU Member States that gives spouses / partners / dependents of non-EEA highly skilled migrants fair consideration and direct access to employment’. See <https://reformstamp3.wixsite.com/home>. See also the discussion in Section 2.2.1 of this report.

<sup>99</sup> Interview with DCEDIY official, International Protection Accommodation Policy, Disability Policy & Anti-Racism Policy, 30 September 2021.

projects, certain local authority actions). These developments explicitly support migrant women and help them to address different challenges, including employment and inclusion.<sup>100,101</sup>

### 3.3.1 Migrant Integration Strategy

Although migrant women are not specifically addressed in the Migrant Integration Strategy, they are included in its scope. The main actions grouped under sectors are outlined below.

#### 3.3.1.1 Labour market integration and entrepreneurship

The Migrant Integration Strategy has a number of actions targeted at labour market integration which are relevant for migrant women. Firstly, it outlines that the specific needs of migrants (such as language acquisition, knowledge of the Irish working environment, interview skills and CV preparation) are to be provided for in further education and training (FET) courses (both in principle courses and in part-time modules) delivered by the Education and Training Boards (ETBs). These needs are also to be provided for via education and training programmes specifically catering for unemployed migrants whose language skills require development; such courses must contain a language component. The Migrant Integration Strategy also commits to wider promotion of the Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) system for the recognition of vocational skills accredited in other countries.

The Migrant Integration Strategy includes a commitment to engage with migrants who are registered as jobseekers, to undertake an analysis to assess the extent to which the level of joblessness among jobseekers of African origin exceeds that of other groups and to determine what action, if any, is required to address any evidence that people of African origin face higher barriers in accessing employment.

The Migrant Integration Strategy has a number of measures directed at the public and civil service including:

- proactive outreach and support measures 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;
- an aim to have 1% of the workforce from ethnic minorities;
- putting in place arrangements to identify the number of civil servants from ethnic minorities;

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<sup>100</sup> Interview with DCEDIY official, International Protection Accommodation Policy, Disability Policy and Anti-Racism Policy, 30 September 2021.

<sup>101</sup> Interview in interview with DCEDIY official, Equality and Gender Equality Division, 14 October 2021.

- broadening outreach in schools and ethnic minority communities to raise awareness, educate about the role of the civil service and showcase the career opportunities available;
- reviewing the composition of the applicant pool to understand where applicants to the civil service come from and develop targeted measures to encourage those areas of society that are not applying; and
- activities to raise awareness of state-board opportunities among key groups within society that are currently under-represented on such boards.

Additionally, the strategy outlines that EU funding will be provided through the Department of Justice and Equality (now the Department of Justice) to support migrants to access the labour market and to promote integration activities. Finally, the Migrant Integration Strategy has actions targeted at entrepreneurship regarding Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs): LEOs are to continue to undertake targeted initiatives to engage with migrant prospective entrepreneurs in line with local need, with best practice activities in this area promoted by the LEO centre of excellence in Enterprise Ireland among all LEOs nationally.

### **3.3.1.2 Social welfare and anti-poverty**

The Migrant Integration Strategy assigns actions to the Department of Social Protection to ensure appropriate information is made available on services, to provide staff training on entitlements of migrant groups, and to monitor progress on reducing poverty and social exclusion in line with national targets. There is an undertaking to ensure the habitual residence condition is correctly and consistently applied (see Section 2.2 for information on related challenges).

### **3.3.1.3 Education, vocational and language training**

The Migrant Integration Strategy has several actions related to education, vocational and language training. These include reviews of English classes for speakers of other languages (ESOL) to cater for the language needs of adults from ethnic minorities and the delivery of follow-on ESOL programmes to enable migrants to acquire more intensive language skills to assist with their labour market integration. The Migrant Integration Strategy outlines that progress assessments are to be supported through the extension of the use of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) for recognition of English language proficiency. It also includes actions to attract migrants into teaching positions, such as raising awareness of the Irish language aptitude test. Finally, it commits to the enactment of the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016. This Bill, which centred on tackling discrimination in school admissions on specified grounds, was subsequently signed into law in July 2018.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> See <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2016/58/>.



#### **3.3.1.4 Health**

The Migrant Integration Strategy includes actions related to the health of migrant populations, namely the development of an appropriate model for the provision of interpreting services to users of healthcare services who are not proficient in English, and a commitment to the development of a second national intercultural health strategy. More information on this second national intercultural health strategy is provided later in this chapter.

#### **3.3.1.5 Civic integration**

The Migrant Integration Strategy has a number of actions related to civic integration. It aims to support and encourage migrants to participate in local and national politics to the extent that these areas are legally open to them, to register to vote and to exercise their franchise. Regarding elections, multi-lingual materials on voter registration and on elections are to be made accessible and available. Additionally, the strategy aims to establish a migrant integration forum in every local authority area, as well as an integration network where migrant groups can engage with Government and public bodies on issues of concern, including barriers to integration.

### **3.3.2 Integration of migrant women in sectoral policies**

In addition to the Migrant Integration Strategy, several sectoral policies address the integration of migrant women, typically as either part of a broader group of women or of migrants in general. This section reviews policies potentially relevant to migrant women by sectoral area and looks at the treatment of migrant women within them.

#### **3.3.2.1 Labour market integration**

The Pathways to Work Strategy 2021–2025 states that it is underpinned by the policy strategies of both the National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy and the Migrant Integration Strategy. While it does not refer to migrant women directly, it briefly mentions migrants and asylum seekers, with references made to the particular barriers to employment faced by these groups. The strategy includes a number of targeted actions for the Public Employment Service, Intreo and partner organisations, which aim to address the needs of disadvantaged minority groups (including migrants). These measures include the provision of English language and integration classes, increased access to further education and training opportunities as well as to paid work internships and apprenticeships, reserved places on state employment schemes, the extension of the higher level of the JobsPlus subsidy to employers who recruit people from disadvantaged minority groups, and the promotion of entrepreneurship and self-employment.

#### **3.3.2.2 Education, vocational training and language learning**

Two sectoral strategies regarding education, vocational training and language learning are relevant to the integration of migrant women: Future FET:

Transforming Learning, the national further education and training (FET) strategy for 2020–2024 (Government of Ireland, 2020a) and Adult Literacy for Life, the ten-year adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy strategy (Government of Ireland, 2021b).

Future FET: Transforming Learning does not directly address migrant women; rather, it mentions asylum seekers and refugees and considers newly arrived migrants among its target groups. This strategy notes the challenges and need for a targeted approach to addressing barriers around participation, completion and progression for marginalised and prioritised cohorts in further education and training, including migrants. The general supports outlined in the strategy are also relevant to addressing migrant women; for example, the strategy highlights the need to encourage partnership between ETBs and community and voluntary organisations that can represent or reach out to particular groups. In addition, it places a focus on linking English language support for new migrants in FET to wider FET pathways that can enable migrants to develop other core and technical skills, and facilitate their entry into work or progression to higher education.

Published in July 2021, the Government’s new ten-year Adult Literacy for Life strategy does not address migrant women directly; however, many of its actions for implementation are relevant to this group. The strategy identifies migrants as a potentially vulnerable cohort, and lays out several actions that target them directly in the shorter-term. These include increased investment in literacy provision, more English language support for migrants, and targeted funding and specific initiatives to support migrant groups. In the longer-term, the strategy aims to address the integration of migrants through the provision of consistent and enhanced support and services around family literacy approaches and intergenerational learning, and English language provision and assessment for migrants.

### **3.3.2.3 Housing**

Two sectoral policies are relevant for migrant women and their integration: Housing for All, the new housing plan for Ireland and Housing Circular 41/2012 on access to social housing supports for non-Irish nationals.

Housing for All was introduced in September 2021 and runs until 2030. It sets out the Government’s overall objective regarding housing: that ‘every citizen in the State should have access to good quality homes, to purchase or rent at an affordable price, built to a high standard and in the right place and offering a high quality of life’. This plan supports the implementation of the White Paper on Ending Direct Provision (Government of Ireland 2021a) and continues the support for the Irish Refugee Protection Programme.

Introduced in December 2012, Housing Circular 41/2012 addresses migrant access to social housing in sections 6 and 7. These sections state that local authorities should assess housing applications from non-EEA nationals where an individual has: five years of reckonable residence with a current valid stamp or any length of reckonable residence that will extend to five years residence. In general, these conditions apply unless an applicant belongs to other specified categories. Importantly, migrant women are not targeted specifically in this circular. Although no differentiation is made in regard to where in the integration process the policy starts, the circular distinguishes entitlements in certain cases based on length of residency.

#### **3.3.2.4 Health**

A number of health policies address the integration of migrant women in Ireland. Firstly, the Health Service Executive (HSE) Second National Intercultural Health Strategy 2018–2023 aims to provide ‘a comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing the many, unique, health and support needs experienced by the continually increasing numbers of service users of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds who live in Ireland’ (HSE, 2018b, p. 9). The strategy outlines the challenges that migrant women face and their needs regarding integration, including, for instance, lack of social support, lack of information, lack of awareness of services, cultural and communication needs, limited work entitlements due to spouse visas, lone parenting, previous trauma, culture shock and access to services. Targeted recommendations are made regarding these different challenges. The strategy also refers to the potential dependency of migrant women on their partners and risk of domestic violence.

While the strategy refers to the needs and challenges of migrant women specifically, the recommendations address women and/or migrants more generally, or ‘women from diverse cultures and ethnic groups’. The strategy targets women and migrants generally, though at times referring to different migrant groups (migrant workers, asylum seekers, refugees, undocumented migrants), and specific categories of migrant women, such as asylum seeking and refugee women, acknowledging the particular difficulties that they may face. Several of its specific actions target migrant women. Overall, these focus on maternity services and safeguarding and protection.

#### **Maternity services actions**

- Work to ensure that maternity services are responsive to the specific needs of migrant women and women from the Traveller and Roma communities and that they are culturally appropriate. This will include access to culturally appropriate information in relevant languages and interpretation services.
- Support implementation of relevant actions from the National Women’s Council of Ireland (NWC) and HSE consultation exercise (2015) on priorities for maternity services and ensure synergy with the Creating a Better Future

Together: National Maternity Strategy 2016–2021 and the priorities of the National Women and Infants Health Programme.

- Develop data collection and analysis of minority ethnic communities' use of maternity services so that policy and service delivery can be more responsive to their needs.
- Work to ensure access to the Maternity and Infant Child Scheme for all pregnant women living in Ireland, regardless of immigration status.
- Work to ensure that maternity services are responsive to the specific needs of migrant women and women from the Traveller and Roma communities and that they are culturally appropriate. This will include access to culturally appropriate information in relevant languages and interpretation services.

### **Safeguarding and protection**

- Coordinate implementation of the health-related actions of the Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender based Violence 2016–2021, and Ireland's Third National Action Plan for Women Peace and Security, with particular regard to provision of appropriate support and protection for migrant women experiencing sexual harassment.
- Review current service provision to ensure measures are in place for migrant women who experience or who have experienced domestic or sexual violence, so that they have access to the support services they require, with particular consideration for women whose immigration status is linked to their partner's status.
- Train healthcare staff to be aware of violence against women in their practice, providing space for safe disclosures by women in their care and access to referral for services to protect women and children from further harm.
- Develop data collection and analysis of minority ethnic communities' use of sexual violence support services (Sexual Assault and Treatment Units) so that policy and service delivery can be more responsive to their needs.
- Continue to develop and implement education and public awareness campaigns, among all health professionals and communities affected by female genital mutilation (FGM), to raise awareness that it is a criminal offence under the Criminal Justice (Female Genital Mutilation) Act (2012) to perform FGM, or to remove a girl from the State for the purpose of FGM.
- Provide training to increase the knowledge and competence of healthcare providers, and other relevant frontline professionals, in relation to appropriate care and protection for FGM survivors and women and girls at risk nationwide.
- Provide appropriate support to survivors of FGM, including counselling and access to specialised health services.

The strategy also draws attention to issues that may affect migrant women and those from ethnic minorities, including the following.

- There is a need for healthcare staff to provide culturally sensitive care to woman and girls requiring sexual, reproductive, or maternity health services.
- The residency of many migrant women living in Ireland is dependent on the legal status of their partner. Migrant women in this situation may not disclose domestic violence for fear of deportation. Those women who leave a partner and do not satisfy the habitual residence condition are particularly vulnerable and may find themselves and their children destitute.
- The intersection of gender and ethnicity has significant implications for the maternal health of minority ethnic women in Ireland, including Traveller and Roma women.
- Early or forced marriage is carried out, as an accepted social norm, in some communities. This practice poses social, economic, health and educational risks for girls. Early motherhood as a consequence of such marriage presents an additional source of distress, often involving the loss of support of parents or peers. Attendant health risks associated with early motherhood pregnancies and access to healthcare are further concerns.
- While domestic violence affects people of all races, classes and ethnic origins, it is possible that some populations of women can be at greater risk, such as migrant and minority ethnic women.<sup>103</sup>

The Strategy Committee set up for the implementation of the National Strategy for Women and Girls established a cross-sectoral sub-committee on period poverty in 2019. While not directly targeting migrant women, its terms of reference include establishing the extent of period poverty and identifying at-risk population cohorts in Ireland, making recommendations regarding education, stigma reduction and targeting of at-risk groups and mainstreaming period poverty mitigation measures across all relevant government departments and public bodies. A discussion paper by the Sub-committee on Period Poverty, which referred to the needs and challenges of migrant women, was published in February 2021 (Government of Ireland, 2021c). The paper highlighted migrant women as a particularly high-risk group for living in consistent poverty, and for facing specific challenges such as discrimination, educational disadvantage, and language and employment barriers. Following the publication of this discussion paper, the Free Provision of Period Products Bill 2021 was introduced into the Seanad on 8 February 2021. The Bill has been before the Seanad in the third stage.<sup>104</sup> However, it does not explicitly refer to migrant women.

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<sup>103</sup> Comments from a representative of the HSE Social Inclusion Office, November 2021.

<sup>104</sup> Houses of the Oireachtas (2021). 'Free Provision of Period Products Bill 2021', <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2021/4/>.

### 3.3.2.5 Domestic and gender-based violence

Two policies are highlighted as relevant to migrant women: the Immigration Guidelines for Victims of Domestic Violence (also discussed in Section 2.4) and the recently published Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence 2022–2026.

The Immigration Guidelines for Victims of Domestic Violence set out options for a victim of domestic violence whose immigration status is dependent on the perpetrator of the violence. The guidelines specifically address non-EEA national migrant women, those whose immigration status is currently derived from or dependent on that of the perpetrator of domestic violence. The guidelines, which are an administrative scheme funded under the general budget of the Department of Justice, were introduced by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) (now known as Immigration Service Delivery) in 2012 and are still in operation.<sup>105</sup> They are designed to allow a victim of domestic violence attain an independent immigration permission.<sup>106</sup> The victim must make an application (themselves or with the support of a solicitor) to Immigration Service Delivery (ISD). There is no application fee.

In July 2021, a report commissioned by the Department of Justice in consultation with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability and Youth (DCEDIY), *Domestic, sexual and gender based violence: An audit of structures*, was published. The report states that the needs of migrant victims (irrespective of whether or not they are EU citizens), are not provided for. It also states that ‘difficulties relate to culturally insensitive communication and in adequate or inappropriate service provision – all of which are compounded where a victim is undocumented, or immigrant status is dependent on a partner who is also a perpetrator’ (Department of Justice, 2021, p. 23). Further, the audit notes that the first (2010–2014) and the second (2016–2021) domestic, sexual and gender based violence strategies gave insufficient attention to migrant women and that, in general, the policy is fragmented, leading to inefficient implementation of the strategies.

In June 2022, the government published Zero Tolerance, the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence 2022–2026 (Government of Ireland, 2022a), which was accompanied by an implementation plan (Government of Ireland, 2022b). The strategy draws on the findings of the audit and aims to employ an intersectional approach regarding the issue of violence but also to increase coordination of implementation by establishing a statutory agency. It lists migrants, refugees and international protection applicants as well as

<sup>105</sup> Department of Justice (2012). ‘Updates and announcements 2012’, <http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/updates-announcements-2012>.

<sup>106</sup> Department of Justice (2021). ‘Immigration guidelines for victims of domestic violence’, <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/my-situation-has-changed-since-i-arrived-in-ireland/immigration-guidelines-for-victims-of-domestic-violence/>.

undocumented migrants among individuals and groups that might require additional inclusion measures. The strategy does not distinguish non-EU national migrant women as a separate target group.

During the consultation process leading up to the strategy preparation, the COVID-19 pandemic period was found to be aggravating the situation of some migrant women due to ‘issues of culture, tradition and immigration’ (Government of Ireland, 2022a, p. 42). The strategy stated that some migrant women ‘had no extended family support, some worried about facing unclear residency status situations that could be contingent on a husband’s residency. In addition, cultural or religious factors, isolation from support networks, discrimination, and language barriers also negatively affected their ability or willingness to access support services’ (ibid., p. 42).

The implementation plan (Government of Ireland, 2022b) covers the period 2022–2023 and follows the strategy’s four pillars structure. In Pillar 1 (Prevention), preparation of materials targeting migrant communities is envisioned – it is planned that the information will also reassure migrant victims/survivors who are undocumented regarding provision of necessary services and protection. In Pillar 4 (Policy co-ordination), there is a commitment to establishing a specialised group within an agency to ‘proof and advise all interventions in terms of intersectionality and inclusivity’ (ibid., p. 42); this would cover migrants as well.

### **3.3.2.6 Other**

While migrant women are not specifically addressed in An Garda Síochána’s Diversity and Integration Strategy 2019–2021, this strategy does set out an aim to develop a Garda training programme for Gardaí and Garda staff to build their competency and capacity to interact more effectively and positively with migrants, refugees, victims of hate crime and people from diverse and minority background. This strategy will complement their internal diversity and inclusion strategy and may be relevant to migrant women.

## **3.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter began with a discussion of gender mainstreaming in integration policy in Ireland. Gender mainstreaming was found to be limited in integration policy, despite a wider government framework which aims to address gender mainstreaming through a whole of government approach within the National Strategy for Women and Girls. This is largely due to the lack of a specific mention of migrant women in either that strategy or the Migrant Integration Strategy. The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy is better than the Migrant Integration Strategy in this regard, with specific actions targeting migrant women. At a local level, there are varied approaches to addressing migrant women in

integration policies, with certain local authorities including migrant women in their strategies and others omitting migrant women from local integration policies.

Despite the current limitations within the current Irish policy framework on gender mainstreaming, NGO representatives consider that efforts are increasing to mainstream gender into integration policy.

This chapter details the several aspects of the Migrant Integration Strategy which are relevant to the integration of migrant women, including labour market integration, entrepreneurship, education and training, health and civic integration. Finally, sectoral policies relevant to migrant women are reviewed. Several such policies mention vulnerable sub-groups of migrants among their target groups, while others, such as the Second National Intercultural Health Strategy, address the specific needs of migrant women more directly.

Chapter 4 outlines the various integration measures that address migrant women's integration and highlights four case studies of integration measures which provide an insight into various ways in which measures can tackle the needs and challenges relating to integration that are faced by migrant women.





## CHAPTER 4

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### Measures addressing integration for non-EU migrant women

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

A range of measures address the integration of migrants. The majority are funding mechanisms, set up via the Migrant Integration Strategy, which, rather than specifically concerning the integration of migrant women, typically reach this group through targeted projects that they fund. National and EU funding streams are discussed below. While national funding streams as well as European Social Fund streams make no distinction between EU and non-EU migrants, EU funding under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) is targeted at migrants from outside the EU. Four case studies of measures that target non-EU migrant women are also provided.

#### 4.2 NATIONAL FUNDING

The Communities Integration Fund and the National Integration Funding Programme are both linked to the aims of the Migrant Integration Strategy and seek to support its implementation.<sup>107</sup> The Communities Integration Fund, for example, was introduced as a direct result of the Migrant Integration Strategy.<sup>108</sup> Typically, any relevant strategy is mentioned in calls for applications for these funds.<sup>109</sup> Currently, no funding is specifically earmarked for migrant women (EU or non-EU) under integration or general equality funding.<sup>110</sup>

The Communities Integration Fund has funded projects addressing the integration of migrant women. This funding stream was established by the Office for Promotion of Migrant Integration (OPMI)<sup>111</sup> in response to Action 51 of the Migrant Integration Strategy. Its main purpose is to fund initiatives by community organisations that seek to promote integration in their local community. The fund aims to provide funding and support for communities across Ireland to enable them to play a greater role in promoting integration by providing practical support to facilitate social inclusion among the migrant population. The National Integration Fund, which ran between 2017 and 2020, also funded projects that seek to facilitate the integration of migrant women: €749,600 was allocated per year over a maximum of three years, for projects that help migrants integrate into

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<sup>107</sup> Interview in interview with DCEDIY official, Equality and Gender Equality Division, 14 October 2021.

<sup>108</sup> Interview with DCEDIY official, International Protection Accommodation Policy, Disability Policy and Anti-Racism Policy, 30 September 2021.

<sup>109</sup> Interview with DCEDIY official, International Protection Accommodation Policy, Disability Policy and Anti-Racism Policy, 30 September 2021.

<sup>110</sup> Interview in interview with DCEDIY official, Equality and Gender Equality Division, 14 October 2021.

<sup>111</sup> The OPMI no longer exists as it was disbanded by the Department of Justice in 2019. Interview with DCEDIY official, International Protection Accommodation Policy, Disability Policy and Anti-Racism Policy, 30 September 2021.

Irish society.<sup>112</sup> More information is available on these funds in the EMN Ireland study, *Policy and practice targeting the labour market integration of non-EU nationals in Ireland* (Arnold et al., 2019).

Other national funds linked to a broader equality and inclusion agenda that may also fund projects related to integration for migrant women include those targeting Traveller and Roma women, as well as national women's organisations.<sup>113</sup> Additionally, funding provided under the LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy 2019–2021 (Government of Ireland, 2019) has certain aspects relating to integration, with some funded projects aiming to increase the inclusion of LGBTI+ migrants.<sup>114</sup>

Some national funding streams have financed projects aiming to support the integration of migrant women. The Dormant Accounts Fund was established by legislation and 'enables unclaimed funds from accounts in credit institutions in Ireland to be used to support the personal and social development of persons who are economically or socially disadvantaged, the educational development of persons who are educationally disadvantaged, and persons with a disability (within the meaning of the Equal Status Act 2000)'.<sup>115</sup> In 2017, targeted funding was given to seven projects nationwide to support the labour market integration of female refugees and the female family members of refugees.<sup>116</sup>

The Department of Rural and Community Development, via the Dormant Accounts Fund, partnered with Bank of America and Rethink Ireland on the 2020–2022 Mná na hÉireann, Women of Ireland Recovery Fund. This fund 'supports charities and social enterprises that seek to enhance the economic mobility of women and is designed specifically to equip these organisations to expand their business acumen, drive growth and deepen their impact across Ireland'.<sup>117</sup> The Mná na hÉireann fund does not exclusively focus on migrant or refugee women but rather on gender equality projects that support women's entrepreneurship and participation in the workforce through training and mentoring initiatives. However, certain projects supported by it exclusively target migrant or refugee and asylum-seeking women. An example is the Integration from Day One Women's Employment Programme with the Irish Refugee Council (described in more detail later in this chapter).<sup>118</sup> The DCEDIY also supports the Rethink Ireland Equality Fund, primarily its 'empowering women strand', which has a focus on vulnerable

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<sup>112</sup> See <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2021-02-24/612/>.

<sup>113</sup> Interview with DCEDIY official, International Protection Accommodation Policy, Disability Policy and Anti-Racism Policy, 30 September 2021.

<sup>114</sup> Interview with DCEDIY official, International Protection Accommodation Policy, Disability Policy and Anti-Racism Policy, 30 September 2021.

<sup>115</sup> Department of Rural and Community Development, 'Dormant Accounts Fund', <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/c376c9-dormant-accounts-fund/>.

<sup>116</sup> For more information, see: <http://www.integration.ie/en/isec/pages/wp18000025>.

<sup>117</sup> Rethink Ireland (2021). 'Mná na hÉireann, Women of Ireland Recovery Fund 2020-2022', [https://rethinkireland.ie/awarded\\_fund/mna-na-heireann-women-of-ireland-fund-2020-2022/](https://rethinkireland.ie/awarded_fund/mna-na-heireann-women-of-ireland-fund-2020-2022/).

<sup>118</sup> Interview with a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, 13 October 2021.

women, explicitly includes migrant women and currently provides support to the Great Care Co-op.<sup>119</sup>

Local authorities are central to the implementation of integration policy and measures related to the integration of migrant women, and are often key in providing targeted funding measures, with many interested in driving the integration agenda.<sup>120</sup> There are 31 local authorities in Ireland. Under the Migrant Integration Strategy, between 2017 and 2021, local authorities were required to update their migrant integration strategies to reflect their local realities.<sup>121,122</sup> In January 2020, non-governmental organisation (NGO) the Immigrant Council of Ireland surveyed local authorities and found that 30 had a current or expired integration strategy, up from 21 in 2018. A total of 11 local authorities had a current migrant integration strategy in place, while 15 were intending to publish a new one or update their existing strategy (ICI, 2020). Local authorities are taking direct measures to support migrant women's integration in their local communities.<sup>123</sup> Kildare County Council, for example, recently launched its local integration strategy and is in the process of developing specific measures for mobilising women, including targeted funding for migrant women.<sup>124</sup>

Finally, the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) (2018–2023) 'provides certain funding opportunities to tackle poverty and social exclusion through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies' (Pobal, nd). SICAP receives funding from the Irish Government through the Department of Rural and Community Development and is co-funded by the European Social Fund under its Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014–2020. SICAP has identified migrants (new communities) as a specific target group and there is certain scope to develop programmes for migrant women within the SICAP programme; for example, several projects funded through SICAP target migrant women.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Comments from a DCEDIY official, Equality and Gender Equality Division, November 2021. For more information on the Equality Fund, see <http://equalityfund.ie/awardees/the-equality-fund-2020-2023/>. The Great Care Co-op is described by the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland as 'Ireland's first care workers cooperative, it is led by migrant women and it is funded under the European Social Funds Women's Entrepreneurship Stream'. For more information, see <https://www.thegreatcarecoop.ie/our-story>.

<sup>120</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDwA, 7 October 2021.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with DCEDIY official, Equality and Gender Equality Division, 14 October 2021.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDwA, 7 October 2021.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDwA, 7 October 2021.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDwA, 7 October 2021.

<sup>125</sup> Interview with a representative of Nasc, 18 October 2021. An example of such a project included Different Together 2, in which 14 asylum seekers in Ballyhaunis participated in integration courses, which also focused on political participation (Pobal, 2021a).

### 4.3 EUROPEAN FUNDING

Two sources of EU funding are available to support migrant integration programmes: the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) through the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014–2020 (Arnold et al., 2019). In September 2016, €4.5 million of EU funding was made available from the AMIF for migrant integration projects implemented between 2017 and 2020. The funding allocated aimed to ‘promote the integration of non-EU migrants and to combat discrimination and racism’. Under this AMIF call, 20 projects were selected and awarded with funding in 2016, with organisations providing 25% matched funding (Arnold et al., 2019).

Between 2014 and 2020, PEIL was the only ESF programme in Ireland. Formally approved by the European Commission in February 2015, it was launched in April of that year. The programme involves a total investment of €1.157 billion; over €544 million each from the ESF and the Irish Government and a special allocation of just over €68 million from the EU’s Youth Employment Initiative. The PEIL covers five ‘priority axes’, including technical assistance, which funds the operations, administration and communication of the programme. The priority axes are as follows.

- Priority 1: Promoting the attainment of sustainable and quality employment through relevant upskilling measures and supporting labour mobility.
- Priority 2: Promoting social inclusion and combating discrimination in the labour market.
- Priority 3: Investing in education, training and life-long learning with a view to upskilling and re-skilling the labour force.
- Priority 4: Youth employment initiative.
- Priority 5: Technical assistance.

PEIL funding has been used to fund projects with migrant women; for example, the Irish Refugee Council has been funded by ESF PEIL on projects related to the labour market integration of non-EU migrant women.<sup>126,127</sup>

Opportunities for Work (Mi-WOW) run by New Communities Partnership is one example of a project co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European

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<sup>126</sup> A promotion video highlighting the work completed within the Irish Refugee Council’s ‘Integration from Day One’ project can be viewed here: <https://www.facebook.com/IrishRefugeeCo/videos/this-world-refugee-day-we-are-passing-across-to-the-amazing-women-of-our-employ/190577572994884/>.

<sup>127</sup> The mid-term evaluation of the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020 (Government of Ireland, 2018) provides an overview of targets in terms of spending and participants. For activity integration and employment of migrants (which includes EU citizens), the target allocation is €3.3 million, while the target number of participants is 2,300 persons. While no gender-sensitive analysis of the activity are provided, it was estimated that around two-thirds of participants were women. The evaluation recommended a greater focus on gender-specific aspects of the activity, such as childcare and transport (ibid.). Finally, the evaluation stated that ‘the Activity supporting integration and employment of migrants is also relatively recently operational and has not been evaluated regarding effectiveness or impacts’ (ibid., p. 93).

Social Fund under PEIL 2014-2020. Introduced in 2020, this national-level project is coordinated and run by migrant women. The project specifically targets migrant women and migrant descendant women with the aim of helping them to overcome employment barriers they face in Ireland. According to New Communities Partnership, 'Mi-WOW is designed to empower migrant women to reach their potential, rebuild their confidence, and upgrade their skills to facilitate their access to the labour market and/or career progression in ways that are linked to their professional goals'.<sup>128</sup> It includes both public conversation hubs and a training programme for returning to the workforce.

Separate funding calls were conducted for gender equality initiatives and migrant integration, with the projects supporting migrant women supported through gender equality funding streams. While funding was not specifically earmarked for migrant women, migrant women participate in gender equality initiatives aimed at the general population and in initiatives aimed at migrant integration.<sup>129</sup> There is a lack of data on the share of funding allocated to migrant women in the AMIF and national funding streams.<sup>130</sup> DCEDIY indicated that the lack of available information on the overall percentage of the funding benefitting migrant women is a result of projects not being asked to collect such data.<sup>131</sup> Among individuals supported by SICAP, migrants (new communities) constituted 13% in 2018, 14% in 2019 and 14% in 2020 (Pobal, 2021b). For an evaluation of SICAP see Whelan et al. (2020).

#### 4.3.1 Challenges regarding funding

AkiDWA representatives were unaware of any funding being offered to organisations to specifically target migrant women.<sup>132</sup> The Irish Refugee Council noted that certain funding, such as ESF PEIL, is tied to specific priorities and therefore does not address some of the deeper, systemic challenges faced by migrant women, such as the unaffordability of childcare or the lack of public transport to rural locations.<sup>133</sup> Similarly, accessing transnational EU funding can be a challenge for organisations, as not all projects may fit the transnational remit.<sup>134</sup> Organisations may also face challenges in accessing and managing funding due to

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<sup>128</sup> New Communities Partnership, 'Migrant women – Opportunities for work (Mi-WOW)', <https://www.newcommunities.ie/services/migrant-women-opportunities-for-work/>.

<sup>129</sup> Comments from DCEDIY official, Equality and Gender Equality Division, November 2021.

<sup>130</sup> Interview with DCEDIY official, International Protection Accommodation Policy, Disability Policy and Anti-Racism Policy, 30 September 2021.

<sup>131</sup> Comments from a DCEDIY official, Equality and Gender Equality Division, November 2021.

<sup>132</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDWA, 7 October 2021, and comments from an AkiDWA representative, November 2021.

<sup>133</sup> Interview with a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, 13 October 2021.

<sup>134</sup> Interview with a representative of Nasc, 18 October 2021.

long and detailed application processes,<sup>135</sup> complex reporting mechanisms and funding restrictions.<sup>136</sup>

#### **4.4 CASE STUDIES OF INTEGRATION MEASURES IMPACTING ON NON-EU MIGRANT WOMEN IN IRELAND**

Four integration measures impacting migrant women in Ireland were identified by stakeholders consulted for the study and these are outlined below. They include one national measure and three NGO-run projects. Each of these case studies uses different approaches in seeking to facilitate the integration of migrant women in society.

The HSE's Second National Intercultural Health Strategy 2018–2023 was selected due to the inclusive consultative process undergone during the development of the strategy.

The Influential Migrant Women Group project was initiated by a migrant-led organisation, AkiDwA. Run by migrant women, this national project addresses the inclusion of migrant women in policymaking and practice by providing support to women seeking to enable them to be represented at and contribute to decision making at national level.

The Gateway Women's Project involves migrant women in its implementation and has a specific focus on language and civic integration, bringing migrant women together through language classes and other activities.

The International From Day One Women's Employment Programme offers training and support for migrant women related to labour market inclusion. The project has a focus on women who have made applications for, or have been granted, international protection status.

##### **4.4.1 The Second National Intercultural Health Strategy 2018–2023**

The HSE's Second National Intercultural Health Strategy 2018–2023 was introduced in 2018 and will continue until 2023 (HSE, 2018b). The previous one, which ran from 2007 to 2012 (HSE, 2007), was the first intercultural health strategy to be developed in Ireland.<sup>137</sup>

While the strategy focuses on migrants in general, it also contains specific actions targeting migrant women (these actions were outlined in the previous chapter). The strategy outlines the challenges that migrant women face and their needs in

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<sup>135</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDwA, 7 October 2021.

<sup>136</sup> Interview with a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, 13 October 2021.

<sup>137</sup> Comments from a representative of the HSE Social Inclusion Office, November 2021.

regard to integration, including, for instance, lack of social support, lack of information, lack of awareness of services, cultural and communication needs, limited work entitlements due to spouse visas, lone parenting, previous trauma, culture shock and access to services. Targeted recommendations are made regarding these different challenges. The strategy also refers to the dependency of migrant women on their partners and risk of domestic violence.

This HSE's Second National Intercultural Health Strategy provides a 'comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing the many, unique, health and support needs experienced by the continually increasing numbers of service users of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds who live in Ireland' (HSE, 2018b, p. 9). It has five main goals: i) to enhance accessibility of services to service users from diverse ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds; ii) to address health issues experienced by service users from diverse ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds; iii) to ensure provision of high quality, culturally responsive services to service users from diverse ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds; iv) to build an evidence base; and v) to strengthen partnership working to enhance intercultural health (HSE, 2018b).

This strategy was highlighted by AkiDwA representatives and a DCEDIY official. In particular, the consultation process held during the development of this strategy was deemed an example of good practice, due to the priority placed on including migrant women. This process ensured representation and the inclusion of migrant women in the development and implementation of the strategy.<sup>138</sup> AkiDwA representatives spoke highly of this consultation process, as well as related ongoing health policy consultation processes, for their continued inclusion of migrant women.<sup>139</sup> They also commended the associated HSE funding available for projects that address integration for migrant women.<sup>140</sup>

The strategy is implemented by the HSE and funded by the HSE's National Social Inclusion Office,<sup>141</sup> which also funds a number of agencies to deliver services on their behalf to service users from diverse groups.<sup>142</sup> Various cross-government strategies contain specific actions assigned to the HSE in respect of the health status, experiences and outcomes of members of minority ethnic communities across the country. The National Intercultural Health Strategy 'represents a strategic response to integrating these actions, together with a range of additional specific health related actions arising from consultations, learning from

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<sup>138</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDwA, 7 October 2021.

<sup>139</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDwA, 7 October 2021.

<sup>140</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDwA, 7 October 2021.

<sup>141</sup> Comments from a representative of the HSE Social Inclusion Office, November 2021.

<sup>142</sup> For more information, see <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/primarycare/socialinclusion/about-social-inclusion/partnerorganisations/intercultural-health.html>.



implementation of the first HSE National Intercultural Health Strategy and evidence from international and national research' (HSE, 2018b, p. 9).

As noted, migrant women were involved in the consultation process of this strategy, with asylum seekers particularly well represented during consultations.<sup>143</sup> In total, 56 written submissions were received during the consultation process (HSE 2018a),<sup>144</sup> of which 41 were from HSE services or government agencies, 10 were from NGOs, 4 were from academic experts and 1 came from a service user (HSE, 2018b). Eight key themes were identified upon analysis of submissions.<sup>145</sup>

The consultative work carried out for the Second National Intercultural Health Strategy built on the previous engagement with migrant women in the development of the first one (HSE 2007). Consultation for the latter included: individual interviews with migrant women, among others; focus groups, many of which were facilitated by NGOs active in the field of ethnic minority health; and a survey which covered 270 migrant workers from nine communities, conducted with the aim of capturing service users' viewpoints. The second strategy is ongoing, and evaluations are not available to date. An implementation update has been carried out, which will be repeated in 2022. Work is underway to establish a partnership mechanism through which the voice of service users from minority ethnic communities can influence progress in implementation and evaluation of actions. The strategy will be reviewed in 2023.<sup>146</sup>

Accessibility was identified as an obstacle to the participation of migrant women during the consultation process. To overcome this, transport and childcare costs were provided.<sup>147</sup> The implementation of the strategy is ongoing, with actions being prioritised across its timeframe, so as to ensure a balance between progressing actions that lend themselves to quick outcomes and those actions that require longer-term planning, additional significant resourcing and associated incremental implementation.<sup>148</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has represented a significant obstacle to the implementation of the actions of the strategy, and resulted in the focus shifting to specific planning, measures and actions to protect vulnerable groups in response

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<sup>143</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDwA, 7 October 2021.

<sup>144</sup> HSE Social Inclusion (2018) *Second national intercultural health strategy 2018–2023. Summary of written Submissions*, <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/primarycare/socialinclusion/intercultural-health/hse-ihs-summary-of-written-submissions-final.pdf>.

<sup>145</sup> The themes included: access to good quality intercultural healthcare services; equality, non-discrimination and human rights; interpreting and translation services; cross-cultural communication and cultural competence of staff; gender-based violence, including FGM and other harmful practices; community participation and service user participation and consultation; data and building the evidence base on intercultural health; and implementation of the Second National Intercultural Health Strategy.

<sup>146</sup> Comments from a representative of the HSE Social Inclusion Office, November 2021.

<sup>147</sup> Interview with representatives of AkiDwA, 7 October 2021.

<sup>148</sup> Comments from a representative of the HSE Social Inclusion Office, November 2021.

to COVID-19. Particular obstacles encountered by migrant women included: underlying health issues; overcrowding and poor-quality accommodation; homelessness; low health literacy; lack of access to health services due to status, low income or loss of income; social isolation; lack of support systems; lack of childcare; and lack of transport. A range of measures were implemented to respond to these issues using a cross-government collaborative approach. Throughout the pandemic, emphasis has been placed on the importance of data, particularly ethnic identifiers, as well as the provision of culturally appropriate translated information, and focusing on the needs of vulnerable groups and addressing health inequalities.<sup>149</sup>

#### 4.4.2 The Influential Migrant Women Group

This influential migrant women project was established in 2017 and is still ongoing. A national project led by AkiDwA, it focuses on civic integration that is tailor-made for migrant women (broadly defined).<sup>150</sup> Aiming to address the lack of representation of migrant women in policymaking, ‘the objective of this project is to build the capacity of migrant women to represent themselves, their families, and communities’.<sup>151</sup> The AkiDwA representatives and the Irish Refugee Council representative selected this as a positive example due to the focus on supporting migrant women to get representation and contribute to decision-making at a national level. This project is funded by Dublin City Council, with certain roles funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development, and is managed by Pobal. AkiDwA implements this project by providing a platform for migrant women leaders from all 26 counties in Ireland to meet regularly. This platform enables migrant women leaders to share information, experiences and strategies for development and progression in different areas.<sup>152</sup> The organisation supports migrant women who are active and influential at local, regional and national level to collaborate on projects and to work together to shape future policy.<sup>153</sup>

AkiDwA identifies influential migrant women leaders in different counties and positions them in emerging opportunities, so that they can get involved in different levels of decision making, and amplify their voices and visibility.<sup>154</sup> Since 2017, AkiDwA has been able to identify and place seven migrant women in decision-making positions, mainly at national level (in three NGOs, two statutory bodies and two media platforms). Additionally, many influential migrant women leaders are participating and engaging in local decision-making structures.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Comments from a representative of the HSE Social Inclusion Office, November 2021.

<sup>150</sup> For more details, see: <https://akidwa.ie/our-work/#integration>.

<sup>151</sup> See ‘AkiDwA, Our work’, <https://akidwa.ie/our-work/>.

<sup>152</sup> Comments from an AkiDwA representative, November 2021.

<sup>153</sup> Comments from an AkiDwA representative, November 2021.

<sup>154</sup> Comments from an AkiDwA representative, November 2021.

<sup>155</sup> More information is available on page 12 of the 2020 AkiDwA annual report. Comments from an AkiDwA representative, November 2021.

Regarding obstacles and lessons learned, in certain committees women found it difficult to participate fully in meetings due to time constraints since they either work full time, study or have a family but no extended family support.

#### 4.4.3 The Gateway Women's Project

A representative from Nasc provided this example, a local project focused primarily on language training and civic integration. The project originally targeted only refugee women as it was tied to a funding stream for refugee women. Currently, however, it includes broader cohorts of migrant women from different migrant pathways. EU nationals are entitled to join, for example, though they are not the target group for this project.<sup>156</sup> The project aims to promote the integration of migrant women through gender-specific language provision, via English language classes for women, delivered by women. As indicated by Nasc, 'in addition to the classes provided through the programme, each participant receives a package of supports tailored to her own specific needs and goals which may include identifying supports for childcare or eldercare to assistance with precarious housing'.<sup>157</sup>

The Gateway Women's Project is implemented by Nasc, a Cork-based NGO. Originally funded through the Dormant Accounts Fund and administered by Pobal, it was first introduced in 2016 as a pilot two-year government programme. Funding for its third year of operation was sourced through ReThink Ireland and the Sustainable Cork Fund. The latter was created by Rethink Ireland in partnership with Cork Chamber of Commerce and the Department of Rural and Community Development via the Dormant Accounts Fund. This funding ended mid-2020.

Over the years, this project has expanded to include various activities, such as arts and crafts, mental health support, mindfulness and yoga. Guided by women, the Gateway Women's Project has created a supportive space and community. While its long-term viability, like most project funding, is not guaranteed, good links have been made with a large multinational company in Cork city which has improved its sustainability. The project now operates with small grant funding from its local authority and is part-funded by a technology company in Cork. Initially the women were reached through the Advocacy Service, and this remains the biggest referral source. Migrant women are also often reached through word of mouth.

A formal evaluation of the Gateway Women's Project is not available. However, a Nasc representative stated that it did meet anticipated objectives in relation to migrant women. In 2020, 36 women engaged in the project while in 2021, some 35 women participated, with participants coming from 10 countries across the world. A total of 5 women found employment, 7 women engaged in career

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<sup>156</sup> Comments from a representative of Nasc, November 2021.

<sup>157</sup> Nasc, 'Gateway Women's Project', <https://nascireland.org/current-projects/gateway-womens-project>.

mentoring supports, while a further 10 women enrolled in short general interest courses (formal) and 16 women participated in the befriending programme. In 2020, despite the pandemic, 3 of its participants found employment. Several women progressed to higher and further education, with 4 women enrolling in college or universities and a further 4 women engaging in further training. One participant won a scholarship to attend university.<sup>158</sup>

In addition to supporting language acquisition, through supports tailored to participant ability, the Nasc representative stated that the project supports the development of social networks and entrepreneurship. The project also promotes good mental health and wellbeing among the women, with those involved in the programme acting as role models for others. Finally, the project provides a safe space for participants, who are supported there in the event that difficult issues arise, such as domestic violence.<sup>159</sup> Insecure funding was identified as a challenge regarding the project's implementation of the project; as a result, it is currently funded through diverse funding streams to avoid reliance on one funding programme. Other obstacles that were identified include the absence of a maximum participant number, which made it difficult to turn women away. However, numbers have since been capped and a clearer vision of the scope and aims of the project have been developed. Difficulties managing the expectations of the women participating were also experienced. This has been overcome by working through the expectations of the women with the project coordinator. A realistic personal development plan is developed with each woman, and these are reviewed and revised regularly.

#### **4.4.5 The International from Day One Women's Employment Programme**

This regional labour market project, run by the Irish Refugee Council, is designed for women seeking asylum or women with an international protection status. Its central focus is on recent arrivals but it is available to any refugee and asylum-seeking women who wish to take part. According to the Irish Refugee Council, 'the programme aims to provide women with pre-employment training in a peer-supported environment as well as employment-readiness support including one-to-one casework, mentoring and, for some clients, supported work experience and volunteering placements. Empowering women with these supports can better position them to retain stable employment in an area reflective of their skills, experience, education and interests.'<sup>160</sup> The representative from Nasc highlighted the gender specificity of the programme and its aim to support migrant women in finding employment.

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<sup>158</sup> Comments from a representative of Nasc, November 2021.

<sup>159</sup> Comments from a representative of Nasc, November 2021.

<sup>160</sup> Irish Refugee Council, 'Women's Employment Programme', <https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/womens-employment-programme>.

Introduced as a pilot project in 2018,<sup>161</sup> the Women’s Employment Programme helps new arrivals to navigate Ireland’s employment systems. The programme is currently supported by the European Social Fund through its Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2019–2022 and ReThink Ireland’s Mná na-hÉireann Fund 2019 – 2021,<sup>162</sup> which is funded by Bank of America and the Dormant Accounts Fund. Since the initial pilot, various funding streams have been acquired to continue this work, including some corporate funding.<sup>163</sup>

Women who join the employment programme are often clients of the Irish Refugee Council’s law centre or drop-in centre. A large number of those who connect with this project have been recommended by a friend.<sup>164</sup> In 2020, 110 women were intensively supported. Up to mid-2021, 83 women had received thorough support. The Irish Refugee Council ran eight online six-week programmes from May 2020 to November 2021, including a range of pre-employment and holistic/wellbeing sessions. Four core employer work placement initiatives have been established. Of women who have found employment (March 2020–August 2021), 17 have found sustainable employment (permanent, secure, or allowing skills progression). Women self-evaluated as having higher levels of self-confidence, well-being and better able to make own opportunities after partaking in the programme.<sup>165</sup>

Barriers to implementation have included a lack of childcare, and the inaccessible location of many Direct Provision centres. Since moving online and offering a blended approach, the Irish Refugee Council have been able to connect with more women in isolated centres who would not have been otherwise able to engage due to lack of childcare or limited transport options. They have also been able to work with newly arrived women and continue to support them as they are moved from the main reception centre for international protection applicants, Baleskin, to other parts of Ireland.<sup>166</sup> Institutional barriers highlighted by the Irish Refugee Council include a lack of employer awareness of refugees’ right to work or of issues they might face in the workplace. Unconscious bias in the recruitment, selection and promotion process, a lack of qualification recognition, and the urgency to earn – trapping refugee women in a cycle of underemployment – were all highlighted

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<sup>161</sup> Irish Refugee Council, ‘Women’s Employment Programme’, <https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/womens-employment-programme>.

<sup>162</sup> Irish Refugee Council, ‘Women’s Employment Programme’, <https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/womens-employment-programme>.

<sup>163</sup> Comments from a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, November 2021.

<sup>164</sup> Comments from a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, November 2021.

<sup>165</sup> Irish Refugee Council, ‘Women’s Employment Programme’, <https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/womens-employment-programme>. Supplementary information provided through feedback from Irish Refugee Council representative.

<sup>166</sup> Comments from a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, November 2021.

by the Irish Refugee Council representative as challenges faced by refugee women in terms of labour market entry and progression.<sup>167</sup>

#### 4.5 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents a discussion of the key measures (namely funding mechanisms) that address the integration of migrant women in Ireland. While not specifically earmarked or directed towards migrant women, two national funding mechanisms, the Communities Integration Fund and the National Integration Funding Programme, are linked to the aims of the Migrant Integration Strategy and provide support to projects addressing the integration of migrant women. Other national funding mechanisms relevant to the integration of migrant women, albeit within a wider scope, include the Dormant Accounts Fund and the Mná na hÉireann, Women of Ireland Recovery Fund.

Local authorities can support the integration of migrant women, and some have allocated specific funding for migrant women. Funding opportunities are also available at a local level through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP). In addition, there are EU funding mechanisms, namely AMIF and ESF PEIL, which are aimed at tackling migrant integration, with, for instance, projects on the integration of migrant women funded through PEIL funding.

While national funding streams make no distinction between EU and non-EU migrants, EU funding under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund is targeted at migrants from outside the EU.

Despite the various measures seeking to tackle the needs of migrant women and related challenges concerning their integration into Irish society, NGOs commented on several obstacles faced, in terms of accessing and managing funding, as well as limited opportunities to address some of the systemic issues facing migrant women in Ireland.

The chapter also provides four case studies of measures that target migrant women.

The next chapter concludes this study by summarising its findings and reflecting on the future outlook regarding policy and measures that address the integration of migrant women in Ireland.

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<sup>167</sup> Comments from a representative of the Irish Refugee Council, November 2021.



## CHAPTER 5

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### Conclusions

In 2020 there were almost 89,000 non-EU women and girls living in Ireland, representing 3.5% of the resident female population. This study aimed to assess if, and to what extent, the distinct situation of non-EU migrant women is considered in Irish national integration policies and measures.

Migrant women may face a ‘double disadvantage’, which relates to being both a woman and a migrant. Non-EU women are subject to immigration conditions and different employment rules to their EU counterparts, resulting in a more precarious residence status in the State. Research discussed above, as well as stakeholders consulted for this study, pointed to the potential vulnerability of non-EU women, including to: gender-based and domestic violence; trafficking; discrimination; and homelessness. In relation to labour market integration, non-EU migrant women show consistently lower employment and higher unemployment rates than Irish women in the reference period. While non-EU migrant women showed higher levels of tertiary education in 2019 than both non-EU men and Irish women, stakeholders noted education challenges related to limited adaptation of language classes to their needs and gendered support needs, particularly regarding childcare. Survey data indicate that non-EU women are more likely to live in overcrowded conditions than Irish women, while health data show that women originating from Africa and Asia have a higher frequency of perinatal deaths than other groups. The political underrepresentation of migrant women was also stressed by NGOs as a challenge.

In Ireland, integration policy does not distinguish between migrants from EU and non-EU regions; the focus in this report derives from the particular remit of the European Migration Network (EMN). However, some sectoral policies mention vulnerable sub-groups of non-EU migrants among their target groups. Perhaps more significant is the fact that migrant women (broadly defined) are not specifically addressed in the national Migrant Integration Strategy in Ireland. This is not unusual within the EU: the EU-wide synthesis study (EMN, forthcoming), shows that few Member States specifically address women in their national integration policies. In Ireland, gender mainstreaming is promoted by Government in the National Strategy for Women and Girls (2017–2021). Stakeholders consulted for this study critiqued the lack of complementarity between that strategy and the Migrant Integration Strategy, in particular the assumption of gender mainstreaming within the latter. Sectoral policies such as the Second National Intercultural Health Strategy directly address the specific needs of migrant women. NGOs highlighted the consultation process held during the development of this strategy, specifically the priority given to including migrant women, as an example of good practice.



The Migrant Integration Strategy, the National Strategy for Women and Girls and the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy all finished in 2021 (extended from 2020 due to COVID-19). An evaluation of the processes for implementation of these three strategies has begun and consultations on the successor Migrant Integration Strategy and National Strategy for Women and Girls will commence during 2022.<sup>168</sup> It is also potentially relevant that the drafting of a new anti-racism action plan, committed to in the Programme for Government (Department of Taoiseach 2021), is nearing completion.<sup>169</sup>

Policymakers consulted for this study noted a change in context since the development of the current Migrant Integration Strategy and the National Strategy for Women and Girls, due to societal shifts and government restructuring, and suggested gender-related issues and intersectionality will be considered more closely in the development of successor strategies.<sup>170</sup> In addition, the importance of the availability of equality data in the context of monitoring a mainstreamed integration system was stressed. NGOs consulted also commented on the shifting context since the development of the Migrant Integration Strategy resulting from major societal changes and movements; examples include developments around marriage equality, the 'Repeal the 8th' movement, a growth in activism, particularly among young people, as well as movements such as Black Lives Matter bringing strong and positive voices to the fore.<sup>171</sup>

EMN (forthcoming) identifies this theme of increased awareness and acknowledgment of the particular issues faced by migrant women, perceived as an important opportunity for integration, across several Member States. It is perhaps significant that the recently published Third National Strategy in Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence commits to an intersectional approach in seeking to properly address the complexities of individual identities and to ensure the inclusion of socially excluded groups. Migrants, refugees and international protection applicants, as well as undocumented migrants, are among those highlighted as potentially needing additional inclusion measures.

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<sup>168</sup> Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. Parliamentary question, 24 May 2022. Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. Parliamentary question, 2 June 2022.

<sup>169</sup> Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Parliamentary question, 24 March 2022.

<sup>170</sup> Interview with DCEDIY official, International Protection Accommodation Policy, Disability Policy and Anti-Racism Policy, 30 September 2021.

<sup>171</sup> Interview with a representative of Nasc, 18 October 2021.

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