

IOM Ireland

Rapid Policy Survey Report:

The Irish Government's Policy Response
to COVID-19 from a Migration
Governance Lens

March 2020 – August 2020

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IOM Ireland Rapid Policy Survey Report: The Irish Government's Policy Response to COVID-19 from a Migration Governance Lens

March 2020 — August 2020



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
agus Comhionannais
Department of Justice
and Equality



GMDAC
IOM's Global Migration
Data Analysis Centre

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Forewords

Firstly, I want to congratulate IOM Ireland and its Chief of Mission, Lalini Veerassamy, on the preparation of this important Report. It is another positive example of the close and collegiate working relationship between IOM and my Department, which has grown since IOM Ireland was first established in 2001. It is a relationship that my Department and I will continue to nurture and to develop for the benefit of all migrants living here in Ireland.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many unprecedented challenges. However, from the outset, our common goal as a country has been clear: to support one another and to protect the most vulnerable. We have promoted a principle of equity in ensuring access to healthcare and social supports, regardless of a person's legal status in the State. We have sought to reassure at every opportunity that there is nothing to fear for anyone in coming forward to seek these services, and I want to reiterate that again now. I also want to acknowledge the important contribution that migrants have made in Ireland including during the pandemic. This applies not only in health and social care services, but also in ensuring the security of our food supplies, supporting local services, and in many more areas that are essential in our day-to-day lives.

I am proud that this Report recognises that the policy responses taken during the pandemic have largely been inclusive of migrants. I believe that this spirit of inclusiveness represents who we are as a country and as a people. In my own Department, we have granted automatic renewals of immigration permissions to ensure that people do not fall out of status during this time through no fault of their own. We have also launched the online renewal system for Dublin, meaning that thousands of people do not have to physically attend our Registration Office. More broadly, the Government has ensured equality of access to the Pandemic Unemployment Payment and other social supports to provide income security, and public health information has been translated into a number of languages to ensure that we all have the necessary information to protect ourselves, our families and our communities.

The Report makes an important contribution to our own evidence base, which is essential for good policy making. Our policy responses will continue to evolve as we learn to live with COVID-19 for the foreseeable future. My Department and I look forward to continued work with Lalini and the IOM team, and indeed with other organisations working to support migrants in Ireland, to maintain an inclusive policy approach and to deliver on our Programme for Government commitments in this area.



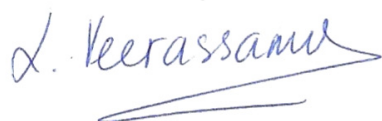
Helen McEntee

Minister for Justice, Government of Ireland

The COVID-19 pandemic is an example of the central and transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to leave no one behind and the “raison d’etre” of global guiding frameworks like the Global Compact on Migration (GCM). COVID-19 has exacerbated inequalities, impacting people most affected by social exclusion who are already in vulnerable situations. Migrants, particularly those in an irregular situation are particularly vulnerable as they can be excluded in law, policy and practice from accessing care. All migrants, regardless of their migration status must be considered in an effective response to COVID-19. An inclusive response is the only effective way of ensuring that society as a whole is protected.

COVID-19 has hit people with the lowest incomes in our society the hardest, particularly migrants in an irregular situation working in the informal sector who have a lack of income security. Those with limited incomes find it the most difficult to social distance or self-isolate and are more likely to live in cramped accommodation. Migrants with an irregular situation are often unaware of their rights and may not access services because of fear of deportation. While vulnerability is determined by many variables, legal status and employment contract or lack thereof are certainly influencing factors.

This Survey Report has enabled IOM jointly with the Irish Department of Justice to assess the immediate policy responses put in place in the midst of COVID-19. I believe that the actions taken by the Government of Ireland in an such unprecedented time constitute a good-practice example in line with many objectives of the GCM and the SDGs. In the context of a new coalition Government in Ireland, it gives even more credibility to various strong references made in the new programme “Our Shared Future” on migration governance, namely on the need to create new pathways for long-term undocumented people and their dependents to regularize their status. Regularization of migrants in an irregular situation is critical to ensure migrants’ access, without discrimination, to health care and social welfare services. As the first COVID-19 national policy report published by IOM, this is an opportunity for many more governments to reassess their long-term migration governance and better prepare for future crises. The COVID-19 crisis has made inequalities even more evident.



Lalini Veerassamy

Chief of Mission, IOM Ireland

Acknowledgements

Many people assisted with this report over the past four months and we would like to thank all of those who have been involved.

First off, we would like to extend thanks to Frank Laczko, Director of IOM Global Data Analysis Centre who proposed this piece of research in consultation with the IOM Ireland Chief of Mission, Lalini Veerassamy.

We would like to thank all those from relevant Government departments and ministries who gave their time to participate in the rapid policy survey which was circulated in May 2020. We extend particular thanks to Cillian Delaney from Department of Justice and Equality who assisted the research and report at every level, providing support and guidance throughout the process.

Special thanks to IOM's Migration Governance Indicators (MGI) Team, namely Andrea Milan, Reshma Cunnoosamy and David Martineau who drafted the rapid survey and provided guidance, feedback and editing throughout the drafting process.

A special word of thanks also to the staff of IOM Ireland. The Chief of Mission, Lalini Veerassamy who directed the report and gave guidance and feedback throughout the process; Rebecca McKinney who launched the process, circulating the survey and gathering responses from Government counterparts and carrying out initial desk research; Aideen Conway who took the lead with drafting and authoring the initial and final draft of the report.

List of acronyms

DBEI	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
DEASP	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DoH	Department of Health
DoJE	Department of Justice and Equality ^a
DYCA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
HPSC	Health Protection Surveillance Centre
HSE	Health Service Executive
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPAS	International Protection Accommodation Services
IPO	International Protection Office
ISD	Immigration Service Delivery
IPAS	International Protection Accommodation Service
MCRI	Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
MGI	Migration Governance Indicators
NPHE	National Public Health Emergency Team
PUP	Pandemic Unemployment Payment
TRC	Temporary Residence Card
WHO	World Health Organization

^a While the Department of Justice and Equality (DoJE) was reconfigured as the Department of Justice (DoJ) at the end of June 2020, this report will refer to the former for the sake of consistency as the survey was completed in May 2020.

Executive Summary

Introduction

The first confirmed case of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in the Republic of Ireland was announced by the National Public Health Emergency Team on 29 February 2020. By 14 March 2020, there were 129 confirmed cases in the Republic.¹ On 27 March 2020, Ireland was placed in full lockdown with all non-essential journeys within the country banned for two weeks. On 10 April 2020, this was extended for three weeks. The first easing of restrictions was on 5 May 2020. Daily case numbers and deaths dropped significantly in June but then gradually increased in July and August. This rise was attributed to outbreaks in workplaces, households and in sports clubs as society began to reopen.

IOM Ireland carried out a rapid policy survey in May–June 2020 in partnership with the Irish Department of Justice and Equality with the objective of gaining a comprehensive view of policy measures which were taken in Ireland in response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) from a migration governance lens. This report examines the extent to which migrants and asylum seekers in Ireland were included in the Government of Ireland's policy responses to COVID-19.

Methodology

This report is informed by a rapid policy survey based on twelve questions. This survey was developed by IOM's Migration Governance Indicators (MGI) Team.² The survey was designed to complement standard MGI assessments—holistic, long-term assessments of migration governance that IOM conducts on a yearly basis – with a dozen questions that could help understand the impact of COVID-19 from a migration governance perspective, therefore ensuring that MGI assessments take the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic into account.³

This survey, conceived as complementary to the full MGI assessment (see Annexe A) was an ideal match for IOM Ireland's interest in a rapid assessment of the COVID-19 policy response from a migration governance perspective, and the survey was therefore conducted as a standalone tool by IOM Ireland with support from the MGI team. The survey was circulated to relevant Government departments and ministries on 18 May 2020, a list of those who participated can be seen in Annex B.

Policy areas

Access to health care

The Government sought to assure migrants in an irregular situation that accessing COVID-19 related care would not lead to deportation. Department of Justice stated online that it does not and will not seek any information from an immigration perspective from either Department of Employment and Social Protection or the Health Service Executive (HSE) for persons seeking social support or medical care. In partnership with the HSE, Safetynet Primary Care^b and the Department of Health (DoH), a COVID-19 helpline was established. On 8 May 2020, the Mater Hospital and HSE, Safetynet Primary Care opened a COVID-19 Community Assessment Hub aimed at those experiencing homelessness and others unable to access COVID-19 testing and treatment. The Hub specifically cares for vulnerable groups in the inner city, including migrants in an irregular situation.

^b Safetynet Primary Care is an Irish medical charity based in Dublin that delivers care to those marginalized in society without access to health care, including homeless people, drug users, and migrants.

Access to social welfare

Pandemic Unemployment Payment

On 16 March 2020, the Government launched the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment. Payments are administered by Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) and available to employees and the self-employed who have lost their job on (or after) 13 March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These payments are available to European Economic Area (EEA) and Non-European Economic Area (EEA) workers who have lost employment due to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴ This is the first time that international students with the right to work in Ireland have been eligible for a social welfare payment.

COVID-19 Enhanced Illness Benefit

In Ireland, employers are not legally obligated to provide sick pay; however, they may do so. Employees who are on sick leave and who have enough Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI) contributions, can apply to the DEASP for a payment called 'Illness Payment'. On 9 March 2020, the Government announced a COVID-19 Enhanced Illness Benefit. Existing conditions surrounding the regular Illness Payment, such as having a specific number of PRSI contributions, is waived. Both employees and self-employed people can qualify for the payment. Workers, irrespective of citizenship/nationality are eligible for this payment. Individuals can apply for the payment if they are suspected of having COVID-19 and are advised by a doctor to self-isolate or if they are diagnosed with COVID-19. On 6 August 2020, the Government announced that workers who live in Direct Provision can access the payment.⁵

Residence permissions^c

On 20 March 2020, The Immigration Service Delivery announced that it will automatically renew existing residence permissions which were due to expire between 20 May and 20 July 2020 (including short stay permission and those who already had their permissions extended from the previous notice on 20 March). Permission to study in Ireland is indicated by Stamp 2 or Stamp 2A, these Stamps offer different conditions and permissions. If an individual possesses Stamp 2,⁶ they can work in casual employment for a maximum of 20 hours per week during school term and 40 hours per week during holidays. While colleges were closed due to the COVID-19 restrictions, students on Stamp 2 permissions could work up to 40 hours. However, students were required to re-enroll in an online course of study to adhere to the conditions of the permission. Students on the Stamp 2A permission cannot work.

On 7 July 2020, the Minister for Justice announced that the online renewal system for immigration permissions would be extended to allow all Dublin based non-nationals to apply online to renew their immigration registration. This makes the renewal process easier for thousands of people every year, and significantly reduces the number of people who need to attend the registration office in person. The public registration office reopened on 20 July 2020 for first time registrations. An Garda Síochána, the national police service, operate local immigration offices nationwide and process applications for the rest of the country.⁷

Employment Permits

The Department of Business, Economics and Innovation (DBEI) implemented changes on 30 March 2020 regarding how employment permit applications and renewals would be processed, throughout COVID-19.⁸ Applications for employment permit renewal are online based and individuals extending existing permissions can still work whilst awaiting a new permit. DBEI indicated that new permits would be issued via email as a PDF and the original permit would be posted at a later date. The DBEI stated that since mid-March, they have been prioritizing the processing of all employment permit applications for medical professionals. In the first half of 2020, 3,059 medical permits were issued. This compares with 2,192 medical employment permits issued in the first half of 2019.

c This is the equivalent of what other countries might call a "residence permit".

Information provision

Translated online resources

The HSE Social Inclusion Department provided translated online resources and posters in 29 languages to help share messaging about COVID-19.⁹

International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS) Newsletter

IPAS started publishing a weekly online newsletter from 9 April 2020 to provide updates on measures being taken in response to COVID-19 in Direct Provision centres. This newsletter is published in English and provides practical information and updates for international protection applicants residing in Direct Provision Centres.

Irish Diaspora

Response Fund for Irish Communities Abroad

The Government of Ireland has allocated EUR 2.5 million for a COVID-19 Response Fund for Irish Communities Abroad, administered by the Irish Abroad Unit of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Applications to the Fund are submitted by Irish diplomatic missions abroad on behalf of local community organizations and are for new, one-off, and time-bound projects designed to respond to the immediate crisis and to the needs of diaspora communities.

Be on Call for Ireland Initiative

The HSE launched an initiative on 17 March called “Be on Call for Ireland” which asked all health-care professionals from all disciplines who are not already working in the public health service to register to be on call in case of additional needs. This call also reached out to Irish health-care workers overseas, some of whom returned home to support and contribute to the COVID-19 response.

Resettlement/relocation

At the country level, all refugee transport and resettlement programmes were suspended temporarily in mid-March 2020 under the Irish Refugee and Resettlement Programme (IRPP) because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, IOM and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) temporarily suspended all resettlement programmes including relocation and family reunification. This impacted the planned resettlement of eight young people who were due to arrive to Ireland under a bilateral agreement between the Greek and Irish Government in late March. The Child and Family Agency (TUSLA) signed a no cost extension to the programme, as initiated by IOM. The National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) approved a rescheduled date and the children arrived in Ireland on 17 June 2020.

Some emergency relocation caseloads have continued to be assisted by IOM during the COVID-19 crisis. On 16 July 2020, seven adults and two infants arrived from camps in Italy and on 23 July, ten adults and one infant arrived. Interviews were carried out by the Irish International Protection Office with those proposed for relocation to Ireland and IOM Ireland assisted in the relocation of these cases once approved. This project, funded by the EU and co-funded by the Italian Government, was implemented by IOM Italy. Both the relocation and resettlement caseloads assisted during this time included pre-departure activities such as pre-migration health assessments (including screening for COVID-19) as well as some pre-departure orientation.

Nationals and residents who may be stranded abroad during COVID-19

Irish nationals

Measures were put in place to support the safe and orderly return of Irish citizens who might have been stranded abroad. This was done through providing advice to citizens in need and helping them to obtain seats on commercial flights where possible; negotiating seats on charter flights organized by other countries where

available; and in a few cases arranging special charter flights themselves. The European Commission helped the Irish DFAT as part of a global effort to repatriate citizens left without return flights due to the rapid spread of the pandemic.

Migrants in Ireland

In coordination with the Irish Government, IOM Ireland continued to deliver the Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) Programme for migrants in the country seeking to return to their country of origin. Flights were largely unaffected in Ireland until late March which allowed the AVR programme to continue without issue; however, by late March it became difficult to find flights. Despite challenges, the programme has continued throughout the crisis, including during the lockdown period.

Summary of conclusions

Highlights of good practices in Ireland during the ongoing public health emergency include:

- Access to COVID-19 public medical testing and treatment for all people who are residing in Ireland, irrespective of their migration status.
- Establishment of a Community Assessment Hub offering COVID-19 treatment and testing for the most vulnerable communities in Ireland, including migrants in an irregular situation.
- Translation of COVID-19 resources into 29 languages to help share messaging and increase awareness of measures to prevent the spread of the virus.
- Access to social welfare services in Ireland for non-EU/EEA workers who have lost employment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including international students.
- Access to COVID-19 Enhanced Illness Payment for all employees (including non-EU/EEA) who are suspected of having COVID-19 and are advised to self-isolate or for those diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Automatic renewal of residence permissions and work permits to ensure people do not enter into an irregular situation.

1. Introduction

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the UN Migration related agency and the leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration. IOM became an operational mission in Ireland in 2001 and has been working closely with the Irish Government to support migration management. It is part of IOM's mandate to conduct research designed to guide and inform migration policy and practice.

IOM Ireland carried out a rapid policy survey in May 2020 in partnership with the Irish Department of Justice and Equality (DoJE) with the objective of gaining a comprehensive view of policy measures which were taken in Ireland in response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) from a migration governance lens. The survey was sent to relevant Government departments and ministries to participate. The report seeks to provide a comprehensive view of Government policies in response to the COVID-19 crisis, examining the extent to which migrants in Ireland were included. The purpose of this report is to highlight policy practices deployed by the Government in response to the COVID-19 crisis; the effectiveness of these policies will not be examined or analyzed. IOM Ireland notes that the COVID-19 situation is fluid and policies are being introduced and changed on a regular basis. This report captures the information received from survey recipients and information which was available online at the time of drafting (May–August 2020).

The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasized the importance of ensuring all migrants, regardless of their status, have access to health care is a necessary condition for effective responses to the COVID-19 outbreak.¹⁰ Migrant communities are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19 because of the barriers they can face to accessing health care and social welfare services. Migration management measures have been put in place by some EU countries, for instance, Portugal temporarily regularized all citizens to ensure migrants' rights, including access to health care and social security during COVID-19. While Ireland has not formally issued any statements in that regard, policy responses have been largely inclusive of migrants. All people in Ireland can access COVID-19 health care, regardless of their migration status. Government has also granted flexibility on immigration requirements, including the extension of residence permissions. It was announced in July 2020 that the ability to renew visas online has been extended to all foreign nationals in Dublin to prevent widespread irregularity and to reduce foot traffic into the immigration office.¹¹ The COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment payment which was announced on 16 March 2020 is one of the most inclusive social welfare payments offered by the Irish Government to date. It includes non-European Economic Area (EEA) citizens who lost their job as a result of COVID-19 and international students who were working in the State when lockdown measures were put in place.

After a short description of the research methodology and a section on the Irish COVID-19 context this report is composed of two main sections. The first section is a summary of survey responses in a consolidated format alongside desk research carried out by IOM to add to relevant sections. The twelve subheadings relate to the questions which were posed in the survey. The second section summarizes the key findings and provides concluding remarks.

2. Methodology

2.1 Overview

This report is informed by a rapid policy survey based on twelve questions. This survey was developed by IOM's Migration Governance Indicators (MGI) Team.¹² The survey was designed to complement standard MGI assessments – holistic, long-term assessments of migration governance that IOM conducts on a yearly basis – with a dozen questions that could help understand the impact of COVID-19 from a migration governance perspective, therefore ensuring that MGI assessments take the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic into account.¹³

This survey, conceived as complementary to the full MGI assessment, was nevertheless a perfect match for IOM Ireland's interest in a rapid assessment of the COVID-19 policy response from a migration governance perspective, and the survey was therefore conducted as a standalone tool by IOM Ireland with support from the MGI team. For more information on the MGI indicators, please see Annexe A.

The survey was sent to all relevant Irish Government departments and ministries on 18 May 2020, at which point Ireland was entering Phase 1 of the Government road map for "reopening society and business". A list of those who responded can be seen in Annex B. Departments and ministries responded electronically (via email) to the questions which were most relevant to their specific remit. Desk research was carried out by IOM Ireland to add to sections of the report and information was taken from Government websites.

2.2 Limitations

The information in this report is informed by survey responses from Government ministries and departments which were received between 18 May and 26 June 2020 and desk research carried out by IOM. This report does not examine the full implementation of Government policies and measures taken during the ongoing public health emergency; it presents a consolidation of all policies taken during the COVID-19 crisis.

IOM would like to acknowledge that the COVID-19 situation is fluid and ever changing and some information may be outdated. A new coalition government with Fianna Fáil leader, Micheál Martin as Taoiseach was formed on 27 June 2020 and new ministers were appointed to key ministries. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs was reconfigured as the Department of Children, Disabilities, Equality, and Integration. Responsibility for Direct Provision moved to this department from Department of Justice and Equality with Green Party Teachta Dála (TD),^d Roderic O'Gorman as Minister. The Department of Justice and Equality was reconfigured as the Department of Justice with Helen McEntee as Minister.

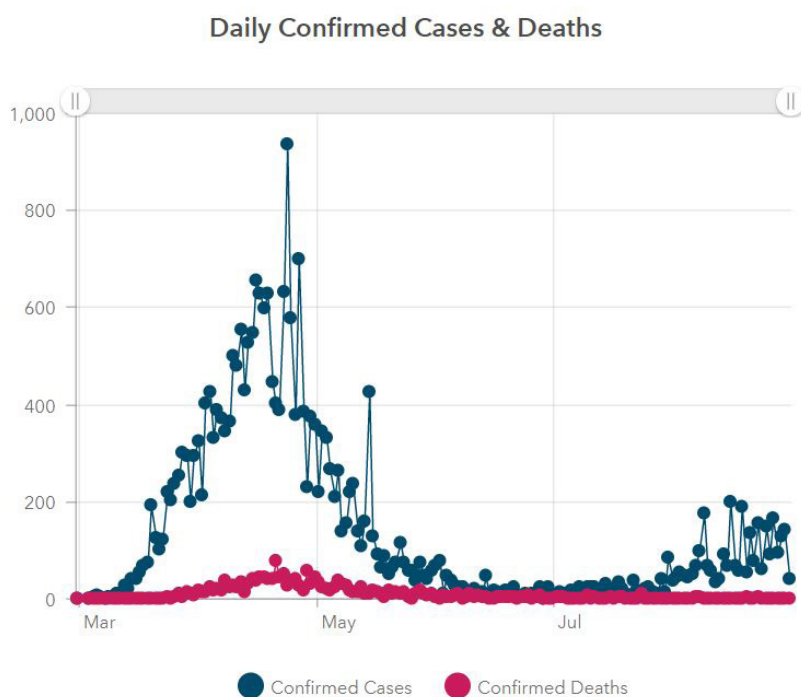
3. Irish COVID-19 context

As of April 2020, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) estimate that the population of Ireland is 4,977,400. Of this figure, 334,800 are EEA nationals (6%) and 299,600 (6%) are non-EEA nationals, this is included to contextualize policy measures discussed. The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in the Republic of Ireland was announced by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHET) on Saturday, 29 February 2020. Within two weeks, there were 129 confirmed cases in the Republic.¹⁴ On 12 March, the Irish Government shut all schools, colleges, universities, childcare facilities and cultural institutions and advised cancelling of large gatherings. On 27 March, Ireland was placed in full lockdown with all non-essential journeys within the country banned for two weeks. On 10 April, lockdown was extended for three weeks as cases continued to surge. On 1 May, the Government's road map for reopening society and business was announced (Annex C). The first easing of restrictions was on 5 May, allowing people to travel within five kilometers of their home. On 5 June, former Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar confirmed that Ireland was ready to move to Phase 2. An accelerated road map which allowed for a more rapid

^d This is the Irish equivalent of terms such as Member of Parliament (MP).

reopening of society and business was also announced (Annex D). At the time of drafting, Ireland is in Phase 3 of the road map for “reopening society and business” (20 August). Phase 4 was due to commence on 20 July, but this was postponed to 10 August and again postponed until 31 August due to an increase in cases. The graph below provides a timeline of confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths as notified by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HSPC).

As of 31 August 2020, there were 28,811 confirmed cases and 1,777 deaths recorded in the Republic of Ireland.¹⁵ Case numbers increased in recent weeks and this rise was attributed to outbreaks in workplaces, households and in sports clubs. Following advice from NPHET, the Government reinstated lockdown measures on 7 August 2020 in some counties with high cases (Laois, Offaly and Kildare). As of 31 August 2020, lockdown measures have been lifted in all counties. In a press briefing on 18 August 2020, further restrictions were reinstated throughout the country until 13 September. These measures were designed to suppress the virus by limiting congregation and social interaction among households.¹⁶ Despite the new restrictions, schools have proceeded to re-open at the end of August. The Government will publish a new road map for “resilience and recovery” ahead of 13 September 2020.



Source: HSPC, 31 August 2020: Source: Government of Ireland (2020) Ireland’s COVID-19 Data Hub <https://covid19ireland-geohive.hub.arcgis.com/>

4. Summary of responses and online information

4.1 Policy measures in response to COVID-19 and the needs of migrants

Research undertaken for this report showed that the Irish Government made efforts to consider the needs of migrants in policy measures in response to COVID-19. Most notable were the following:

- Provisions were put in place for the automatic renewal of existing residence permissions to prevent widespread irregularities.
- Migrants have equal access to COVID-19 related health care regardless of their migration status.
- Non-EEA nationals who were working in Ireland immediately before 13 March 2020 are eligible to access the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment. This includes international students who were not previously entitled to social welfare benefits in the State.

- The DBEI has prioritized the processing of work permits for non-EEA medical personnel since mid-March.
- Government announced a COVID-19 Enhanced Illness Payment for those suspected of having COVID-19 or for those diagnosed with COVID-19. This is available to employees, regardless of their tax contributions.

On the international level, the European Commission is coordinating a common European response to the COVID-19 crisis and is supporting member States in tackling the virus. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) through its Development Cooperation and Africa Division (DCAD), is involved in a global COVID-19 response, as part of the Team Europe group effort. The European Union launched its “Team Europe” package on 8 April 2020, mobilizing EUR 36 billion to fight the pandemic worldwide.¹⁷ The package will help the most vulnerable countries in Africa, the EU’s neighbourhood including the Western Balkans, the Eastern Partner countries, the Middle East and North Africa, parts of Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean. It will focus on the people most at risk, including children, women, the elderly, persons living with disabilities, as well as migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons and their host communities. Ireland continues to provide support to key multilateral partners during the COVID-19 crisis, such as the World Health Organization, the International Organization Migration and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

4.2 Migrant visas and work permits during COVID-19 crisis

4.2.1 New visa applications

From 20 March to 22 June 2020, DoJE made the decision to temporarily cease accepting new visa applications except for specific priority and emergency cases. The following are examples of those which were prioritized: emergency visas (e.g. for health care professionals, health researchers, elderly care professionals), immediate family members of Irish citizens, persons legally resident in the State, persons entitled to avail of the provision of the EU Free Movement Directive, Transport personnel engaged in haulage of goods and other transport staff to the extent necessary.¹⁸ Immigration Service Delivery (ISD) restarted processing applications for long stay visas, including student visas on 22 June 2020.

4.2.2 Residence permissions (including student permissions)

On 20 March 2020, the ISD announced that it would automatically renew existing residence permissions which were due to expire between 20 May and 20 July 2020 (includes short-stay permissions and those who had their permissions already extended from the previous notice on 20 March). Permission to study in Ireland is indicated By Stamp 2 or Stamp 2A, these Stamps offer different conditions and permissions (see Annex E). If an individual possesses Stamp 2,¹⁹ they can work in casual employment for a maximum of 20 hours per week during school term and 40 hours per week during holidays. While colleges were closed due to the COVID-19 restrictions, students on Stamp 2 permissions could work up to 40 hours. However, one was required to re-enrol in an online course of study to adhere to the conditions of the permission. If an individual’s course finished, one must enrol in a new course of study immediately. Students on Stamp 2A permission cannot work. Students on this kind of permission are usually on a semester abroad or studying at a private secondary school in Ireland.

International Students who left the State before completion of their studies due to COVID-19, can return and resume their studies and the duration of their absence will not count towards the two years maximum period of English language study allowed in Ireland. Language students with a current and valid permission who are still in the State and who have completed the maximum two years permitted as a language student, but due to COVID-19 are unable to return home, may remain as students until the end of the year provided they re-enrol in an online course of study for the remainder of the year.

On 7 July 2020, the Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee, announced that the online renewal system for immigration permissions will be extended to allow all Dublin based non-nationals to apply online to renew their immigration registration; this has made the process easier and significantly reduces the number of people who

need to attend the Burgh Quay Registration Office in person. The public registration office which closed in mid-March 2020, reopened on 20 July 2020 for first time registrations. An Garda Síochána, the national police service of the Republic of Ireland, operate local immigration offices nationwide and process applications for the rest of the country.²⁰ In response to the new measures which were announced by the Government on 18 August 2020, public registration offices around the country closed as of 18 August 2020 to allow for revised public health guidance to be issued. As of Monday, 24 August 2020, the Registration Office at Burgh Quay in Dublin reopened, with strict social distancing arrangements in place to protect customers and staff.

4.2.3 Employment permits

The DBEI (DBEI) implemented changes on 30 March 2020 regarding how employment permit applications and renewals would be processed, throughout COVID-19 (full plans detailed on DBEI website).²¹ Applications for employment permit renewal are online based and individuals extending existing permissions can still work whilst awaiting a new permit. DBEI indicated that new permits would be issued via email as a PDF and the original permit would be posted at a later date.

4.2.4 International protection applicants

The DoJE indicated that new applicants for international protection should continue to report to the International Protection Office (IPO) on Mount Street in Dublin where initial processing takes place. When an application is registered and the Section 15²² interview is completed, the applicant is issued a Temporary Residence Certificate (TRC) and is referred to the International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS) if accommodation is required. All new applicants, over the age of 14 years, are fingerprinted when they first attend the IPO.

The layout of the public office of the IPO has been altered to allow optimal distance between applicants and to keep in line with Government recommendations on social distancing for prevention of transmission of COVID-19.

Alternative arrangements for renewal of Temporary Residence Certificates (TRCs) are now in place. TRCs can now be renewed via email. This means that applicants are not be required to present in person to renew their TRCs until further notice. Applicants whose TRC is expired or due to expire within three weeks have been instructed to email the TRC renewal department of the IPO to request a renewal and, if eligible, the TRC is issued by post to the address on their file. Any applicants in Direct Provision are required to return their old TRC card to their centre manager for return to the IPO.

4.2.5 Resettlement/relocation

At the country level, all refugee transport and resettlement programmes were suspended temporarily in mid-March under the Irish Refugee and Resettlement Programme (IRPP) because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, IOM and UNHCR temporarily suspended all resettlement programmes including relocation and family reunification. This impacted the planned resettlement of eight young people who were due to arrive to Ireland under a bilateral agreement between the Greek and Irish Government in late March. The Child and Family Agency (TUSLA) signed a no cost extension to the programme, as initiated by IOM. The NPHET approved a rescheduled date and the children arrived in Ireland on 17 June 2020. They were all male, from Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Syrian Arab Republic.

Some emergency relocation caseloads have continued to be assisted by IOM during the COVID-19 crisis. On 16 July 2020, seven adults and two infants arrived from camps in Italy and on 23 July, ten adults and one infant arrived. The individuals disembarked from boats in November and December 2019, and were of Guinean, Somali, and Sudanese nationality. Interviews were carried out by the Irish International Protection Office with those proposed for relocation to Ireland and IOM Ireland assisted in the relocation of these cases once approved. This project, funded by the EU and co-funded by the Italian government, was implemented by IOM Italy. Both the relocation and resettlement caseloads assisted during this time included pre-departure activities such as pre-migration health assessments (including screening for COVID-19) as well as some pre-departure orientation.

4.3 Social distancing and prevention measures in areas with high concentration of migrants

4.3.1 Direct provision centres

Overview

The established procedure across all Direct Provision Centres where a person was suspected of having the virus or is confirmed as having the virus, is that they are moved to a dedicated offsite self-isolation facility. The IPAS made residents aware of social distancing rules, hand hygiene and coughing/sneezing etiquette. Information and posters have been distributed by IPAS to all centres and translations of public health information have also been provided. From 9 April 2020, IPAS began sending weekly COVID-19 newsletters to residents. During this time, centre managers were advised by IPAS to increase the standard and frequency of cleaning throughout the centres, paying attention to communal areas. Residents in Direct Provision centres were subject to the same COVID-19 public health measures as the rest of the population. Lockdown measures which the former Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar announced on 27 March 2020 applied to those living in Direct Provision. The Health Service Executive (HSE)^e added that they also follow additional Health Protection Surveillance Centre guidance (HPSC) for residents in Direct Provision centres.²³

Temporary accommodation for health care workers

On 10 April, the HSE issued its National Guidance document on temporary accommodation for health-care workers during the COVID-19 crisis. Health-care workers living in Direct Provision centres were eligible to apply for accommodation under the scheme via a referral form to the HSE.²⁴ DoJE actively encouraged all health-care workers living in Direct Provision centres to apply for temporary accommodation for their protection and that of other centre residents and staff. This continues to be offered but because it is primarily B&B accommodation, it was reported that some people were continuing to return to Direct Provision centres to use laundry and cooking facilities.²⁵ This scheme was supposed to close on 31 July 2020 but the HSE Social Inclusion Unit updated the Irish Refugee Council via email on 9 July 2020 that it remains risky for health-care workers in the asylum system to move back into Direct Provision centres and the HSE guidance is that this should not take place. IPAS ensured that no more than three people were sharing a room in any of the Direct Provision centres during the public health emergency. In early April 2020, some residents were transferred to new accommodation to allow for greater social distancing and to reduce overcrowding in some centres.

New accommodation

Since 31 March 2020, DoJE has procured 850 new temporary hotel beds following intensive negotiations with hotel owners within a very short space of time. These beds are being used to support social distancing by reducing the number of residents in existing communal centres. On 9 April 2020, 50 single women were moved to new temporary accommodation.²⁶ This increase in capacity is a critical part of the Government's overall strategy to protect residents and is additional to the new accommodation centres which were opened recently in Tullamore, Rosslare Harbour and Caherciveen.

Vulnerable residents in direct provision

Cocooning measures are required for people who fall within one of the six criteria of serious medical illnesses published by the HPSC on 26 March 2020.²⁷ These are the specific criteria that are helping to determine who in Direct Provision is considered vulnerable at this time. Those aged 70 or older, are considered particularly vulnerable to this virus; however, DoJE noted that residents in Direct Provision centres are generally far younger.

^e Public agency in Ireland responsible for the provision of health and personal social services.

DoJE went further than the HSE guidelines by implementing cocooning measures for all residents aged 65 years or older. In terms of medically vulnerable residents, DoJE does not hold medical information related to residents due to doctor-patient confidentiality. They are reliant on the HSE as the health-care providers which are examining this matter in conjunction with General Practitioners. To speed up the process, the HSE set up a dedicated email address where residents could disclose serious medical illnesses directly in confidence to a doctor to see if they require cocooning.

4.4 Access to COVID-19 related health services for migrants

4.4.1 Overview

Citizen's Information, the statutory body in Ireland which supports the provision of information, advice and advocacy on a public and social services, confirmed that the same COVID-19 public medical treatment is available to all people who are residing in Ireland, including migrants with in an irregular situation. The Government sought to assure migrants in an irregular situation that accessing medical care would not lead to deportation. DoJE published on their website that it does not and will not seek any information from an immigration perspective from either DEASP or the HSE for persons coming forward for social supports or medical attention. It is stressed that migrants in an irregular situation "should not hesitate about coming forward to access health care or social supports during the COVID-19 crisis".²⁸ The Migrant Rights Centre, a leading non-governmental organization in Ireland working with migrants indicated that while hospitals will request a Personal Public Service Number (PPSN), those who do not have one should still be able to access treatment.²⁹ Department of Youth and Children's Affairs (DYCA) referred to their equity of care principal meaning that all children can access the same medical care in Ireland, regardless of their migration status.

4.4.2 COVID-19 community assessment hub

In partnership with the HSE, Safetynet Primary Care and the Department of Health (DoH), a COVID-19 telephone clinical helpline was established to arrange triage, testing and isolation for homeless and vulnerable individuals with COVID-19 symptoms living in congregated settings. It was also used to advise, support and work with locations where vulnerable groups are present relating to the implementation of COVID-19 guidelines and measures. This telephone service went live on 9 April 2020. On 8 May 2020, with the Mater Hospital and HSE, Safetynet Primary Care opened a COVID-19 community assessment hub aimed at those experiencing homelessness and others unable to access COVID-19 assessment, treatment and testing. The Hub specifically cares for vulnerable groups in the inner city. The former Minister for Health, Simon Harris said: "This community assessment hub is a key part of the infrastructure providing a rapid response service to test for COVID-19 among people who are homeless, those living in extreme poverty, undocumented migrants and other vulnerable groups in the inner city".³⁰ The service includes an assessment unit at the Mater Hospital in Dublin and a mobile assessment unit working across the inner city. Safetynet Primary Care intend to continue this service as long as other COVID-19 community assessment hubs around the country are in operation.

4.5 Access to social security

4.5.1 COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment

On 16 March 2020, the Government launched the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP). Payments are administered by Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP). The payment is available to employees and the self-employed who have lost their job on (or after) 13 March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These payments are also available to non-EEA workers who have lost employment due to the COVID -19 pandemic.³¹ This is the first time that international students with the right to work in Ireland have been eligible for a social welfare payment.

Unlike existing jobseeker payments, claimants do not have to prove they have been let go by their employer, but the department stressed that it carries out pre and post payment checks on eligibility. The DEASP has confirmed that this payment is available irrespective of migration status to:

- Employees and self-employed people who lost their job or have been laid off due to the COVID-19;
- Employees and self-employed people who have a valid Personal Public Service Number.

The payment also applies to:

- Non-EU/EEA workers who have lost employment due to the COVID-19 pandemic irrespective of their migration status;
- Students (and non-EU/EEA students, stamp 2 and stamp 1G) who have lost employment due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rates for the COVID-19 PUP changed from 29 June 2020 and are now linked to earnings. The DEASP accesses this information from the Office of the Revenue Commissioners. Those who were earning EUR 200 euro or more per week continue to receive EUR 350 per week. Those who were earning EUR 199.99 or less receive a COVID-19 Pandemic Payment of EUR 203 per week –this new rate was paid from 7 July.³²

As of 3 May 2020, there were 602,107 people receiving the COVID-19 PUP (CSO, 2020). This makes up 18 per cent of the estimated population of working age (16–66) in Ireland.³³ Of this figure, 72 per cent (435,547) were Irish, 3 per cent (18,471) were British, 16 per cent (95,552) were EU Nationals and 9 per cent (52,537) were non-EU Nationals (Other).³⁴ As of 23 August, there were 230,435 people claiming the COVID-19 PUP, a 61.72 per cent decrease.

4.5.2 Temporary COVID-19 Wage Subsidy Scheme

The Temporary COVID-19 Wage Subsidy Scheme was administered by the Office of the Revenue Commissioners. The scheme enabled employees whose employers were affected by the pandemic to receive significant supports directly from their employer. It was available to employers who kept employees, including EEA and non-EEA employees who are employment permit holders, on the payroll throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning employers could retain links with employees for when business picks up after the crisis. Further information on this scheme is available from the Revenue Commissioners.³⁵ This differed from the pandemic unemployment payment in that employees remained on the payroll through the pandemic. On 5 June 2020, this scheme was extended by the Minister of Finance to 31 August 2020. The operation of the scheme reduced the burden on the DEASP which is dealing with the other COVID-19 related payments. Employers made this subsidy payment to their employees through their normal payroll process. More than EUR 2.7 billion has been given to 69,500 employers via the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy Scheme, covering more than 600,000 workers. This scheme ended on 31 August 2020 and was replaced by the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme (EWSS). The new EWSS will operate until the end of March 2021. Under the EWSS, employees with gross weekly pay of less than EUR 152 per week are not eligible for any subsidy.³⁶

4.5.3 COVID-19 enhanced illness benefit

In Ireland, employers are not legally obligated to provide sick pay. However, employers can decide their own policy on sick leave and may decide to pay an employee who is off on sick leave. Employees who are on sick leave and who have enough Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI) contributions, can apply to the DEASP for a payment called illness benefit.³⁷

On 9 March 2020, the Government announced a COVID-19 Enhanced Illness Benefit. Existing conditions surrounding the regular illness benefit, such as having a specific number of PRSI contributions, is waived. Both employees and self-employed people can qualify for the payment. Both employees and self-employed people can qualify for the payment. Workers, irrespective of citizenship/nationality are eligible for this

payment. On 6 August 2020, the Government announced that workers who live in Direct Provision who have been diagnosed with COVID-19, or who have been advised to self-isolate, can access the COVID-19 enhanced illness benefit.³⁸ One can apply for the payment if they are suspected of having COVID-19 and are advised by a doctor to self-isolate or if one is diagnosed with COVID-19. To qualify, one must:

- Be aged between 18 and 66;
- Have a medical certificate called a “Certificate of incapacity for work” from a doctor or have a text or letter notification from the HSE to support his/her application;
- Be employed or self-employed and have worked in the 4 weeks before the date of the medical certification;
- Have a current contract of employment, (only applies to employees).

The COVID-19 enhanced illness benefit is a temporary measure during the public health emergency, and it will be in place until 31 March 2021. If one needs to self-isolate because they may have COVID-19, it is paid for a maximum of two weeks. This can be extended for another two weeks, if the HSE advise further self-isolation. If one is diagnosed with COVID-19, it is paid for a maximum of ten weeks.

4.5.4 Migrants in an irregular situation

While migrants in an irregular situation are typically excluded from social welfare payments (apart from an exceptional need payment) in Ireland, some individuals have been able to access the COVID-19 PUP payments if they have a PPSN. DoJE indicated that undocumented migrants can access information from social welfare services free from fear of deportation during COVID-19.³⁹ Migrants in irregular situation tend to work in sectors such as construction and hospitality which have been hit hard during the pandemic.

4.6 COVID-19 information provision

4.6.1 Translated online resources

The HSE Social Inclusion Department have provided translated online resources and posters in 29 languages to help share messaging about COVID-19.⁴⁰ This is important to ensure migrant communities in Ireland that may not be fluent in its official languages can access information. The DYCA stated that some of their documents have been translated and translation services are used where required.

4.6.2 IPAS newsletter

IPAS started publishing a weekly online newsletter from 9 April 2020 to provide updates on measures being taken in response to COVID-19 in Direct Provision centres. This newsletter is published in English and provides practical information and updates for international protection applicants residing in Direct Provision Centres.

4.6.3 Community Assessment Hub

The Mater Hospital, the HSE and the medical charity, Safetynet launched a COVID Community Assessment Hub on 8 May 2020. Safetynet aims to identify gaps in health services and facilitate the development of new services with the aim of ensuring equitable care for all. The Community Assessment Hub includes an assessment unit at the Mater Hospital in Dublin and a mobile assessment unit working across the inner city to serve the needs of people living in poverty and those living in congregated settings. These groups are less likely to try to access health care for diagnosis in the first place which makes this service extremely important in the context of COVID-19.

4.6.4 COVID-19 “Community Call” fora (local government)

In response to COVID-19, the Government launched “The Community Call” on 2 April 2020, an initiative that links local and national Government with the community and voluntary sectors. The purpose of the Community Call is to coordinate community activity, direct community assistance to where it is needed, and marshal the volunteering energy of the country.⁴¹ The Community Call Fora are now in operation in all 31 local authorities across the country. The immediate focus is on the elderly and the most vulnerable. Assistance is offered such as collection and delivery of food and other items, self-isolation supports and other medical or health needs. An example of the Fingal Community Call Helpline can be seen in Annex F.

4.7 Extraordinary measures to ensure migrants can contribute to the COVID-19 response

The Department of Health Professional Regulation Unit stated that there was no expedition for recognition of foreign qualifications of health-care personnel during COVID-19; although efforts were made to process applications as expeditiously as possible without any alteration to standards required. According to the Government website, in the current COVID-19 crisis, delays might be experienced in reaching decisions on applications for recognition.⁴²

A non-EEA national, unless exempt, requires an employment permit to work in Ireland. Since mid-March, the DBEI has been prioritizing the processing of all employment permit applications for medical professionals. In the first half of 2020, 3,059 medical employment permits were issued. This compares with 2,192 medical employment permits issued in the first half of 2019 (see Annex G).

For an employment permit to be issued there is a requirement for six months validity on the non-EEA nationals’ passport for a new permit and three months for a renewal permit. The Employment Permits Section in DBEI implemented a temporary measure (with the agreement of the DoJE) allowing non-EEA medical professionals who do not have the required validity on their passport to apply for an employment permit, and those who cannot access passport renewal services in their own country, may submit a valid application for an employment permit. This temporary measure is designed to ensure that key medical personnel continue to be available to assist the State during the COVID-19 crisis. Employment permit holders will be required to send a copy of their new passport as soon as possible after it has been issued to them. This does not apply to EEA nationals as they do not require a permit to work in Ireland.

4.8 Migratory status as a separate variable in data collection and dissemination related to COVID-19 health statistics

The CSO developed and launched a COVID-19 Information Hub in March 2020. It reports on the changing state of aspects of Ireland’s economy and society since the COVID-19 outbreak with themes including the following: economy, labour market, social and well-being health and transport, energy and tourism.⁴³ Migratory status is not captured by the CSO as a separate variable for COVID-19 related health statistics. Nationality is a field collected but the relatively small sample size prohibits dissemination. The COVID Tracker app was launched on 7 July 2020. It does not ask for user’s nationality or migratory status. If you choose to “check in”, your county and locality is requested but this is not a mandatory field and it is possible to select “prefer not to say”. The rate of download of the app is high compared to other countries, with over one million people registered in July 2020.⁴⁴

The Government launched a COVID-19 Data Hub which provides national statistics, information and data related to COVID-19. This site is a collaboration between Ordnance Survey Ireland, the All-Island Research Observatory, the HPSC the HSE, the CSO and the Department of Health. The information is based on

official figures provided by the HPSC and the HSE. Datasets, charts and maps are updated on an ongoing basis. COVID-19 cases and mortality figures are not disaggregated by migratory status.

4.9 Migratory status as a separate variable in data collection related to socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19

The CSO stated that nationality and country of birth are captured as part of the household surveys which have been used to generate initial data on the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 but the small nature of these samples, and the additional challenges associated with response rates falling as a consequence of COVID-19, means that the use of nationality or country of birth for data analysis is not currently possible. The CSO added that the Labour Force Survey,⁴⁵ a large scale nationwide survey of households in Ireland has some additional information which captures some aspects of migration, but again it was noted that the sample size was small, making the dissemination of migratory related statistics difficult. The CSO added that additional information may be examined as the situation continues to evolve.

The CSO include information on nationality in their COVID-19 income support live register tables which was referenced in section 2.5.1. These tables are updated on a weekly basis and as of 24 August, there were a total of 230,435 individuals receiving the payment. Of the total, 2.7 per cent were from EU 14 countries (excluding Ireland), 11.38 per cent were from EU 15-27 countries and 10.39 per cent were other nationalities (non-EU).⁴⁶

4.10 Diaspora Contribution to the COVID-19 Response from Abroad

4.10.1 Response Fund for Irish Communities Abroad

DFAT shared that the Government has allocated EUR 2.5 million for a COVID-19 Response Fund for Irish Communities Abroad, administered by the Irish Abroad Unit of the DFAT. Applications to the Fund are submitted by Irish diplomatic missions abroad on behalf of local community organizations and are for new, one-off and time-bound projects designed to respond to the immediate crisis and to the needs of diaspora communities. The COVID-19 Response Fund has four priority areas: protecting the elderly and mitigating the impact of social isolation; meeting the needs of those made vulnerable by the crisis and responding quickly to cases of particular hardship; mental health support and bereavement counselling; support for the provision of services online. To date, 68 projects have been supported by the fund: 28 in Britain, 12 in the US, 12 in Canada, 9 in Australia, 3 in New Zealand and 4 in the rest of the world. In general, projects have been delivered by local community and welfare organizations identified through the Irish Mission Network.

4.10.2 Be on Call for Ireland Initiative

The HSE launched an initiative on 17 March called “Be on Call for Ireland” which asked all health-care professionals from all disciplines who are not already working in the public health service to register to be on call in case of additional needs. This call also reached out to Irish health-care workers overseas, some of whom returned home to support and contribute to the COVID-19 response. As of 16 April 2020, 72,000 people applied to the initiative.⁴⁷ Registration for the initiative is now closed but the HSE have indicated that registration might re-open again if there is a need.

4.11 Continued flow of remittances during the COVID-19 crisis

Remittances can be channeled through the formal or informal sector. The formal sector refers to authorized money service providers such as Banks, Global Networks (Western Union and MoneyGram) and Country Specific Operators. The Department of Finance indicated that financial and legal services were officially classified as essential services and were permitted to open during the lockdown in Ireland. Banks, credit unions, and post offices were specifically named as examples of essential services in this sector.

Activities of suppliers, that were required for the provision of essential services, were also permitted to continue.

Global networks such as MoneyGram and Western Union were affected by the lockdown measures in Ireland. These services are typically offered in Ireland inside other businesses, such as foreign exchange offices, internet cafes and print-shops, none of which were entitled to open while lockdown measures were in place.^f While Western Union and MoneyGram do have online apps which can be used, these online transfers often require a bank account which not all migrants have. Those seeking to send cash via money transfer offices could not do so while lockdown measures were in place.

DFAT mentioned in their response that at the international level, Ireland, as co-chair of the Friends of Migration group at the United Nations in New York, advocates actively for the recognition of the specific impacts of COVID-19 on migrants. Ireland co-organized a virtual meeting on “Migrant health and remittances amid the COVID-19 pandemic” for senior diplomatic representatives and others on 4 June which the former Minister of State, Ciaran Cannon participated in.

4.12 Measures to support and facilitate safe and orderly return and sustainable reintegration of nationals and residents who may be stranded abroad during COVID-19

Measures were put in place to support the safe and orderly return of Irish citizens who might have been stranded abroad. DFAT’s approach during COVID-19 prioritizes assisting citizens overseas to return safely to Ireland. This was done through providing advice to citizens in need and helping them to obtain seats on commercial flights where possible; negotiating seats on charter flights organized by other countries where available; and in a few cases arranging special charter flights themselves. In cases where flights were chartered directly, and where space was available, transport was also provided to EU and United Kingdom citizens and to non-nationals resident in Ireland. This was in line with similar support provided by international partners to Irish citizens. All citizens assisted to return home were advised in advance of the range of public health requirements and advice. On each of the flights directly chartered by DFAT, all possible measures were taken to ensure the protection of public health and the health of those travelling – for example, on the 11 May repatriation flight from Nigeria passengers received two temperature checks prior to departure, were provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and were facilitated in social distancing on the plane and between airport terminals by using a private bus. As of July 2020, DFAT assisted over 8,000 Irish citizens to return to Ireland, with the majority able to find seats on commercial flights.

During the COVID-19 crisis, IOM Ireland continued to deliver the Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) Programme for migrants in the country seeking to return to their country of origin. Flights were largely unaffected in Ireland until late March which allowed the AVR programme to continue without issue; however, by late March it became difficult to find flights for those who wished to return home. Despite challenges, the programme has continued throughout the crisis, including during the lockdown period. From 27 March to 29 July, IOM Ireland assisted the following beneficiaries to return home under the AVR programme: 20 Brazilians, 1 Egyptian, 1 Malaysian and 3 South Africans. Finding flights remains a challenge in August 2020 due to ongoing restrictions around the world.

5. Conclusion

From survey responses received from relevant government counterparts and desk research carried out by IOM Ireland, it is apparent that efforts were made to include migrants in policy responses to COVID-19. Good practices that could be replicated in other countries include:

^f Call interviews with businesses who provide money transfer services in Dublin.

- Extending access to COVID-19 public medical testing and treatment for all people who are residing in Ireland, including migrants in an irregular situation.
- Establishment of a Community Assessment Hub offering COVID-19 treatment and testing for the most vulnerable communities in Ireland, including migrants in an irregular situation.
- Translation of COVID-19 resources into 29 languages to help share messaging and increase awareness of measures to prevent the spread of the virus.
- Access to social welfare services in Ireland for non-EU/EEA workers who have lost employment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including international students.
- Access to COVID-19 Enhanced Illness Payment for all employees (including non-EU/EEA) who are suspected of having COVID-19 and are advised to self-isolate or for those diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Automatic renewal of residence permissions and work permits to ensure people do not enter into an irregular situation and can continue to work and access services as required.

At the end of August 2020, countries all over the world (see Annex H) are still struggling to contain the spread of COVID-19, with resurgences emerging in countries which had managed to contain the virus earlier in 2020. It is clear from the initial stages in Ireland that migrants show specific patterns of vulnerability. COVID-19 outbreaks in the summer of 2020 have been recorded in workplaces in Ireland including among health-care workers, meat processing plants and construction sites. Sixteen clusters of COVID-19 were reported in meat processing factories across the country between March and July. Meat Industry Ireland confirmed that of their employees, 30 per cent are Irish, 50 per cent are EEA nationals and 20 per cent are non-EEA nationals on work permits. Despite efforts to increase beds and reduce the number of residents sharing bedrooms to allow for greater social distancing in Direct Provision centres, clusters have emerged in several centres across the country.

Migrants in an irregular situation remain the most vulnerable migrant group during the COVID-19 crisis. The World Health Organization stressed the importance of including migrants in policy responses to respond to COVID-19 effectively. It is known that COVID-19 has hit people with the lowest incomes in our society the hardest, particularly migrants in an irregular situation working in the informal sector who have a lack of income security. Those with limited incomes find it the most difficult to social distance or self-isolate and are more likely to live in cramped accommodation with non-relatives and work in jobs where it is not possible to social distance. While DoJE has sought to reassure migrants that it is safe to access medical services and seek advice from Department of Employment and Social Protection, migrants with in an irregular situation are often unaware of their rights and may not access services because of fear of deportation. While vulnerability is determined by many variables, legal status and employment contract or lack thereof are certainly influencing factors.

While addressing the COVID-19 crisis, it is important that governments maintain a longer-term, holistic perspective on migration governance.⁴⁸ COVID-19 has exacerbated inequalities, impacting people most affected by social exclusion. Structural inequalities limit the effectiveness of measures taken to contain the spread of the virus. COVID-19 can be seen as an opportunity for governments to reassess their long-term migration governance, take lessons and better prepare for future crises. This is an opportunity for the new coalition Government including Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Green Party to implement their new programme: “Our Shared Future”. The programme included reference to migration governance, mentioning the need to create new pathways for long-term undocumented people and their dependents to regularize their status.⁴⁹ Regularization of migrants in an irregular situation is critical to ensure migrants’ access, without discrimination, to health care and social welfare services. The COVID-19 crisis has made inequalities evident and

simultaneously, these inequalities have been exacerbated. Recent outbreaks in Ireland have been linked to workplaces, highlighting the importance of labour protections and workplace standards. In this context, it is more important than ever that governments consider long-term migration governance and social inclusion policies if the COVID-19 pandemic is to be adequately addressed and contained.



THE MIGRATION GOVERNANCE INDICATORS



A look into the way countries govern migration

This is an era of unprecedented mobility, and the need to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility is becoming increasingly relevant. The necessity to face the challenges and to maximize the opportunities that this mobility brings has been recognized with the inclusion of migration in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which highlights the positive contribution of migrants to inclusive growth and development in, among others, target 10.7 “orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”.

To help countries understand what well-managed migration policies might look like in practice, IOM worked with The Economist Intelligence Unit to develop the Migration Governance Indicators (MGI), a standard set of approximately 90 indicators, which helps countries identify good practices as well as areas with potential for further development and can offer insights on the policy levers that countries can use to develop their migration governance structures.

OBJECTIVES

1

Generate a dialogue on well-managed migration policies

2

Identify gaps to be addressed to inform the formulation of comprehensive migration strategies

3

Help establish baselines to track progress on national and international commitments

KEY ATTRIBUTES



Voluntary

MGI assessments are conducted upon government request, and the profiles are published with their consent.

Sensitive to local specificities



All countries have different realities, challenges, and opportunities that relate to migration. Therefore, the MGI does not propose one-size-fits all solutions, nor does it establish a ranking between countries.

Consultative



Governments are engaged through all stages of the process. The results of the assessments are used to generate an inclusive national conversation on the country's migration policies.

68 COUNTRIES

- Albania
- Angola
- Argentina
- Bahrain
- Bangladesh
- Belize
- Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
- Brazil
- Cabo Verde
- Cambodia
- Cameroon
- Canada
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Côte d'Ivoire
- Djibouti
- Dominican Republic
- Ecuador
- El Salvador
- Eswatini
- Ethiopia
- Germany
- Gambia (the)
- Ghana
- Guatemala
- Guinea-Bissau
- Honduras
- Iraq
- Italy
- Jamaica
- Kazakhstan
- Kenya
- Kuwait
- Kyrgyzstan
- Malawi
- Mali
- Mauritania
- Mauritius
- Mexico
- Morocco
- Nepal
- Nicaragua
- Panama
- Papua New Guinea
- Peru
- Philippines
- Portugal
- Republic of Korea
- Republic of Moldova
- Rwanda
- Senegal
- Serbia
- Seychelles
- Sierra Leone
- South Africa
- Sri Lanka
- Sweden
- Tajikistan
- Timor-Leste
- Turkey
- Tuvalu
- Uganda
- Ukraine
- Uruguay
- Vanuatu
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe

Annex B: List of Departments who responded to the rapid survey

Department	Section
Department of Justice and Equality	Civil Justice and Equality – Migration Policy
	IPO
	IPAS
Department of Education and Skills	Social Inclusion Unit
Department of Further Education	Further Education and Training
Department of Health	Professional Regulation Unit
Tusla	
Department of Children and Youth Affairs	Policy Innovation Unit
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	Irish Abroad Unit
	Development Cooperation and Africa Unit
	Consular Directorate
Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation	Economic Migration Policy
Central Statistics Office	Integrated European Social Statistics (IESS) Regulation Coordination
Department of Finance	
Citizen's Information	Dublin City

Annex C: Timelines for first road map- published on 2 May and commenced on 18 May 2020

Based on a 3 week review process, the current phases would commence on the following dates:	
Phase 1	18 th May
Phase 2	8 th June
Phase 3	29 th June
Phase 4	20 th July
Phase 5	10 th August

Annex D: Revised road map, approved on 19 June 2020 (Phase 3)

Phase 3 – Commencing 29th June					
Education/Childcare/Young People	Economic Activity & Work	Social	Cultural & Religious	Sport	Transport & Travel
<p>The following may reopen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All adult education facilities Creches, childminding facilities and pre-schools Summer Camps Youth Clubs All indoor and outdoor amenities for children. 	<p>Continue to work from home as much as possible.</p> <p>The following may reopen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wellbeing services, e.g. chiropractic, massage therapy, acupuncture, reflexology and homoeopathy. Hairdressers, barbers, nail and brow salons, beauty salons, spas, make up application services, tanning, tattooing and piercing services. Driving schools. All remaining retail (e.g. bookmakers), services and commercial activities. <p>Driving tests as well as volunteer and other driving services may recommence.</p> <p>Compliance with work protocols and health guidance will be monitored by State agencies.</p>	<p>Indoor gatherings of up to 50 people when conducted in line with public health advice are permissible.</p> <p>Outdoor gatherings of up to 200 people when conducted in line with public health advice are permissible.</p> <p>The following may reopen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pubs and hotel bars operating as restaurants, and subject to meeting specific requirements Cafes and restaurants providing on premises food & beverages Hotels, hostels, caravan parks and holiday parks. <p>Specific recommendations apply to singing, choirs and playing musical instruments in groups.</p> <p>All of the above are subject to the Phases 3 and 4 restrictions on numbers for public gatherings and other important public health advice.</p>	<p>The following may reopen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Museums, Galleries, Theatres, concert halls and other cultural outlets Cinemas, Music Venues (excluding nightclubs and discos), leisure facilities, bingo halls, arcades, skating rinks, amusement parks Religious Buildings and places of worship. <p>Specific guidance will apply to numbers attending religious buildings and places of worship.</p> <p>All of the above are subject to the Phases 3 and 4 restrictions on numbers for public gatherings and other important public health advice.</p>	<p>Sporting activities may gradually recommence, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team leagues for adults and children Close contact sports Organised sporting spectator events and fixtures. <p>The following may reopen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indoor Gyms and exercise facilities Yoga, Pilates and dance studios. Sports clubs and public swimming pools. <p>All of the above are subject to the Phases 3 and 4 restrictions on numbers for public gatherings and other important public health advice.</p>	<p>Walk or Cycle if possible</p> <p>Public Transport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social distancing means that overall capacity remains restricted Use public transport only for essential journeys Face coverings should be worn Avoid peak-time travel. <p>International Travel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All non-essential overseas travel should be avoided Passengers arriving from overseas are expected to self-isolate for 14 days Passengers will also have to complete a form showing where they will self-isolate. <p>Tourist travel to offshore islands may resume.</p> <p>Private Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tour, event and private bus use, and vehicle hire, may recommence.

Source: Government of Ireland, 2020, "Roadmap for reopening society and business".

Annex E: Irish immigration stamps – overview

Stamp	Typical Situations	Private Health Insurance required	Reckonable for citizenship	Conditions
Stamp 0	Stamp 0 indicates permission to stay in Ireland for a temporary period, subject to conditions.	Yes	No	Must be of independent means; cannot receive any benefits or use public services; cannot work.
Stamp 1	Indicates permission to work or operate a business in Ireland, subject to conditions.	Yes	Yes	You must not start a job or enter employment unless you or your employer has obtained an employment permit for you.
Stamp 1A	Indicates permission in full time, paid accountancy training for a specified period, subject to conditions.	Yes	No	Temporary, can work full time in accordance with employment law provisions.
Stamp 1G	Stamp 1G indicates you have finished your studies in Ireland and have permission to look for employment here under The Third Level Graduate Programme, subject to conditions.	Yes	No	Temporary, if you wish to Continue working after Stamp 1G expires, you must find a job that requires an employment permit.
Stamp 2	Stamp 2 indicates permission to study a full-time course on the official Interim List of Eligible Programmes (ILEP) for a specified period, subject to conditions.	Yes	No	Temporary, can work up to 20 hours per week during term and 40 hours per week during holidays.
Stamp 2A	Stamp 2A indicates permission for full time study in Ireland for a course that is not on the official Interim List of Eligible Programmes (ILEP), for a specified period.	Yes	No	Temporary, cannot work or engage in any business, trade or profession.
Stamp 3	Stamp 3 indicates permission to stay in Ireland for a specified period, subject to conditions.	Yes	Yes	Temporary, cannot work or engage in any business, trade or profession.
Stamp 4	Stamp 4 indicates permission to stay in Ireland for a specified period, subject to conditions.	No	Yes	Can take up employment and are not required to hold an employment permit.
Stamp 5	Stamp 5 indicates permission to stay in Ireland without limits on the time you can remain here, subject to conditions.	No	Yes	The stamp will be valid up to the expiry date on your passport.
Stamp 6	Indicates you are an Irish citizen with dual citizenship.	No	N/A	Permission to remain in Ireland with full citizenship rights.

Source: Department of Justice, 2020, “Permission, stamps and conditions”.

Annex F: Community Call Fora Example – Fingal

Fingal County Council COVID-19 Community Call Helpline

✓ Collection & delivery of food, other items ✓ Social isolation supports
 ✓ Garda related issues ✓ Other medical or health needs

☎ 01-890 5000
 1-800-459-059

✉ covidsupport@fingal.ie



Comhairle Contae
 Fhine Gall
 Fingal County
 Council



Source: Fingal County Council, 2020

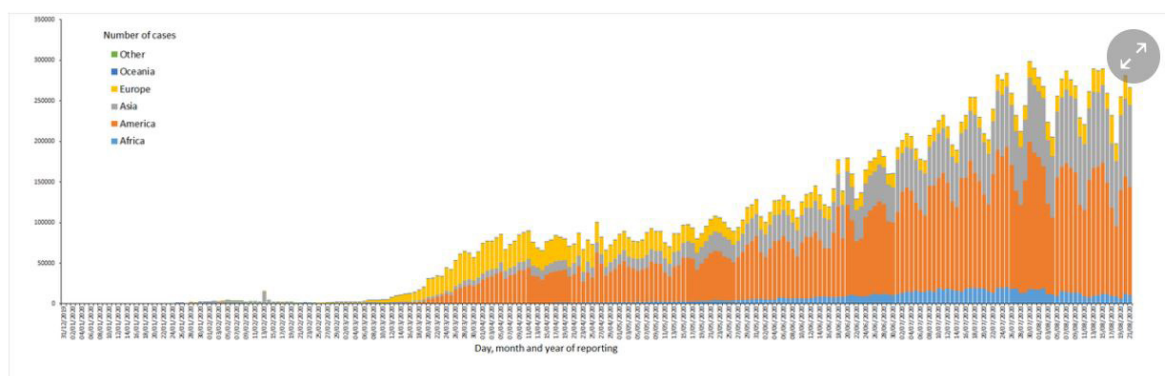
Annex G: Medical permits issued by DBEI

Occupation	Medical Permits issued Jan – June 2019	Medical Permits issued Jan – June 2020
Medical practitioners	1,434	1,714
Medical radiographers	32	38
Nurses	726	1,307
Total Medical Permits issued	2,192	3,059

Source: DBEI Employment Permits Section (July 2020)

Annex H: COVID-19 Cases Worldwide, by Continent

Distribution of COVID-19 cases worldwide, as of 21 August 2020



① Distribution of cases of COVID-19 by continent (according to the applied case definition and testing strategies in the affected countries)

Source: European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (21 August 2020) “COVID-19 situation update worldwide”.

Endnotes

- 1 RTE (21 April 2020) "[Coronavirus in Ireland – a timeline](#)".
- 2 Migration Data Portal (...) "[About the Migration Governance Indicators](#)".
- 3 See also Milan, A. and Cunnoosamy, R. (2020) "[COVID-19 and migration governance: A holistic perspective](#)", *Migration Policy and Practice* 10 (II), pp. 27-31.
- 4 DoJE (10 July 2020) "[Information regarding the Justice Sector COVID-19 plans](#)".
- 5 DEASP (14 August 2020) "[Access to COVID-19 Enhanced Illness Benefit and the Pandemic Unemployment Payment for people in Direct Provision](#)".
- 6 INIS (2020) "[Permission, stamps & conditions](#)".
- 7 DoJE (7 July 2020) "[Expansion of Online Registration Renewal System](#)".
- 8 DBEI (2020) "[Employment Permits – Updates](#)".
- 9 HSE (2020) "[COVID-19 Translated Resources](#)".
- 10 WHO Europe (2020) "[Interim Guidance for Refugee and Migrant Health in Relation to COVID-19 in the WHO European Region](#)".
- 11 INIS (2020) "[Online Renewals](#)".
- 12 Migration Data Portal (...) "[About the Migration Governance Indicators](#)".
- 13 See also Milan, A. and Cunnoosamy, R. (2020) "[COVID-19 and migration governance: A holistic perspective](#)", *Migration Policy and Practice* 10 (II), pp. 27-31.
- 14 RTE (21 April 2020) "[Coronavirus in Ireland – a timeline](#)".
- 15 HSPC (August 2020) "[Ireland's COVID-19 Data Hub](#)".
- 16 Department of the Taoiseach (18 August 2020) "[Statement on the introduction of new measures to limit the spread of COVID-19](#)".
- 17 EEAS (8 April 2020) "[Coronavirus: European Union launches "Team Europe" package to support partner countries with more than €20 billion](#)".
- 18 INIS (March 2020) "[COVID-19 Updates and Announcements](#)".
- 19 INIS (2020) "[Permission, stamps & conditions](#)".
- 20 DoJE (7 July 2020) "[Expansion of Online Registration Renewal System](#)".
- 21 DBEI (2020) "[Employment Permits – Updates](#)".
- 22 Irish Statue Book (2015) "[International Protection Act 2015](#)".
- 23 HPSC (2020) *Health Protection Surveillance Centre*.
- 24 HSE (2020) "[Temporary Accommodation for healthcare workers during COVID-19](#)".
- 25 RTE News (11 June 2020) "[Healthcare Workers raise temporary accommodation concerns](#)".
- 26 DoJE (9 April 2020) IPAS Newsletter.
- 27 HPSC (March 2020) "[Guidance on Cocooning to protect people over 70 years and those extremely medically vulnerable from COVID-19](#)".
- 28 DoJE (10 July 2020) "[Information regarding the Justice Sector COVID-19 plans](#)".
- 29 MRCI (2020) "[Immigration Questions](#)".
- 30 SafetyNet (8 May 2020) "[Press statement – Minister for Health opens new Hub at the Mater which will care and treat the most marginalized in the inner city](#)".
- 31 Government of Ireland (2020) "[COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment](#)".
- 32 Citizen's Information (2020) "[COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment](#)".
- 33 CSO (2020) "[Population estimates](#)".
- 34 CSO (10 July 2020) "[Pandemic Unemployment Payment Analysis Tables](#)".
- 35 Revenue (2020) "[COVID-19 Information and Advice for Taxpayers and Agents](#)".
- 36 Irish Examiner (30 August, 2020) "[€2.7bn temporary wage subsidy scheme comes to an end](#)".
- 37 Citizens Information (2020) "[Sick leave and sick pay](#)".
- 38 DEASP (14 August 2020) "[Access to COVID-19 Enhanced Illness Benefit and the Pandemic Unemployment Payment for people in Direct Provision](#)".
- 39 DoJE (7 August 2020) "[COVID-19 – Information Regarding the Justice Sector COVID-19 Plans](#)".
- 40 HSE (2020) "[COVID-19 Translated Resources](#)".
- 41 Department of the Taoiseach (2 April 2020) "[Press Release – Ireland launches "The Community Call" in major nationwide volunteering effort](#)".

- 42 Government of Ireland (2020) “[Recognition of Qualifications in the Department of Health](#)”.
- 43 CSO (2020) “[COVID-19 Information Hub](#)”.
- 44 RTE (July 2020) “[Why have over a million Irish people downloaded the COVID-19 app?](#)”.
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- 48 See also Milan, A. and Cunnoosamy, R. (2020) “[COVID-19 and migration governance: A holistic perspective](#)”, *Migration Policy and Practice* 10 (II) pp. 27-31.
- 49 Government of Ireland (June 2020) “[Programme for Government – Our Shared Future](#)”.

