

EMN Ireland conference summary

Responding to the refugee crisis

15 December 2016 | No 6 Kildare Street, Dublin 2



*EMN Ireland, the Irish National Contact Point for the European Migration Network located within the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), hosted its annual national conference on **Responding to the Refugee Crisis** on Thursday 15 December 2016.*

*The conference was organised in the global context of estimates by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that **65.3 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide in 2015, including 21.3 million refugees**. The aim of the conference was to bring together a range of speakers to address current responses to the refugee crisis.*



Programme

Speakers from Oxfam Ireland, UNHCR, the Department of Justice and Equality, the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner, the European Commission, the Irish Refugee Council and other EU Member States – Sweden, Portugal and Germany – spoke over three thematic sessions: Context and Policy Framework, State and Local Level Responses in EU Member States and Ireland’s Response to the Refugee Crisis. The final session was closed by a presentation of a personal experience of resettlement and integration in Ireland, from business person and former programme refugee, Abbas Ghadimi.

Welcome and Opening Address

Reflecting EMN Ireland’s links with the overall mission of the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) to produce research to inform evidence-based policymaking, the conference was opened by **Professor Alan Barrett, Director, ESRI.**

Opening address: Minister David Stanton TD

The opening address was made by **David Stanton TD, Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality.** In his address, Minister Stanton acknowledged the research and outreach work undertaken by EMN Ireland at the ESRI, in its capacity as Ireland’s National Contact Point of the European Migration Network and highlighted the recent publication of the study, ***Resettlement of Refugees and Private Sponsorship in Ireland.*** Minister Stanton commented that the breadth of experience of conference participants was

“an excellent example of the readiness of civil society, the research community, service providers and others to work with policy makers to shape the Irish response to the refugee and migrant crisis.”

Minister Stanton emphasised the scale of the crisis with 65 million people forcibly displaced, many of whom are children, who could spend their entire childhoods away from home, sometimes separated from their families. He covered efforts at international, EU and national level to tackle the refugee and migration crisis, and emphasised the importance of cooperation, and a multi-faceted approach including conflict prevention and resolution, development aid, poverty prevention and an international focus on human rights and the provision of practical supports. Commenting on the international willingness to act, demonstrated by the UN Summit on Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants in September 2016 and the Leaders



Minister David Stanton TD; Emma Quinn, Alan Barrett



Summit on Refugees, Minister Stanton said that there was now a need to translate that willingness into action and effective cooperation. He also commented that while there were challenges and practical implications to be addressed by this level of mass migration, that it also presented opportunities in terms of how societies can evolve in the future, and to enrich our cultures with diversity of knowledge, experiences and opinions.

Thus, while Minister Stanton spoke of Ireland's direct response to the refugee crisis in terms of development and humanitarian aid, naval search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean, and the government's commitment to take in 4,000 refugees under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, he also emphasised the longer term challenge of supporting refugee's integration into the host country, and that integration is an intensive process and community focused.

The Minister said:

“Interaction between citizens and those newly arrived is key to creating understanding between communities and to helping people to feel connected to our values, our heritage and our history.”

[Read Minister's Speech](#)

Session One – Context and Policy Framework

This session was chaired by **Brian Merriman, Asylum Policy Division, Department of Justice and Equality**. Speakers from Oxfam Ireland, UNHCR and the European Commission presented on the context and policy strategies surrounding the refugee crisis.



Jim Clarken, Susan McMonagle, Stephen Ryan and Brian Merriman



Bullets, brutality and barbed wire: reality for people forced to flee

Jim Clarken, Oxfam Ireland



65 million people displaced worldwide, including 21.3 million refugees

Jim Clarken's presentation focussed on the scale of the humanitarian crisis, resulting from a number of sources including conflicts and natural disasters. This scale is evident both in terms of numbers with 65 million people displaced worldwide, including 21.3 million refugees, and the actual effects of the causes of the crisis on people. Some **24 people are forced to flee every minute**. He quoted the UN Secretary General Representative for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief, Stephen O'Brien's statement that:

"Suffering in the world has reached levels not seen in a generation. Conflicts and disasters have driven millions of children, women and men to the edge of survival. They desperately need our help."

The presentation pointed out that while the spotlight is on how Europe is coping with the refugee flows, **only 1 - 2 million refugees are trying to get to Europe, while 86% of refugees are hosted in poorer countries**.

His presentation contrasted the EU's migration policy, focussed on stopping immigration and border control, with the scale of the humanitarian issues to be addressed. It also contrasted the EU response with the response of other countries responding to lesser known conflicts, giving the example of Tanzania welcoming 250,000 refugees from Burundi. In contrast, he pointed to the rise in far right nationalist parties in elections right across Europe, with success rates in recent national elections varying from 4.7% to 21%.

However, he also pointed to positive indicators of goodwill. The UN Summit on Migration was welcome in itself, even if weak in outcome. Welcome has been extended to refugees across Europe including in Ireland. The policy response of the Irish Government through the Irish Refugee Protection Programme's implementation of the Government pledge to accept 4,000 refugees via relocation and resettlement by the end of 2017, was acknowledged. He stressed that it was important to speed up the Irish response and to build on the goodwill that exists, and that care should be taken to keep people concerned about these issues actively engaged, in order to avoid another discourse emerging.

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Better protecting refugees in the EU and globally: UNHCR's proposals to rebuild trust through better management, partnership and solidarity

Susan McMonagle, UNHCR Ireland

This presentation outlined the main points of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) new proposal paper on how the EU can better protect refugees both within the EU and globally. The presentation noted that Europe is not experiencing a refugee crisis, but instead a crisis of solidarity, considering that **1 million arrivals constitute just 0.2% of the total EU population**. UNHCR's proposals provide a vision for how the EU could tackle forced displacement globally, prepare for and manage arrivals to the EU and better protect and integrate refugees. The proposals focus on four themes:

- **Engagement beyond EU borders to protect, assist, and find solutions** – through development, needs-based support, and developing safe, legal pathways
- **Preparedness to respond to large numbers of new arrivals** – including through planning, identification of standby capacity and coordination
- **Protection through a well-managed, common asylum system** – with registration, family reunification, accelerated procedures, distribution, procedures for unaccompanied and separated children and return
- **Emphasis on integration of refugees in their communities** – including through funding, engagement, welcome and two-way processes.

The UNHCR proposals include a strong emphasis on family reunification, in particular as a safe legal pathway to Europe, but also as a means of distributing newly arrived asylum applicants at an early stage to EU Member States where they have family members or other strong links.

Some of the specific proposals in the UNHCR paper that were outlined include a new approach to management of the Common European Asylum System. UNHCR proposes: **setting up Registration and Processing Centres** in the main countries of entry and **implementing a common registration system in all Member States** linked to individual Member State case processing systems; transferring asylum applicants immediately after the registration phase to another EU Member State where they have family members; and accelerated procedures in country of entry for both manifestly unfounded and manifestly well founded cases, with access to return for those with unsuccessful applications. Assisted Voluntary Return is the preferred mechanism for return with forced return only to be used in certain limited circumstances. A distribution mechanism for Member States under pressure is also proposed – based on an agreed “fair” reference share - with manifestly unfounded cases not being distributed to

other Member States, manifestly well-founded cases not transferred to other Member States until after protection is granted and all other cases distributed among the Member States in accordance with the agreed reference share. UNHCR recommends that the distribution mechanism for Member States under pressure would be triggered when the reference share is reached, rather than after it reaches 150% of the share as proposed in the European Commission's proposal for the recast Dublin Regulation.

The incentives of compliance with the new system would include reunification with family members for asylum seekers and, for Member States, a reduction in the reference share for states that achieve high quality, fast processing.

The UNHCR paper also proposes a new procedure for Unaccompanied and Separated Children. Central to this procedure is a best interests' assessment, which includes family tracing. If the child has family members in another EU Member State, they should be reunited with their family in that Member State and at early stage.

Finally, the UNHCR proposals emphasise the importance of integrating refugees in their communities. Integration is a two-way process that both refugees and communities must engage in. Increased and targeted funding, civil society engagement and welcoming communities are key to achieving integration.

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Responding to the EU refugee 'crisis': Reform of the Common European Asylum System and enhanced external engagement

Stephen Ryan, Asylum Unit, DG Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission



This presentation focussed on the need to reform the legal instruments which make up the **Common European Asylum System (CEAS)** to address their “fitness for purpose” to address the current unprecedented influx of migrants into the EU. Issues

which have come to light due to the current massive strain on EU Member States’ asylum systems include:

- Inequitable distribution of asylum-seekers / beneficiaries across the EU
- Differing treatment of asylum-seekers / beneficiaries across the EU
- Widespread 'secondary movements' (moving on from point of first entry).

The presentation summarised the **new legal proposals on the Dublin Regulation** (the legal mechanism for transferring asylum applicants across the EU); the associated **Eurodac database of biometric data**; and the **proposal to establish a fully-fledged European Asylum Agency** to replace the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), all published by the European Commission in May 2016. The presentation also covered proposed changes to the Asylum Qualification, Procedures and Reception Directives, all of which were published in July 2016.

The proposal for changes to the Dublin Regulation includes a “corrective allocation mechanism” for Member States who have reached 150% of a reference share (which is calculated on the basis of population/GDP). Inadmissible applications or applicants from Safe Countries of Origin are not to be transferred.

The proposals to change the Eurodac Regulation include the possibility to store the fingerprints of children from age 6, rather than age 14, and the possibility to store other forms of biometric and alphanumeric data. Also proposed is the possibility to search data for the purpose of detecting irregular migrants and return.

The Asylum Qualification and Procedures Directives are proposed to be transformed into Regulations to facilitate EU-wide harmonised standards, while the Reception Directive is to stay as a Directive, reflecting the different conditions across Member States.

Stephen Ryan also presented on the **external dimension of the EU’s asylum policy**.

This policy has three motives:

- **humanitarian**, to ensure that the EU is playing its part on the world stage to help refugees globally;
- **solidarity**, to support those non-EU countries hosting the greatest number of refugees worldwide, and
- **migration management**, to help better manage migration flows to the EU in its own social, economic and security interests.

Mechanisms mentioned in the presentation included humanitarian aid (€1,064 million in humanitarian aid to refugees in 2015 - 72% of the EU humanitarian aid budget); regional development and protection programmes (RDPPs) (capacity building programmes including development-oriented actions, with a focus on asylum system capacity building) and resettlement - which is developing an enhanced EU-wide dimension with links to EU funding, and the resettlement “quotas” agreed by EU Member States in June 2015.

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Session Two - State and Local Level Responses in EU Member States

This session was chaired by **John Roycroft, Irish Refugee Protection Programme**. Representatives from **Germany, Sweden and Portugal** presented responses at national and local level, on resettlement; private sponsorship schemes and relocation of asylum seekers under the EU relocation schemes.

Resettlement, humanitarian admission programmes and private sponsorship in Germany

Janne Grote, Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Germany

This presentation was based on research undertaken for the German national report of the EMN Study on **Resettlement of Refugees and Private Sponsorship**. The presentation outlined four resettlement, humanitarian admission and private sponsorship programmes in operation in Germany from 2012 – 2016. These are:

- **Resettlement Programme** in operation since 2012 – **1,402 persons admitted**;
- **HAP Syria, a humanitarian admission programme** for Syrians and its neighbouring countries Egypt and Libya (2013 and 2014) – **18,952 admitted**;
- A **temporary admission procedure for Afghan local staff** and their family members (since 2012) – **2,038 admitted**; and
- **Temporary private sponsorship programmes** operated by various federal Lander for Syrians since 2013) – **21,500 admitted**.

Numbers admitted (up to 2015) were also shown in the context of total asylum applications to Germany which have increased from 45,741 in 2011 to 702,492 up to November 2016.

The various Programmes carry with them different conditions and benefits. The general Resettlement programme is based on UNHCR recognised refugee status and selection missions are undertaken by the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. HAP Syria is partly based on UNHCR recognition and selections are undertaken based on information from dossiers. In general, a three year residence permission is given to the selected beneficiaries of the Resettlement Programme and two years to HAP Syria beneficiaries. The Resettlement Programme includes access to integration courses and other support measures. The Private Sponsorship Programmes do not require UNHCR recognition of target group is Syrians or stateless persons from Syria.

Within the Private Sponsorship Programmes the definition of family members is also significantly wider than within the other admission programmes and procedures, as it includes spouses, first-degree relatives (parents, children), second-degree



relatives (such as grandparents, grandchildren or siblings) as well as their spouses and minor children. There is no claim to attend an integration course, but attendance may be admitted on request; in this case the expenditure for the integration course must generally be borne by the sponsors. The Afghan Local Staff Programme is a special admission procedure aimed at Afghan local staff members considered at risk due to their activities for the German agencies. Approval for admission also includes the staff member's nuclear family, and the residence permission is for two years with a work permit from the beginning. Selection criteria for the Resettlement Programme, HAP Syria and the Private Sponsorship programmes include humanitarian reasons, the degree of vulnerability, and family unity and family links in Germany.

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Resettlement in Sweden, central and local perspectives

Marie Bengtsson, Swedish Migration Board and Martin Söderström and Mattias Sjölund, Åre Municipality, Sweden



Marie Bengtsson focussed on the Swedish response to resettlement at the national level, while Martin Söderström and Mattias Sjölund spoke of their on the ground experience of integrating refugees in the Åre Municipality in northern Sweden.

Sweden's national resettlement programme has been in operation since 1950 and it is based on referrals from UNHCR. The beneficiaries get a permanent residence permit in Sweden. The focus of the programme is on providing a durable solution for refugees. Currently there is a yearly quota of 1,900 persons, including 450 emergency cases. It is planned to expand this to 5,000 places per year by 2018; 3,400 places have already been allocated for 2017.

3,400 places have been allocated for 2017

Actual numbers resettled in 2014 and 2015 were 1,971 and 1,880 respectively, from a range of nationalities, the largest being Syria, DR Congo, Somalia, Afghanistan and Eritrea.

The co-presenters from the Åre Municipality focussed on their ability to make a difference on a small scale. Åre Municipality, with a population of 10,500 persons takes in **100 refugees per year**, or 1% of its population.

If applied on an EU scale the same ratio would result in 7,430,000 refugees being resettled. The presenters explained their motivations in accepting and integrating refugees into their community: the local area needs more people of working age, but the speakers also highlighted that the programme provides a safe and effective solution for the refugees. Around 50% of the refugees are referred under the UNHCR programme.

The Åre Municipality works intensively with the refugees on their integration over the two year period during which a government grant for integration is available, providing supports including language classes, and training for employment. **The goal is that after the two year period, the refugee knows the Swedish language and is employed.**



Preparation in the local community begins two months before the arrival of the refugees. This includes preparing schools and health centres but also door-to-door calls advising neighbours to expect a newly arrived refugee in their locality. The programme begins within a couple of weeks of the refugees' arrival in Åre – children start school and adults are enrolled in language classes. The municipality itself is the largest employer - for example, refugees can be employed in schools as translators/teaching assistants helping with unaccompanied minor refugees or other refugee children. Some 50 – 70% of refugees have a job after the two year period. Some 20 – 30% are in different programmes that prepare them for jobs. Approximately 5% have difficulty and this can be due to mental health reasons caused by, for example, isolation as a result of being separated from family.

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The mobilisation of civil society, municipalities and the state towards the reception and integration of resettled refugees and relocated asylum seekers: the Portuguese response

Maria de Fatima Grillo, Asylum and Refugees Department, SEF, Portugal



The emphasis in this presentation was on the system of coordination of activities between various State agencies, local authorities and civil society and NGOs to receive and integrate refugees under the resettlement and relocation programmes in Portugal. A Working Group on Migration has been established, coordinated at technical level by the Border and Aliens service (SEF), and including representation from state level including the High Commissioner for Migration (ACM); directorates for education and

health; municipalities; and NGOs including the Portuguese Refugee Council and Portuguese Red Cross. This group has monthly meetings and reviews the situation on the ground.

The presentation highlighted the role of the Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR) as an NGO partner which has been involved in the resettlement programme since 2006 and the relocation programme since 2015. CPR operates two reception centres for asylum seekers and a kindergarten for refugee children and children from the local community. CPR leads the Reception and Integration Plan for refugees, which includes adopting cooperation protocols with 14 municipalities. There are preparatory initiatives, with training and establishing of local reference teams, prior to the arrival of the refugees to Portugal. Indicators to assess the integration effort are agreed. Affordable housing, close to necessary services, is selected. Once the refugees arrive in Portugal, they are dispersed throughout Portugal and received in the locality by a Local Intervention Guide. An 18 month integration programme is provided taking into account educational and skills background, family composition, health care needs and religious facilities. Refugees are supported throughout the integration process by a legal officer, social officer and interpreter/cultural mediator.

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Maria de Fatima Grillo, John Roycroft, Martin Söderström, Marie Bengtsson, Janne Grotte and Mattias Sjölund



Session Three – Ireland’s response to the refugee crisis

This session was chaired by **Enda O’Neill** from **UNHCR Ireland**. The Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner, the Irish Refugee Protection Programme and the Irish Refugee Council presented on Ireland’s response to the refugee crisis.

The operational response to the refugee crisis: The role of the European Asylum Support Office and the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner

David Costello, Irish Refugee Applications Commissioner and deputy chair of the EASO Management Board



David Costello outlined the role of the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) in implementing the relocation programme at an operational level, at the hotspots in Italy and Greece. As context, the presentation outlined figures sourced from IOM that the numbers arriving in Greece and Italy up to 30 November 2016 were 174,561 and 173,188 respectively. IOM figures also indicate that **6,123 persons have been relocated up to end November 2016 from Greece and 1,890 from Italy**. EASO figures indicate pledges from Member State of 12,426 for Greece and 5,289 for Italy.

The presentation identified several key challenges in implementing the relocation programme including Insufficient pledges, lengthy response times from States, and the require-

ment of pre-transfer security checks from some States slowing the process down.

ORAC has a role in the relocation process both in the hotspots themselves and in Ireland. Irish staff has been deployed to Greece and Italy under EASO to meet migrants arriving on Greek islands to inform them of relocation and to perform vulnerability assessments and admissibility interviews to ascertain if valid asylum claims exist. Monthly missions to Greece are headed by ORAC Liaison Officers where orientation interviews with relocation applicants are held and pre-departure cultural orientation training (covering practicalities like Irish weather, health and education services, food and type of clothes worn) is given. In Ireland, ORAC processes the asylum claim for the applicant. The asylum interview takes place in the Emergency Reception and Orientation Centre (EROC) where the relocated asylum seekers are housed on arrival in Ireland.

The presentation indicated that the International Protection Act 2015 is due to “go live” on 31 December 2016. This will introduce a single procedure for all asylum cases, including relocation cases. ORAC will be replaced by a new office – the International Protection Office, which will process all main grounds – refugee status, subsidiary protection and permission to remain, and the Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT) will be replaced by the International Protection Appeals Tribunal which will deal with appeals (protection grounds only). This new procedure will bring Ireland in line with the norm in other EU Member States.

The presentation also outlined the work of EASO in supporting the EU relocation programme – 500 experts have been deployed to Italy and Greece to date. Some 92 experts are currently based in Greece, including two from Ireland.

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The Irish Refugee Protection Programme and the challenges created by the Government’s approach to the Migration Crisis

Shane O’Connor, Irish Refugee Protection Programme

This presentation outlined the structure of, progress to date and challenges faced by the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, which was established by Government Decision on 10 September 2015, with the remit of taking in 4,000 refugees by the end of 2017.

The presentation summarised the breakdown of the Government commitment of 4,000 and progress to date as follows:

Total Relocation	2,622	109 arrived from Greece 130 to arrive 16 December 2016 84 cleared for travel and awaiting flights 82 being assessed in Athens Intake schedules agreed with Greek authorities to ensure Ireland meets target by September 2017.
Total Resettlement	1,040	519 out of 520 arrived in 2016 260 to arrive Quarter 1 2017 Mission to select next 260 in April 2017
Unaccompanied Minors previously in Calais	200	
Mechanism Undecided	138	
TOTAL	4,000	

The Government Decision establishing the IRPP also established a cross-Departmental IRPP Task Force which is pitched at quite a high level, and requires a number of sub-committees to deal with particular issues including: housing; health; education and welfare and Interfaith/NGO. More NGO involvement is needed. All of these structures report to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform. A Programme Office in the Department of Justice, which administers the reception and accommodation of relocated asylum seekers and a Relocation Unit in ORAC have also been established. [The Resettlement Programme is run by the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration (OPMI)].

Challenges are faced in implementing the IRPP at both European and national levels. Challenges at the relocation hotspots include poor quality case files, lack of interpretation facilities and the need to combat misinformation (by migrant smugglers) on relocation to potential relocation applicants. In Ireland, a large challenge is posed by the housing crisis. The more frequent arrivals under the IRPP means that a new approach is needed to access housing than

under the existing method used by OPMI of approaching local authorities on a rota basis (with a 9 month+ lead in time).

Persons arriving are first accommodated in Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROC). Two of these are operational – Hazel EROC in Monasterevin and Clonea Strand EROC in Dungarvan. The presentation also explained how the Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROCs) are being designed based on a service provision model – including onsite education, health and social protection services, orientation classes and weekly IRPP clinics. A challenge to be addressed is to differentiate the EROCs from the nega-

4,000 refugees by the end of 2017

tive image of Direct Provision accommodation centres (which also have new standards set by the McMahon report).

Challenges are also faced regarding the relocation of unaccompanied minors. Many unaccompanied minors are ineligible for relocation because their country of origin is not included under the programme. There are different definitions of unaccom-



panied minors (Ireland / Greece / IOM / UNHCR) but, under the Greek definition, Ireland will have taken in **twelve unaccompanied minors by 16 December 2016**. Continued efforts are being made to ensure that unaccompanied minors are included on every Greek pledge until TUSLA capacity is reached. TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency, is to receive extra resources to meet the Government Decision of November 2016 to take in **200 unaccompanied minors (previously in Calais) from France**.

The presentation pointed out that once the initial challenges are met, the longer term challenge of integration into the community must be met. A strong message from the presentation was that support from the voluntary sector was needed and would be welcomed to help address these challenges.



Safe and legal pathways to protection in Ireland

Nick Henderson, Irish Refugee Council



This presentation was focussed on the need for safe and legal pathways to protection in Ireland. It looked at not only how safe and legal pathways can be created but also at how existing laws and policies can hinder access to protection.

The presentation gave, as context for this need for safe and legal pathways to protection in the EU, data to show that 2016 was the most deadly year to date in the Mediterranean: 4,715 people died in the Mediterranean in 2016. Total sea arrivals to Italy and

Greece were 351,357. Some 91% of the 24,902 arrivals of children by sea to Italy from January to October 2016 were unaccompanied children.

The presentation argued that the EU is tackling this loss of life with deterrent measures that force smugglers to use even more dangerous means to avoid border controls, rather than focussing on safe and legal pathways which have benefits to both governments and refugees – reducing the loss of life, reducing trafficking and smuggling and allowing for an efficient and orderly process. Mediciens sans Frontières have argued that smugglers are exploiting some of the most vulnerable people in the world and that their business model partly exists due to the lack of safe pathways to reach Europe. The right to seek asylum from persecution, contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, must be emphasised and protected.

4,715 people died in the Mediterranean in 2016

It was acknowledged that the work of the Irish Naval Service in search and rescue in the Mediterranean is an important contribution to the humanitarian effort to save lives.

Types of safe and legal pathways posited included: resettlement and relocation; family relocation; humanitarian admission and private sponsorship schemes; humanitarian visas; legal migration channels like education and labour; and protection sensitive border procedures. The presentation highlighted the importance of family reunification as a safe pathway and expressed serious concerns about the new provisions on family reunification in the International Protection Act 2015, where there are reduced time limits for making the application. The presentation also highlighted NASC's *Safe Passage Campaign*, which proposes establishing a Humanitarian Admission Programme allowing Irish citizens or beneficiaries of international protection/legal residents to apply for family reunification for extended family members fleeing conflict zones. The campaign also puts forward the idea of co-sponsorship where an



Irish citizen or an organisation, such as a charitable organisation, NGO, businesses or universities to co-sponsor a family reunification application, thus giving it financial and institutional backing and encouraging integration.

The presentation also submitted concerns about practices that can hinder safe access to protection. Concern was expressed about the number of refusals of leave to land in Ireland (5,946 in the period from January 2015 to September 2016). It was submitted that greater transparency was needed around these figures and the procedure of refusing leave to land. Other worrying practices mentioned in the presentation included the new provisions on inadmissibility of applications from safe countries of origin and first countries of asylum in the Dublin IV Regulation proposal. It was argued that there are also unwelcome trends in the external dimension of the EU's migration policy – for example, the EU-Turkey deal has been criticised.

The concluding message of the presentation was that development of safe and legal pathways are also in the interest of States. In addition, better resources are essential for Ireland's domestic agencies. Resettlement and relocation will expose existing weaknesses and deficiencies in our domestic procedures and policies which must be addressed.

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Personal experience of resettlement and integration in Ireland

Abbas Ghadimi



The session ended with an account of the **personal experience of resettlement and integration in Ireland** by former programme refugee and business person, Abbas Ghadimi. Abbas came to Ireland in 1985 as part of a group of 26 Iranian Baha'i programme refugees, and was settled in Kilkenny. In his presentation he showed the group as they first arrived at Dublin airport in 1985 and their reunion after 30 years in Ireland in 2015. He demonstrated the considerable social, economic and cultural contribu-

tions made by the group to Ireland since their arrival. He gave a humorous, uplifting and motivational view of his integration into Irish society. One of his key messages is to realise how easy it is to help others, stressing that we can never run out of people to help.

[Download presentation](#)

“How can I help rather than what is for me? We need to remember this before we go sleep tonight.”

Conference close

The conference was closed by **Emma Quinn**, Head of **EMN Ireland** at the **ESRI**.

Conference presentations can also be downloaded from www.emn.ie.





Further information:

Approximately 110 delegates from a diverse range of interested organisations including government, international organisations, civil society and NGOs, academia, members of the European Migration Network from other EU Member States, and private individuals attended the conference.

EMN publications



The EMN Ireland study *Resettlement of Refugees and Private Sponsorship in Ireland*, published on 12 December 2016, was of particular relevance to the subject matter of the conference.

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The EMN synthesis report on *Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Programmes in Europe – what works?* provides a comprehensive overview of policies and practices on the functioning of resettlement, humanitarian admission programmes and schemes, as well as private sponsorship programmes for refugees in the EU Member States and Norway.

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