

## Migrants

### Do we need migrant workers?

Migrant workers make an important contribution to all sectors of the Irish economy, including the health service, information technology, construction, hospitality and horticulture. Many migrants set up their own businesses which then offer employment.

Migrant workers contribute also to the Irish economy as taxpayers and users of goods and services. It is generally recognized - not just in Ireland - that migrants are prepared to do work which the local population does not want to do. However, there is often less recognition of the contribution made by highly skilled migrants in a great number of sectors in the economy.

Research indicates that most migrant workers come here legally but become undocumented / irregular ('illegal') through no fault of their own, for example, when an employer fails to renew their work permit.

Many migrant workers who become undocumented experience exploitation in the workplace, often involving, for example, not being paid the minimum wage or having deductions made to their earnings for accommodation which is often substandard.

### What about immigration from Ireland?

About 15,000 Irish people emigrate each year. It is estimated that there are 50,000 undocumented / irregular ('illegal') Irish migrants in the United States.

### What about migrant workers without 'papers'?

## REFUGEE AND MIGRANT PROJECT IRISH BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

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**Who's who?**

**People Seeking Asylum  
Refugees  
Migrants**



**Every migrant enjoys inalienable fundamental rights which must be respected in all cases!**

*Pontifical Council for Migrants*

## People Seeking Asylum and Refugees

### About whom are we speaking?

A Person seeking asylum (refugee), is someone fleeing persecution in her/his own country who has applied to be recognized as a refugee. While in the asylum system, a person has limited rights and is not allowed take up employment.

A Refugee is a person whose application for asylum has been successful. A refugee has largely the same rights as an Irish citizen.

A person with *leave to remain*, although having fewer rights than a refugee, is allowed to live and work in the State.

### What is Ireland's obligation to people seeking asylum?

Ireland, as one of the countries which signed the Geneva Refugee Convention (1951), has agreed to allow any person who arrives at the borders seeking asylum to enter the country and to make an application for asylum. Having examined the application, the authorities decide on whether or not to recognize the person as a refugee.

People seeking asylum are legally in the country while their asylum application is being examined and, should their application be turned down, are legally here until they are removed (deported).

Worldwide there are over 16 million refugees and some 750,000 people in the process of seeking asylum. In addition, almost 26 million people are displaced within the borders of their own country and some 12 million people are stateless.

### How many refugees and people seeking asylum are there in the world?

Up to 90% of people forced to flee their homes in the developing world find refuge in a neighbouring country. In 2007, Ireland received less than 1% of all people who sought asylum in the industrialized world.

### How many refugees and people seeking asylum are there in Ireland?

In the 5 years from 2003 to 2007 8,000 people have been recognized as refugees. We do not have statistics on how many of those are still living in the State.

In 2007, 3,933 people came to Ireland seeking asylum, while over 23,600 work permits were issued to non-EU nationals.

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A Migrant is a person who is living and/or working in a State of which s/he is not a national.

A Work Permit gives permission for a non-EEA national to be employed in a specific job. It is issued for two years and can be renewed for three years. To obtain a work permit, an employer must show that no Irish/EEA national is available to fill the position.

A Green Card is valid for two years and entitles a non-EEA national and her/his family to live and work in the state. It is issued for specified, highly skilled, well-paid positions.

An EU (European Union) national is a person who is a citizen of an EU member state. In general, all EU citizens have the right both to live and work in the State. However, for the moment, Romanian and Bulgarian nationals are subject to work restrictions.

An EEA (European Economic Area) national is a person who is a citizen of an EU State or of Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein. EEA nationals have the same rights, in general, as EU nationals.

Non-EEA nationals have fewer rights than EEA citizens and need travel visas and work permits to live and take up employment in the Irish State.

### About whom and about what are we speaking?

### How many migrants are there in Ireland?

Official estimates put the number of non-Irish nationals in the Republic (from within and without the EU) at about 420,000, representing almost 10% of the total population. Of this 10%, over 7% come from Europe, 1.1% from Asia, 0.9% from Africa and 0.5% from America.

Of the top 10 nationalities (other than Irish) living in the State, some 54% come from UK, 28% from Central Europe, 8% from Asia, 6% from USA and 4% from Africa.

Irish Government policy strongly favours migrant workers who come from other EU countries. With the enlargement of the EU, increasing numbers of migrant workers now come from the EEA. While, for example, 48,000 work permits were issued to non-EEA nationals in 2003, the number of such permits issued in 2007 was less than 24,000.

Of 1.9million people at work in Ireland in 2006, some 67,000 (3.1%) came from outside the EEA.

To qualify for social welfare payments, an EEA national must already have worked in the State and an applicant from outside the EEA must be resident in Ireland for approximately two years.

### Migrant Workers in Ireland

