



<b>Speech: Minister of State Stanton</b>	
Event	Launch of the <i>Monitoring Report on Integration 2018</i>
Organiser	Economic and Social Research Institute
Date	7 <sup>th</sup> November 2018
Time	15.00
Venue	ESRI Whitaker Square, Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Dublin

- **Check Against Delivery**

Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted to be here today for the launch of the 2018 *Monitoring Report on Integration*. There can be little doubt, as we watch and read about events in Europe, America and beyond, that how countries do – or do not – welcome and integrate their migrants is one of the issues of our age. As we all know, it is easy on subjects like this to be the victims of misinformation or, perhaps at times, exaggeration. In such a context, it is vital that we have access to dispassionate, objective and accurate evidence about the origins and cultures of the people that make up our country, and how those who arrived more recently are getting on in their new home. So I very much welcome the publication of this report.

The report updates and builds upon previous Integration Monitors that have begun to quantify how migrants are integrating into Irish society. There are positives to draw from it. In particular, when looking at the employment rates of non-Irish nationals, it is encouraging to see that, by and large, migrants in Ireland are playing an active role, contributing to the Irish economy and society. It is also encouraging to see that immigrant students achieve similar scores to Irish students in many areas. These results do more than provide an indication of where migrants are fitting well into Ireland and Irish society. They

also demonstrate the contributions that migrants are making to Ireland. We can celebrate these contributions and recognise the role of our more multicultural communities in shaping the future of this country.

Nevertheless, for those of us who are working in the area of migrant integration, the report does not always make for easy reading. It identifies clear areas of concern for us to consider. Integration outcomes are not consistent across migrant groups. To some extent this can be expected, given the diverse background, education and economic resources of migrants in Ireland. Nonetheless, it is something that is concerning to see. For example, the data reveal that despite a high proportion of African migrants having third-level education, Africans are more likely than other nationalities in Ireland to face unemployment. Findings such as these push us to ask ourselves – are we doing enough? What barriers exist that prevent members of this group from gaining access to work and opportunities? And how can we address those barriers?

As these questions and challenges come to mind, it is important to consider the work that the Government is doing to address many of the issues highlighted in this report. The government has set out its plans for the successful integration of migrants through the development of the national Migrant Integration Strategy. The strategy runs until 2020. It outlines 76 actions that fall under the responsibility not only of National Government, but of Local

Government and state agencies as well. Indeed, the funding for this research programme with the ESRI is itself part of that strategy. It implements Action 25, which states that “Research will be undertaken to assess how mainstream services are meeting migrant needs.”

I am determined that my Department will play its role in implementing the strategy. One element of the strategy is political participation, which provides a case in point. As today’s report highlights, while non-Irish residents make up 13% of the national voting-age population, only around 5% of people on the voting register are non-Irish. This figure is clearly not good enough. Ireland has a progressive stance in terms of political participation, particularly at the local level. Anyone who is resident in Ireland has the right to vote in local government elections. In response to issues like this, actions in the strategy are designed to increase political participation. Recently, I had the opportunity to speak at events in Cork and Dublin that focused on raising migrants’ awareness of their voting rights and encouraging them to become more engaged in politics. We hope that initiatives such as these will lead to positive changes in the figures presented in the future.

The Migrant Integration Strategy features many positive initiatives in relation to employment. It will improve the access of migrants to training and skills development, with courses tailored to meet their specific needs. This means helping them with language and knowledge of the Irish working environment. Measures like these are

important for generating equality of opportunity. It is important too that we help employers to be ready and able to create and respond to a more diverse workforce. As regards the public sector, the strategy includes outreach and support measures designed to increase the number of people from immigrant backgrounds working at all levels in the civil and public service. Part of the strategy is also to encourage the private sector to focus on integration and I have seen many positive engagements from private companies. I recently attended a signing event of the Diversity Charter, which encourages organisations to become more diverse and “diversity friendly”.

These are just some examples of the many initiatives in the Migrant Integration Strategy. Nevertheless, there is of course much more to do. The findings of today’s report provide an indication of how well we are doing across a range of areas, highlighting those where we perhaps need to focus more. Events like today allow us to take a step back from the usual, day-to-day proceedings and to be more analytical in our approach. I strongly believe in the importance of good research in the development of government policy. While differing views will always have a bearing on how we respond to challenges, our opinions and responses need to be based on solid research. Good research presents facts and tests whether ideas are sound. Research cannot give us our values, but it can help us to ensure that our actions live up to those values.

The Monitoring Report on Integration is the first in a series of three new reports to be produced by the ESRI on integration. In working to support integration and diversity, across the public, private and voluntary sectors, access to this detailed information will inform and guide our work. It will help us to design and target effective interventions to support integration and remove barriers.

Finally, it just remains for me to thank and to congratulate the report's authors, Frances McGinnity and her colleagues, who have compiled and written this extensive piece of research. I am confident that it will prove a valuable resource for all those working in the field of integration.

Thank you.

---