

**Speech by Minister of State for Equality, Immigration and Integration  
David Stanton T.D. at the Show Racism the Red Card “Club Welcome”  
event on 23<sup>rd</sup> of January, 2018**

“Good afternoon everyone. I am delighted to be with you today here in the Carmichael Centre to give recognition to the hard work and commitment you have shown by your activities to promote the integration of refugees in our society. I want to thank Martina Quinn, Garrett Mullan and the team at Show Racism the Red Car for the opportunity to meet with you today for this event. It always gives me great pleasure to attend events such as this and to see at first hand the work being done throughout the country to promote the integration of migrants and refugees through the medium of sport. I am constantly reminded of the great work done by communities, small and large, throughout the country. People of all ages and backgrounds are coming together to organise activities that make our communities more inclusive and sensitive to the needs of our new arrivals.

Show Racism the Red Card is to be commended for the positive contribution it has made, and indeed continues to make, to integration. Through the ‘Club Welcome’ initiative we are celebrating this morning, it promotes the participation of refugees and asylum-seekers in grassroots sports clubs. Of course, this initiative is only part of the work programme of Show Racism the Red Card. Much of its work involves promoting anti-racism measures that target our youth in schools and sports clubs throughout the country. One of the ways it delivers the vitally important anti-racism message is through the creative competition for primary schools.

This has never been more important than it is today. Over the past twenty years or more Ireland has become more culturally and ethnically diverse. To put this in perspective Census 2016, the most recent census carried out, tells us that just under 12% of our population have a nationality other than Irish. The census also shows a huge increase - to over one hundred thousand - in the numbers of people who hold dual Irish citizenship. This attests to

increasingly settled migrant communities – people who are long-term residents here and call Ireland their home. These new communities have an increasing sense of belonging to the Irish nation, without relinquishing their identity or nationality of origin.

In the Ireland of today our cities, towns and rural areas are now made up of increasingly diverse communities. The benefits of diversity are all around us. It brings colour and a new vitality to communities. As a society we have a responsibility to ensure that new arrivals in our communities are made feel welcome and valued. Many have travelled a long and difficult route to reach our shores and their integration in our communities has never been more important.

To guide our work in this area, the Government has adopted a four year Migrant Integration Strategy that was published early last year by my Department. This Strategy provides a framework for action on integration by central and local Government and public service providers for the period from 2017 to 2020. The Migrant Integration Strategy has been devised to respond to the challenges that we anticipate in the years ahead and is targeted at both EU and non-EU nationals, including refugees. It is also targeted at foreign-born Irish citizens and their children. It aims to enable migrants or persons of migrant origin to participate on an equal basis in the life of the country with those of Irish heritage. Its primary objective is to ensure that any barriers to full participation in Irish society by migrants or their Irish-born children are identified and addressed.

The important contribution that sport can make to integration is acknowledged in the Strategy. It contains a commitment to explore further the potential of sport in the integration of migrants through encouraging active participation, volunteering and involvement in governance. It also requires public providers of grants to sports organisations to include a criterion on the promotion of integration activities in funding decisions.

Given the importance of sport in bringing communities together, my Department has provided funding to major national sporting organisations to assist them in promoting the integration of migrants in the communities they serve.

I firmly believe in supporting integration at the community level. In my own Department, we do this primarily through a series of funding programmes targeting both national and community-based organisations. Early last year I launched the new Communities Integration Fund to provide grants for local integration projects and events. Many organisations working to promote integration through sport received funding for integration projects.

To conclude, I would like to commend Show Racism the Red Card and the clubs represented here today for delivering the “Club Welcome” programme. I look forward to hearing news of the expanded programme in 2018.

Thank you.”