

Visit of Minister of State David Stanton T.D., Drumshanbo 04 April, 2018

- Thank you Mohammed for that wonderful piece of music. Perhaps we will have the opportunity to hear you again in July as a guest at the Joe Mooney Summer School.
- Rev Fr Murray
- I am deeply honoured to be among you here on the final stage of your journey to Ireland and on behalf of the Government of Ireland, I'd like to say 'céad míle fáilte' which in our native Gaelic language means a hundred thousand welcomes.
- My being here today is a sign of the Government's commitment to you and recognition of the tremendous effort you all undertook to make the perilous journey to Europe and ultimately to Ireland.
- I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Drumshanbo Parish Council for affording me this opportunity to meet with you.
- In particular, I am grateful to the community of Drumshanbo, Carrick-on-Shannon and to the wider county of Leitrim who have warmly embraced and welcomed these families.
- I acknowledge the work of the Council's Interagency Working Group, whose members have worked with such dedication and service. This comprehensive, joined-up approach represents a unique structure with

considerable potential for developing and introducing a new regional mechanism capable of service delivery at a local level.

- Finally, we must not forget this community has not simply received a quota of refugees, but rather you have openly embraced the arrival of mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters, each with their own life story and shared cultural history, tied to a strong bond of family.
- Ireland is currently operating under a comprehensive Migrant Integration Strategy, which was launched in February of last year. This is a Whole-of-Government Strategy. At its heart is the vision that migrants are facilitated to play a full role in Irish society, that integration is a core principle of Irish life, and that Irish society and institutions work together to promote integration. The Strategy will be implemented over the coming years through a series of initiatives across all branches of Government. Focus areas include access to citizenship and public services; employment and education; political participation and the promotion of intercultural awareness. Government Departments, Agencies, Cities and local communities, all have their part to play in delivering on the commitments in the Strategy.
- Integration is a two-way process. With truly successful integration, migrants are able to participate actively in Irish society and have a sense of belonging, without having to relinquish their own cultural identity. Because it is a two-way process, integration also requires Irish society, institutions and communities to work together.
- I would like to finish by wishing all of you here this evening every success as you build a new future for yourselves and your families here in Ireland.

- My Department will continue to work to complete the Government's ambitious targets by 2019. And, I am determined that the Irish Refugee Protection Programme will continue to work with partners both at home and abroad to actively respond to assist those in need of urgent humanitarian protection.
- In conclusion, I am sure there will be valuable lessons to learn from the sharing of experiences and of your culture. As a society, we are eager to learn from you. I acknowledge there will be challenges to be overcome as you accustom to your new life in Ireland. But I am confident the Council and community will continue to work together to make this programme succeed.
- It is now time for you to give something back and begin making a positive contribution to the community here in your new home.