

**Speech by Minister of State for Equality, Immigration and Integration
David Stanton T.D. at the 'Midleton Participate' event organised by
NASC.**

7 October 2017

"Ladies and Gentlemen,

You're all very welcome here this morning to the Midleton Participate event organised by NASC. I'm delighted to be able to join you here this morning. Today's event is aimed at encouraging migrants living in East Cork to participate to the full in Irish society.

Promoting the integration of migrants forms part of my responsibility as Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality. Our work in this area is guided by a four year whole-of-Government Migrant Integration strategy that I published earlier this year. Some of you may be familiar with this document. The concept of participation is at the very heart of it. Our Strategic Vision is that migrants "*are facilitated to play a full role in Irish society*". Play a full role. What do we mean by that? We mean participate. We mean engage. We mean join in. Or, as the poster for this event puts it: "Make Ireland Home".

Participation is an important driver of integration. Yet we recognise that migrant communities and individuals may encounter barriers to participation. This could be through lack of information or networks; there may be isolation issues or a need to improve English language skills or intercultural awareness. Or it's possible that the experience of discrimination or racism could inhibit or prevent participation.

For our part, in central Government, we are working in various ways to address these types of barriers. We are combining mainstream service provision for migrants with targeted supports where they are needed. Many of these additional targeted initiatives are delivered by community organisations - such as NASC - with the aid of government funding. This is the approach we intend to continue, within the framework of the new Strategy. But also – and critically – we intend to measure its effectiveness in meeting migrant needs. This will involve research on how well mainstream services are meeting migrant needs. While funding programmes for targeted supports will be evaluated periodically to ensure their effectiveness.

Our new Strategy addresses participation and the barriers to it through many of its actions. These include initiatives to encourage migrants to participate in local and national politics; to register to vote and exercise their franchise and to take part in volunteering activities in their communities.

I am delighted to see many of these themes are covered by your event here today. There is information available on applying for citizenship; voter registration; employment and training opportunities; volunteering; community and youth engagement, and many more. These are some of the critical ingredients for successful integration, for “making Ireland home”. And they are being served up here this morning in an atmosphere that is both welcoming and engaging.

I am also pleased to see the support of so many local organisations for this event, from public service providers to voluntary organisations. These include: South and East Cork Area Development (SECAD); Midleton Arts Festival; Cork Education and Training Board; Citizens Information; New Communities Partnership; Cork County Public Participation Network; Cloyne Diocese Youth Service and Midleton Community Policing.

In my work as Minister for Integration, I meet with many groups and individuals from migrant communities. I consult with Government colleagues, local authorities, public bodies and community groups. And one thing that we all seem to agree on, and that I firmly believe myself, is that it is on the ground at community level that the key to successful integration is to be found. It is the day-to-day lived experience of migrants in cities and towns and rural areas all across the country that will determine our success in addressing this challenge, and in realising the many benefits of diversity.

Events such as Midleton Participate play an important part in our efforts to build truly integrated communities here in East Cork, as elsewhere throughout Ireland. I wish you every success with the day.

Go raibh maith agaibh go léir.”