

**Speech by Minister of State for Equality, Immigration and Integration
David Stanton T.D. at the Irish Medical Council launch of the “Working
with your Doctor” multi-lingual information booklet for patients.**

“Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to join you here today at the launch of such an important booklet ‘Working with Your Doctor’. I would, first of all, like to acknowledge the work of William Prasifka of the Medical Council and his team in putting together this booklet and deciding to translate this into several languages for the maximum benefit of the public. I am very grateful to be invited here today and delighted that I have the opportunity to support the role of language in accessing services and achieving successful integration.

This booklet aims to help all people get the best health care through working in partnership with their doctors and other health professionals. It explains vital information such as the different type of doctors that might treat you, what you can expect from them, and how you can work with them to improve your care.

I would like to congratulate all involved in the booklet’s success. It is a great example of adapting our public services to reflect the needs of a more diverse Ireland. I am delighted to see the use of the Polish, French, and Spanish languages used in an attempt to ensure that access to services is not lost in translation. This booklet has provided a wonderful opportunity for Migrants to continually exercise their right to access mainstream services in the like manner and to the like extent in all respects, as a native Irish citizen.

Access to public services of migrants will be guided over the next three years by the Migrant Integration Strategy – A Blueprint for the Future. This is a living document which was launched by the Government last February. The Strategy adopts a Whole-of-Government approach that seeks to build on existing good practice and provide additional supports where needed. It contains a broad range of initiatives in areas such as access to language provision; public services; education; employment; political participation, and more. Its implementation is overseen by a cross-sectoral committee, involving the relevant public authorities. Some of our key civil society organisations working in the area of integration also have a voice. I am glad to say that I am due to Chair the third meeting of this committee, and the thematic sub-groups have met before Christmas. I am continually enthused by the dedication and energy from all the committee’s members.

The Government has committed significant resources to language training and up-skilling programmes to help integrate people into society. Last year, I was pleased to announce the results of an Open Call for Proposals under the National Funding to Promote Integration of Immigrants, the Communities Integration Fund, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, and finally the European Social Fund. Close to €10m has been granted to 40 national and 130 regional projects to support integration over the next three to four years with both EU and Irish Government funding. The majority of these projects are led by Community and Voluntary organisations who are implementing a range of activities to support migrant integration. These projects are operating in various locations across the country with a common purpose to support migrant integration.

Migrant access to public services is reinforced in our National Strategy and a number of actions are underway to ensure that this is not just the policy, but the practice. A specialised sub-group from the Strategy's Monitoring and Co-ordination Committee, made up of Government Agencies, Departments and NGOs will work to fulfill these actions. In addition, there are a number of targeted initiatives such as resource and drop-in centres available throughout Ireland, which are supported through Government and EU funding. These projects work with refugees, asylum seekers, and all migrants, providing advice, advocacy and translation on housing, social welfare, health and wellbeing, education, family reunification, citizenship, and support with integration.

The recent census figures, as referenced in the report that over 600,000 people in Ireland speak a foreign language at home. These figures are an excellent illustration of the rich diversity among our population. But they also help to show us where supports may be needed. For migrants without the necessary level of English language proficiency, access to English language education is an essential step towards successful integration of migrants and their families, ensuring they can reap the benefits of living in Ireland. 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 and institutions to work together to promote integration.

Which brings me back to why we are here today. We are here to launch this very relevant booklet and its numerous translations and to encourage continued access of public services for our new communities. Once again, well done to everyone involved."