

**Speech by Minister of State for Equality, Immigration and Integration David Stanton T.D. at the Migrant Information Day organised by New Communities Partnership at the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission**

**21 November 2017**

“Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here this afternoon to speak at this marvellous ‘Migrant Information Day’. I would like to extend my thanks to Anca Lupu of New Communities Partnership, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, and UN Migration Agency (IOM) Ireland for their invitation and their work pulling this all together.

I would like to congratulate all the civil society organisations present here today, for coming together to make this ‘Migrant Information Day’ such a valuable and useful event. Today not only gives our new communities a great opportunity to find useful advice on services and supports available to them, it also reflects the cross-organisational enthusiasm and collaboration in Ireland, on working towards the smooth integration of our new communities, in an increasingly diverse Ireland.

We are indeed becoming a more diverse country. Last year’s census revealed that the proportion of our population who have a nationality other than Irish now stands at 11.6%. The number of people who hold dual Irish nationality has increased significantly – almost doubling over the 5 year period since the previous census to stand at over 100,000 people. Over one-third of these people were themselves born in Ireland. This is illustrative of a strong commitment to Ireland among many of our newer communities. It is encouraging to see the numbers of people who opt to retain an identity from their country of origin, while at the same time embracing an Irish identity that co-exists with it.

Diversity has become a fundamental characteristic of the Irish population. And it has brought us great benefits. It has broadened and deepened our skills base. Our migrant communities are active in all sectors of the economy, bringing their wealth of skills, experience and talent to bear in diverse ways that we can all benefit from. And no less than the economic contribution made by members of our newer communities, we are all enriched by Ireland’s increased cultural diversity. Increased diversity brings with it both challenges and responsibilities. To ensure that we can fully realise the benefits of diversity, we must develop a greater focus on integration.

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.

As many of you will know, our efforts in this will be guided over the next three years by the Government's Migrant Integration Strategy – A Blueprint for the Future. 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 public services; education; employment; political participation, and more. I was interested to see in the press release for this event, the list of areas in which migrants felt they needed the greatest support. Employment, education, health, integration, combating racism and discrimination. These are all areas which the Government's Migrant Integration Strategy seek to impact upon and achieve better outcomes - not just for migrants themselves - but for our society as a whole.

Clearly, there is already a developing synergy between what is happening at national strategic level and what you and wider civil society is trying to achieve through events like today. Implementation of the Migrant Integration Strategy is coordinated and monitored by a cross-sectoral committee, involving the relevant public authorities. Importantly though, several of our key civil society organisations, many present today, also have a voice on this Committee, including today's organisers New Communities Partnership. I chaired the second meeting of this committee last month and a number of thematic sub-committees are taking place at the moment in order to maintain momentum across the many actions within the strategy. I am continually enthused by the dedication and energy of all who participate in these important groups.

The Government has committed significant resources to help integrate people into society. Making funding available for the types of supports that promote integration, such as those present today, is a key element of our Strategy. Earlier this 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 our 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. Through providing targeted funding for integration projects, the Government can support the critical work of migrant integration. I hope that these

various supports will make a real difference in the lives of some of our most vulnerable migrants, and well as supporting all our communities to achieve true integration.

Finally, I want congratulate once again all those involved in putting together this event today and hope that our new communities find it useful and can take away as much information as possible with them to use and help make their integration in Ireland a reality. Go raibh míle maith agaibh.”