

KILKENNY MIGRANT INTEGRATION ACTION PLAN



Kilkenny County Council
Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh



KILKENNY
LEADER
PARTNERSHIP



KILKENNY PPN
Public Participation Network



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PHOTOGRAPHS: COMMUNITY OFFICE KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL; STOCK IMAGES.



FOREWARD

Kilkenny County Council, in partnership with Kilkenny Public Participation Network and County Kilkenny LEADER Partnership are pleased to play our part in the National Migrant Integration Strategy - A Blueprint for the Future.

In 2013 Kilkenny County Council worked in partnership with local ethnic minority and cultural groups and the then Integration Centre to develop "Uniting the Diverse"- Kilkenny Integration Strategy 2013-2017. The review of that strategy was complimentary about the engagement and participation processes developed to ensure representation and inclusion of those voices that were and remain central to the strategy and its underlying values.



In the development of this Migrant Integration Strategy in May 2020 when the consultation and engagement processes were designed and implemented, the promoting organisations in consultation with Hannah Grene of Barncat Consultants, who were contracted to develop the Migrant Integration Strategy, contended with how to engage people in a meaningful way during a Pandemic.

The country had just gone into level 5 restrictions as outlined in the Irish Government's Roadmap for re-opening society and business as an outcome of the Covid 19 Coronavirus Pandemic. The restrictions seriously limited face to face interactions and so all consultations were moved online via various digital platforms.

While this proved challenging, it is felt that the process was inclusive and managed to connect with and get the views of ethnic minority and cultural groups living in Kilkenny. The consultation and engagement process and platforms were also useful to connect with those who provide services in the county. The result is a comprehensive Migrant Integration Strategy for Kilkenny that reflects the needs and experiences of ethnic minority and cultural groups and service providers.

The Kilkenny Migrant Integration Strategy is committed to both EU and Irish Government principles for immigrant integration and sees integration as an active process where mutual respect, human rights, equality, self-determination, encouragement and capacity building play a central role.

Kilkenny County Council is proud to have worked in partnership with the Kilkenny Public Participation Network and County Kilkenny LEADER Partnership and recognises that collaborative processes require courageous leadership from everyone involved. It enables diverse perspectives and conversations to be explored and for the voices of those we do not normally hear from to be listened to. We hope this Migrant Integration Strategy reflects that and can live in the hearts of all those committed to its implementation.

Cllr Andrew McGuinness
Cathaoirleach Kilkenny County Council

*‘Integration is a dynamic,
two-way process of mutual
accommodation by all
immigrants and residents of
Member States’*

Common Basic Principle 1 for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In County Kilkenny, 8.4% of Kilkenny's population are non-Irish national, and 12.2% do not identify as White Irish, according to the 2016 Census. 12.8% of Kilkenny residents were born abroad, pointing to growing numbers of dual-nationality citizens, and a maturing of the migrant population.

In this Integration Action Plan, we affirm the rights of all migrants to participate and integrate into Irish society on an equal basis with others. We acknowledge that integration should not be 'one way', but that an intercultural approach will allow us to respect and appreciate the beliefs and cultures of others, while maintaining the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed to us under Irish and international law.

In particular, we commit to the following:

- **A rights-based approach ensures equality and non-discrimination in migrants' access to services**
- **Zero tolerance towards racism and discrimination in County Kilkenny society.**
- **A particular attention to the needs of children, young people and families from migrant backgrounds**
- **An acknowledgement of the role which migrants play in the Irish workforce, and a commitment to ensuring migrants are empowered to participate in employment on an equal basis with non-migrants**
- **An intercultural approach to active civic, cultural and sporting engagement by both migrants and non-migrants, leading to stronger, more cohesive communities.**

This Integration Action Plan has been developed by Kilkenny County Council, Kilkenny LEADER Partnership and County Kilkenny Public Participation Network and most of its actions are assigned to these and other state funded bodies. However, this Integration Plan should belong to everyone in County Kilkenny, whether from a migrant background or not, since everyone has a part to play in ensuring and enhancing integration.

What does this mean for me as a.....?

SERVICE PROVIDER?

- be aware of the public sector duty to ensure everyone can access services equally
- ensure that interpretation services are offered where they are available, and lobby for them where they are not
- Campaign for equality and diversity training in your organisation

SCHOOL TEACHER?

- ask students or their parents if they would like to present on their culture or country
- organise intercultural days or ask parents to bring national food to school events
- establish a 'buddy system' between established and new families
- ask your school to participate in the Yellow Flag anti-racism and diversity campaign

MEMBER OF SOCIETY (MIGRANT OR HOST COMMUNITY)?

- respect Irish Law, including the right to equality and non-discrimination
- respect and understand other cultures and beliefs
- ask what you can do to help your employer / voluntary group/ activity to welcome diversity
- call out and report racism to the Gardaí and to ireport.ie

On the next page are some of the actions which have been agreed by Kilkenny County Council, Kilkenny LEADER Partnership, County Kilkenny Public Participation Network and other state bodies. However, we can all play a part in furthering integration in County Kilkenny.

A more detailed account of the actions, including lead agency, resources and timeframe, is set out in Section Four.

COUNTY KILKENNY INTEGRATION ACTION PLAN: SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

INITIAL AND GENERAL ACTION

- 1 Agree ownership of actions with lead agencies
- 2 Invite further representatives on to the Integration Steering Group
- 3 Establish a wider County Kilkenny Intercultural Network
- 4 Submit national level concerns to the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration and the Immigrant Council of Ireland
- 5 Review all actions of the Action Plan at least twice yearly, and adapt as needed
- 6 Actions should be included into the annual Local Economic and Community Plan, and the Steering Group should report regularly to the Local Community Development Committee.
- 7 Engage with other Integration groups regionally

ACCESS TO PUBLIC SERVICES

- 8 Provide public sector duty training, with a focus on equality and diversity to all public sector staff
- 9 Appoint a nominated person within each section of the local authority who can serve as a 'champion' for the public sector duty to equality and non-discrimination
- 10 Ensure that migrants and service providers are aware of the various services which exist.
- 11 'Ensure that DEASP and HSE staff in Kilkenny are familiar with national policy on interpreting so they can provide the best possible service to customers
- 12 Enquire if community groups funded by Kilkenny County Council, CKLP or are involved with the PPN are currently promoting migrant integration in their local areas.

COMBATING RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA

- 13 Promote awareness of the channels for reporting and addressing racism and discrimination.
- 14 Ensure that racist graffiti is given highest priority for removal

EDUCATION, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

- 15 Improved coordination between schools, youth services and adult learning classes in terms of ensuring that children and their parents are receiving the language supports that they need.
- 16 Support the integration needs of young people from new communities
- 17 Increase anti-racism initiatives in schools

EMPLOYMENT AND PATHWAYS TO WORK

- 18 Engage with employers in a dialogue on diversity and non-discrimination
- 19 Provide diversity and anti-racism training to employers.
- 20 Ensure that attention to the needs of different migrant groups is mainstreamed in employment services.

ACTIVE CIVIC AND CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

- 21 Encourage awareness amongst migrants that everyone has the right to vote (and stand) in local elections (including asylum seekers) and hold a voter registration drive.
- 22 Encourage representation of migrant associations on local authority policy committees.
- 23 Encourage local representatives and interested migrants to participate in the migrant-councillor internship scheme.
- 24 Ask all community groups to reflect on what they can do to attract and encourage migrant participation, and provide training for voluntary groups to ensure that they are treating participants equally.
- 25 Ensure that specific supports are available to refugee families who are no longer benefitting from resources provided through the resettlement programme, on the basis of needs identified

What is the best thing about living in Kilkenny?



Our 2020 Kilkenny Survey showed that migrants and non-migrants gave similar answers.

INTRODUCTION

In March 2020, Kilkenny Council, in partnership with County Kilkenny LEADER Partnership and Kilkenny Public Participation Network, commissioned Barncat Consulting to carry out a review of 'Uniting the Diverse: Kilkenny Integration Strategy 2013-2017' and to assist in developing a new Integration Action Plan. This Action Plan is in line with the National Migrant Integration Plan, which envisages each local authority developing their own local Integration Strategy.

The following report is the final deliverable in that project, and should serve as a basis for the new Kilkenny Integration Action Plan. It is based on interviews, focus groups and a survey with service providers, migrant representatives and others living and working in County Kilkenny (see Appendix A for full details).

The action plan has five parts:

- 1. A demographic profile of minority nationality and ethnic groups in Kilkenny.**
- 2. An overview of the five thematic areas for action identified.**
- 3. A mapping of services, supports and activities currently available in Kilkenny under the five themes.**
- 4. A detailed set of actions.**
- 5. Recommendations for implementation, monitoring and review.**

A separate review of the former Integration Strategy (Appendix C) and a more detailed set of findings from the recent Integration Survey have also informed this Action Plan. The Strengths, weaknesses, Challenges and Success chart below shows a brief synopsis of the review.

'UNITING THE DIVERSE'

KILKENNY INTEGRATION STRATEGY 2013-2017

A BRIEF REVIEW

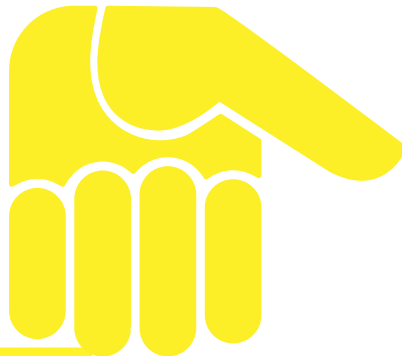
WEAKNESSES

- Extremely ambitious plan
- Over reliant on volunteer actors in Kilkenny Integration Forum as lead on half the actions, and as overall driver



- Strong buy in from local authority and migrant group representatives
- Highly participative process
- Detailed plan with clear timelines
- Identified lead organisation for each action

STRENGTHS



CHALLENGES

- Reduction in guidance and resources nationally
- Fatigue and interpersonal clashes led to disbanding of Integration Forum, leaving Strategy without a driver



- Continued engagement between local authority, service providers and various migrant communities
- Many of the actions achieved and ongoing

SUCSESSES





1

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

CENSUS 2016 DATA

According to the latest population census in 2016, 8.4% of Kilkenny's population are non-Irish national, and 12.2% do not identify as White Irish. Between 2011 (the previous census) and 2016, there was a slight increase in County Kilkenny's population as a whole, and a slight decrease in the percentage of the population who were non-Irish nationals (from 8.8% to 8.4%). However, there was a slight increase in the numbers of Kilkenny residents born abroad (from 12.6% to 12.8%), which implies that an increasing number of migrants are settling in Kilkenny and becoming Irish citizens. We know that at national level, the number of people with dual nationality almost doubled in Ireland between 2011 and 2016, with 63.4% of those being born abroad¹.

TABLE 1: While the number of non-Irish nationals has decreased slightly, this may indicate a maturing and settling of the migrant population.

NATIONALITY	2011	2016	CHANGE	PLACE OF BIRTH	2011	2016	CHANGE
	%	%	%		%	%	%
IRISH	90.2	90.6	0.4	BORN IRELAND	87.4	87.3	-0.2
<i>NATIONAL</i>	86.8	88.4	1.6	<i>NATIONAL</i>	83.0	82.7	-0.3
NON-IRISH	8.8	8.4	-0.4	BORN ABROAD	12.6	12.8	0.2
UK	28.8	25.9	-2.9	UK	44.8	40.5	-4.3
POLAND	26.0	28.1	2.1	POLAND	17.0	17.3	0.3
LITHUANIA	5.0	4.9	-0.1	LITHUANIA	3.3	3.1	-0.2
OTHER EU	19.5	26.7	7.2	OTHER EU	13.9	17.5	3.6
REST OF THE WORLD	20.7	14.4	-6.3	REST OF THE WORLD	20.9	21.6	0.7
<i>NATIONAL</i>	12.1	11.6	-0.5	<i>NATIONAL</i>	17.0	17.3	0.3
NOT STATED	1.0	1.0		NOT STATED	0.0	0.0	
TOTAL	100	100		TOTAL	100	100	

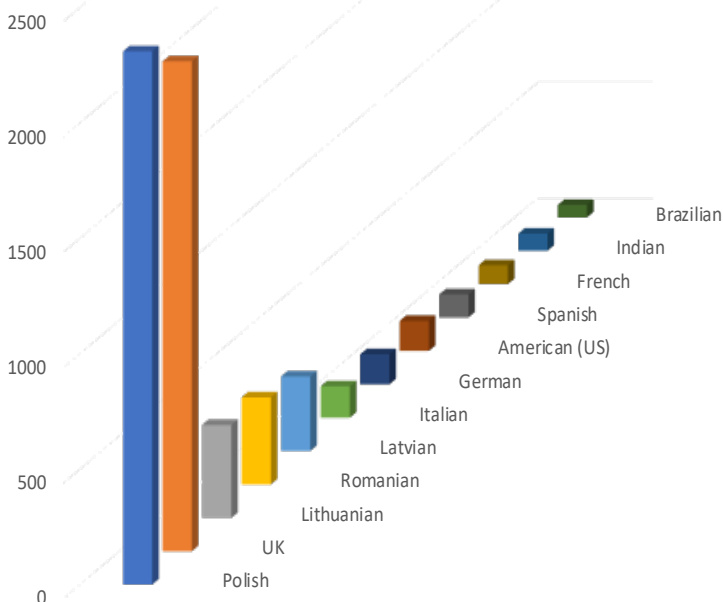
Source: CSO Census 2016 & Kilkenny Economic and Community Monitor

¹ CSO, Census of Population 2016 - Profile 7 Migration and Diversity - Dual Nationalities, 2017. The profile explains that persons may identify as having a dual nationality based on what citizenship they hold, where they were born, where they live or where their parents are from.

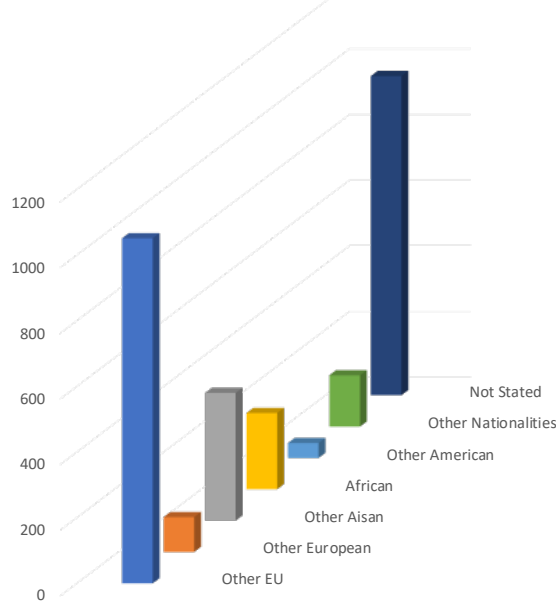
Nationals of UK and Poland remain the largest group of Non-Irish Nationals residing in County Kilkenny, representing more than half of the Non-Irish residents. Other nationalities resident in County Kilkenny are shown in the tables below.

TABLE 2: NON IRISH POPULATION IN COUNTY KILKENNY BY NATIONALITY (2016)

TOP 12 NATIONALITIES



OTHER GROUPS



Source: Census 2016 data reported in 2018 CYPSC Socio-demographic Statement

Looking at the diversity of Kilkenny’s population in terms of ethnic, linguistic and religious characteristics, there has also been little change, apart from an overall increase in number, which is in line with the overall population increase in the County between 2011 and 2016.

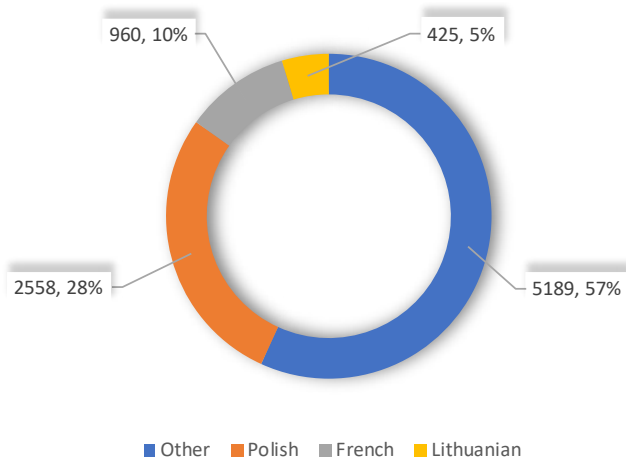
TABLE 3: COUNTY KILKENNY POPULATION DIVERSITY (2016)

ETHNICITY			RELIGION		
	NUMBER	%		NUMBER	%
WHITE IRISH	86,176	87.8	ROMAN CATHOLIC	83,641	83.7
WHITE TRAVELLERS	557	0.6	CHURCH OF IRELAND	2,712	2.7
WHITE OTHER	7,271	7.4	PRESBYTERIAN	740	0.7
BLACK / BLACK IRISH	730	0.7	METHODIST, WESLEYAN	223	0.2
ASIAN / ASIAN IRISH	979	1.0	JEWISH	311	0.3
OTHER	935	1.0	OTHER	3,718	3.7
NOT STATED	1,477	1.5	No	7,119	7.1
TOTAL	98,125	100	NOT STATED	1,421	1.4
			TOTAL	99,885	100

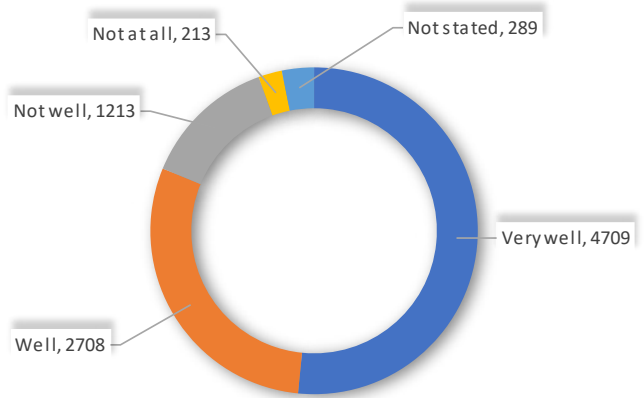
Source: Census 2016

TABLE 4: 9% (9132) of County Kilkenny's population speak a foreign language, but most of these speak English well or very well

FOREIGN LANGUAGE SPOKEN



ABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH



Source: Census 2016

9% of residents in the County reported speaking a foreign language (9,132 people). Polish is the most commonly spoken foreign language spoken (28%) followed by French (11%). More than 80% of these foreign language speakers reported being able to speak English well or very well, with only 2% not able to speak English at all.

In terms of ethnic minorities, the percentage of the population who do not identify as White Irish is 12.2%, and the percentage who do not identify as White is 5.2%.

If we look in more detail at the places in Kilkenny where members of ethnic minorities live, we unsurprisingly find a concentration in urban areas, and places with more employment opportunities. The Asian or Asian Irish community seems to concentrate in Kilkenny City (with 511 in 2011 and 611 in 2016), while the majority of Black or Black Irish community are located mainly in 2 places, Kilkenny City (376 in 2011 and 432 in 2016) and Ferrybank (211 in 2011 and 205 in 2016).

CHANGES SINCE 2016

Ireland's next census will be held in 2021. In the meantime, what can we say about the ways in which diversity may have changed since 2016?

National preliminary data from 2019 show that since 2016, the numbers of non-Irish nationals living in Ireland has risen again. Estimates for 2019 also reveal that in 2019 there were 622,700 non-Irish nationals in Ireland, which was an increase of 29,100 from the previous year and constitutes 86.3% of the total immigrants that year.

TABLE 5: ESTIMATES SHOW THAT THE NON-IRISH NATIONAL POPULATION HAS INCREASED SINCE 2016²

POPULATION CHANGE 2016 -2019		POPULATION INCREASE 2018 - 2019	
NATIONALITY	% CHANGE	NATIONALITY	NUMBER
IRISH	-1.0	IRISH	35,300
UK	0.1	NON-IRISH	29,100
REST OF EU15	0.3	UK	3,700
EU13	0.0	REST OF EU15	8,100
REST OF WORLD	0.7	EU13	2,700
		REST OF WORLD	14,600
		TOTAL PERSONS	64,400

Source: Census 2016

Data at county level is not yet available. However, we know that the South Sudanese community in Kilkenny city, with its basis in a refugee resettlement programme in 2008, is well established there, and that a Syrian refugee resettlement programme starting in 2018 currently counts 152 Syrian individuals in various locations throughout the county. Concentrations of migrant populations can be found in relation to various places of employment throughout the county.

In our recent survey, while just over half of migrants had been living or working in Kilkenny for more than five years, almost three quarters of migrants thought that they would still be living in County Kilkenny in five years' time, displaying a strong intention to stay.

² In the tables, 'Rest of EU 15' refers to the countries before enlargement on 1 May 2004, (i.e. Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Portugal), while EU 13 refers to the 10 countries that joined the EU on 1 May 2004 (i.e. Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia), along with Bulgaria and Romania who joined on 1 January 2007 and Croatia who joined on the 1 July 2013.



2

**THEMATIC
ISSUES**

This section follows on from an interim report, which mapped services and supports of which migrants can avail in County Kilkenny, and identified gaps and challenges. These were informed by a survey of over 200 County Kilkenny residents, and then further discussed in a series of five focus groups, one for each of the five themes identified below:

- Access to public and health services
- Combating racism and xenophobia
- Education, young people and families
- Employment and pathways to work
- Active civic and cultural engagement

These broadly echo the five themes of the previous Uniting the Diverse strategy in Kilkenny, but also consider and group the ten themes of the current National Migrant Integration Strategy.³

ACCESS TO PUBLIC AND HEALTH SERVICES

The 2014 Irish Human Rights and Equality Act established a positive duty on public bodies to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of their employees, customers, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans.

A positive duty means that it is not enough for a public sector body to avoid direct discrimination; they must also consider what particular barriers specific groups and people may have in dealing with public services and take positive steps to address these. In our focus group, few people – including both migrant representatives and service providers – were aware of the public sector duty, indicating a need for further training.

Of the barriers specific to people from migrant or ethnic minority backgrounds, language difficulties are one of the most commonly cited by service providers and migrant representatives, followed by unfamiliarity or difficulty in navigating the system.

Several service providers said that greater awareness of their services in migrant communities would lead to greater uptake, through for example, publication of information in other languages, or more staff from migrant/ethnic minority backgrounds, who could help in publicising and providing those services in the relevant language. Some service providers noted that there was less availability of publications in other languages for their services at national level than there had previously been.

³ Government of Ireland, *The Migrant Integration Strategy: A Blueprint for the Future, 2017-2020*.

Promoting intercultural awareness follows on naturally from the section on accessing public services above, since it is key to the public sector positive duty to promoting equality, preventing discrimination and protecting human rights mentioned above. There is also a need to promote intercultural awareness and to tackle racism and xenophobia more broadly within the community.

In the 2019 Progress Report on the National Migrant Integration Plan, the Minister of State for Equality, Immigration and Integration, David Stanton, asked that a 'greater energy and focus' for the 'remainder of the Strategy' be given to actions combating racism and xenophobia, and actions to support integration and social cohesion at the local level⁴. However, the State provides few official statistics on racism and hate speech in Ireland, with reporting largely left to NGOs. The Irish Network against Racism reports a doubling of reports of racism in the first quarter of 2020, compared to the same quarter in 2019, with reports of offensive online and media comment particularly high⁵.

In the recent online survey for this work, almost half of migrants have experienced some form of discrimination in County Kilkenny, on the basis of their national or ethnicity, while approximately one-third report encountering hostility or suspicion, and verbal abuse. This is particularly common amongst non-white migrants.

There was some interesting input from service providers around the issue of intercultural awareness and the need, as one participant put it to: "meet people where they're at". For example, one service tried to engage with the Syrian refugees, and were disappointed that there was not a more enthusiastic response. The manager of that service felt there might be a need for intercultural training for staff to understand what the group had been through, and that they might not yet be ready to engage.

Other participants spoke of patriarchal attitudes in some communities, and the difficulties of reconciling cultural sensitivity with the norms of Irish society. In some cases, participants noted the need for sustained and gradual engagement with women from particular backgrounds, in order to empower them to engage more fully.

In our focus group on this theme, we discussed addressing racism and xenophobia in a three pillar approach: awareness raising, in the form of training and public media; legislation (more awareness and uptake of the ways in which racist behaviour can be prosecuted in Ireland, and also stronger legislation specifically on hate crime); and these two should then lead to the third pillar, a general consensus in society that racist behaviour is completely unacceptable, much as has happened in a relatively short time with drink driving. As one participant reiterated: The message needs to be repeated so it becomes the norm.

⁴ Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration, *The Migrant Integration Strategy Progress Report 2019*.

⁵ Irish Network Against Racism, *Media Release: Racism Figures Double Last Year's, Friday 1st May 2020*, available at: <https://inar.ie/media-release-racism-figures-double-last-years/>

EDUCATION, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

Supporting younger and second-generation migrants in both education and more generally is key to a successful integration process.

There have been some very successful examples of youth work with migrants in Kilkenny, both currently and in the past, and one youth worker commented that young people seem to find more common ground in the migrant experience, in dealing with their divided loyalties between home life and life in the community, than perhaps some adult migrants from different communities. There are, however, challenges in ensuring that young migrants engage with activities, particularly for young women.

In our survey, migrants were noticeably less likely to speak positively about schools than non-migrants. Several participants expressed concerns with the adequacy of supports available to schools and students in schools, particularly in terms of language support. Some migrants may also be older than their year group in school, which leads to greater problems with integration and the risk of early school leaving. While there were some positive examples of including literacy supports for parents in schools (see asset mapping), there was a concern that we need to do more to look at the family unit as a whole, rather than providing siloed supports for adults, children and youth.

In terms of integration, it was felt that raising awareness around the time when children are moving from primary to secondary (i.e. in 6th class and 1st year) was key. There is a need to be conscious that we do not 'single out' young migrants for intercultural activities, but strive to include non-migrants in all intercultural events also.

EMPLOYMENT AND PATHWAYS TO WORK

At national level, while most migrants are in employment, many of them are overqualified for the work that they perform, and migrants are over-represented in low-paid, precarious employment⁶. Recent research carried out in Kilkenny bears out this tendency⁷ and also highlights the underemployment of people of Black African descent, which is a concern nationally too.⁸

Our recent survey showed that migrant respondents were much more likely to have lost their jobs during the spring Covid-19 restrictions, compared to non-migrants.

While language barriers, lack of qualifications and lack of recognition of non-Irish qualifications are all factors in the underemployment of migrants, we must acknowledge that bias, whether conscious or not, plays a very significant part.

6 *Migrant Rights Council of Ireland, All Work and Low Pay: the Experience of Migrants Working in Ireland, 2015.*

7 *St Canices Community Action CLG, Research on Barriers to Inclusion and Employment of Immigrants in Kilkenny, 2019*

8 *Phillip O'Connell, 'Why are so few Africans at work in Ireland? Immigration Policy and Labour Market Disadvantage', Irish Journal of Sociology, June 2019.*

In 2009, a study by the Economic and Social Research Institute of Ireland showed that people with Irish names are over **twice as likely** to be invited to interview as candidates with non-Irish names, even where the CVs are essentially identical⁹. It is likely that many employers are unaware of their own prejudices, telling themselves that they have just selected the best candidates for the job.

While the entrepreneurial drive of many migrants is very positive, there are sometimes concerns that it can mask discrimination, as migrants unable to find regular employment have to create their own opportunities. As one person commented, frustrated by efforts to engage in community life and employment in Kilkenny, *if you won't give me a seat at the table, I'll build my own table.*

ACTIVE CIVIC PARTICIPATION

The theme of active citizenship and community participation covers a broad range of activities including political participation, volunteering, sport, culture and the celebration of diversity.

Political participation by migrant community members at national level remains low. A recent publication by the Immigrant Council of Ireland showed that approximately 3% of local election candidates were of migrant origin, and accounted for less than 1% of those elected¹⁰. No candidates from a migrant background ran in County Kilkenny. Despite the voter registration drive in 2014 under the previous Integration Strategy, the proportion of non-Irish on the voting register in Kilkenny remains low, somewhere a little below the national average.¹¹

Our survey found that migrants are less likely to belong to a community or voluntary group or activity, even among those who have been living here for a long time. This finding was discussed in our focus group, and suggested reasons for this disparity included: lack of awareness of available activities; a lack of confidence and fear of being unwanted; lack of public transport and 'clique culture' in Kilkenny – which is experienced not only by migrants, but by many long-time Kilkenny residents.



¹⁰ Immigrant Council of Ireland, *Strength in Diversity: The Experience of Migrant Candidates in the 2019 Local Election*, April 2020

¹¹ Immigrant Council of Ireland, *Strength in Diversity: The Experience of Migrant Candidates in the 2019 Local Election*, April 2020, p8.

3

ASSET MAPPING

A recent Feasibility Study on a proposed International Cultural House for Kilkenny found that there was an unawareness of services among certain groups, and that participants brought up the need for certain activities that were, in fact, already established¹².

The following table, therefore, maps some of the services, supports and activities currently available for migrants in Kilkenny. A list of these assets was shared and discussed with each thematic focus group, with participants invited to contribute further details, before actions were discussed. This should be regarded as a living document, which should be updated as information about further services and supports is discovered, and as services alter or go online in response to pandemic restrictions.

ACCESS TO PUBLIC AND HEALTH SERVICES	
What	How?
The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the Health Service Executive have access to interpretation and translation services. Interpreters are aware of the confidentiality requirements in all engagements between Department and Customer.	If you or someone you know needs interpretation or translation in talking to social welfare, or at your GP or a hospital, it is possible to arrange this. It is better to have a professional interpreter than relying on family and friends, and staff will be able to arrange this for you. Services should be able to access interpretation over the phone right away but if possible, give advance notice. If you need language interpretation in person, you should make an appointment. If you need document translation, this needs five to seven working days.
Immigrant Services Kilkenny provide a drop-in clinic on Monday and Wednesday 9am - 1pm, at the Fr McGrath Family Service Centre, St Joseph's Road, Kilkenny city and from 9am to 5pm at O'Loughlin Court Community Building.	If you are having trouble knowing how to access the services you need, this free drop-in clinic will help you find the information that you need. See: http://frmcgrathcentre.ie/immigrant-support-clinic/
The Citizens Information Service also provide free information about public services for anyone who needs it, in person in their centre on the Parade, Kilkenny city, by phone or on their website. Staff also have a direct line to the Immigrant Council of Ireland, to help you with immigrant queries.	Citizens Information Kilkenny can be contacted at 0761 07 7910, or you can call the national Phone Service on 0761 07 4000 (cost is the same as a landline), or consult for information or to request a call back at https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/ If you need help in accessing any of the services, or filling out any of the forms mentioned below, the Citizens Information can help.

COMBATING RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA

What	How?
Anyone either experiencing or witnessing a racist incident can report it to the Gardaí, and offenders can be prosecuted.	Ring your local Garda station and report the incident. You can also request support from a specially trained Ethnic Liaison Officer (there are several in Kilkenny).
If you have experienced discrimination in the workplace, you can report it to the Workplace Relations Commission.	You can fill out the e-complaint form on the Workplace Relations Commission website at https://www.workplacerelations.ie/en/
If you wish to report racist incidents confidentially, the Irish Network against Racism collects reports through www.ireport.ie	Fill out the form at http://www.ireport.ie/ . Even if you have already reported it through other channels, you can report it here, to allow the Irish Network Against Racism to monitor reports of racist incidents in a variety of different settings. http://www.ireport.ie/
A fuller list of how you can report racism or discrimination is provided by the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration.	http://www.integration.ie/en/ISEC/Pages/Mig_Info_Reporting_Racism



EDUCATION, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

What	How?
<p>Ossory Youth engage with a diverse group of young people and their families through their activities around the county, and run groups for Syrian young people specifically in Urlingford, Callan and Thomastown.</p>	<p>Look at http://www.ossoryyouth.com/our-services/ to find out more, and contact details for relevant youth workers.</p>
<p>Foroige also engage with Syrian youth and other nationalities in the Drum Youth Centre, in the McDonagh Shopping Centre, Kilkenny, and in Ferrybank.</p>	<p>The Drum Kilkenny provides a Youth Café, a band rehearsal space, one to one support and referrals, and other organised activities. https://macdonaghjunction.com/stores/the-drum-youth-centre/ Foroige Ferrybank are planning to work with young migrants in the 10-14 age brackets, restrictions dependent.</p>
<p>The Yellow Flag programme for schools is a diversity and anti-racism award scheme for schools, similar for to the Green Flag environmental programme.</p>	<p>See www.yellowflag.ie. Teachers, parents and students can all suggest to their school that they participate, for the 2021/22 year or later.</p>
<p>The Football Association of Ireland, together with Show Racism the Red Card, deliver anti-racism training in schools across the county, including actively in Kilkenny.</p>	<p>Usually, workshops can be delivered by FAI development officers in person in schools. During Covid, there are educational resources and a video which teachers can use with their class. Schools who have yet to receive workshops can contact William.Kinsella@fai.ie</p>
<p>The Family Learning Project funded by Kilkenny Carlow Education and Training Board in St. John's Junior School.</p>	<p>This project engages with school parents from new communities and takes place (Covid restrictions permitting) on a Friday morning with two tutors from the Family Learning Project. It is currently moved online.</p>
<p>Hug a Book (for parents with literary difficulties) and Digital Literacy (for parents who need to upskill in IT to support children) are also open to migrant families.</p>	<p>Both currently online. Contact Carmel Bryan on 056 7763149 for more information.</p>

EMPLOYMENT AND PATHWAYS TO WORK

What	How?
The New Start programme in Kilkenny LEADER Partnership provides English language and training supports for specifically for migrants.	Contact the Kilkenny LEADER Partnership on 056 7752111 or see http://www.cklp.ie/migrant-support/ . Although the migrant programme finishes in May 2021, there are many other resources available through the Partnership for jobseekers. Staff within the Partnership are experienced in providing support to migrants.
For those looking to start or develop their own businesses, both the LEADER Partnership and the Local Enterprise Office can provide supports.	Details for the Partnership are above. For the Local Enterprise Office, see https://www.localenterprise.ie/Kilkenny/ for supports, training and events.
The Employment for People from Immigrant Countries (EPIC) programme.	Usually available for those in the Dublin region, it has now moved online and will consider applications nationwide. https://www.bitc.ie/business-action-programmes/business-action-on-employment/are-you-a-jobseeker/
The Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board run a full programme of English language classes at various levels, as well as other courses and services.	Contact the Adult Learning Service on 056 7763149 with regard to English language provision, or see http://kilkennycarlow.etb.ie/further-education-and-training/ for other courses.
A number of Fáilte Isteach programmes (informal, volunteer-led conversational English language classes) are currently being run in Kilkenny.	The English and Integration Course is run on a Wednesday morning in the Fr McGrath Centre by Immigration Services Kilkenny (contact 056 775 1988 to find out more). Two further mornings of classes are run by the same providers as part of the New Start programme, with the support of the County Kilkenny LEADER Partnership. Fáilte Isteach classes are also run by the Partnership in Ferrybank (contact 056 7752111).



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ACTIVE CIVIC AND CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

What	How?
A Festival of Cultures is run by the Kilkenny LEADER Partnership	The Festival was run in 2018 and 2019, but restrictions did not permit it to be run in 2020. Contact the Partnership on 056 7752111
A Civics course for migrants run by the Kilkenny LEADER Partnership.	Contact the Partnership on 056 7752111
The Library Service welcome new communities and do their best to cater to them with books, events and activities.	Find your local library at https://www.kilkennylibrary.ie/eng/
Twilight Community Group welcomes all migrant interaction and participation.	Visit the Twilight website https://www.twilight.ie/ for more details.
The Kilkenny Public Participation Network provides a link between local community and Kilkenny County Council, so that local community and voluntary groups can have their say in local policy making. It provides a forum for groups to hear about news and events, and PPN representatives are elected to policy making committees with the local authority.	Membership of the PPN is open to all community and voluntary groups, including cultural and intercultural associations. If you would like to register your group with the PPN, or if you would like to find out more about groups you might join, you can email ppnkilkenny@kilkennycoco.ie , contact 056 7794710 or 087 1731634, or visit https://kilkennyppn.ie/

OTHER RESOURCES

What	How?
A new Government initiative to raise awareness about the potential signs of human trafficking. Human trafficking involves the sale, trade and exploitation of human beings for profit. This may be for the purposes of sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, criminal activity, forced begging or forced marriage, and victims may be adults or children.	It is really important that everyone knows that human trafficking does happen in Ireland, and that it is not confined to big cities only. The Government have launched a new website in October 2020, https://www.anyonetrafficked.com/ which lists the potential signs for different forms of human trafficking, and where you can report a concern. You can also report a concern to the Garda Confidential Helpline on 1800 666111.



4

ACTIONS

The following suggested actions are based on the consultations with service providers; suggestions in the survey; discussion in the five focus groups and with the steering group. They are subject to approval by the steering group, and agreement with lead agencies around proposed actions.

INITIAL AND GENERAL ACTIONS					
	What?	How?	Lead agency	Resources	Timeframe
1	Agree ownership of actions with lead agencies	Recommendations in Section Five of this report.	Integration Steering Group	Suggestions for lead agencies made in this report.	Before Action Plan launch
2	Invite further representatives on to the Steering Group	Recommendations in Section Five of this report.	Integration Steering Group		In conjunction with Action 1.
3	Establish a wider County Kilkenny Intercultural Network	Recommendations in Section Five of this report.	Integration Steering Group; PPN; Partnership Intercultural Lead.	Details for interested parties to be provided by researcher.	Around Action Plan launch.
4	Submit national level concerns to the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration and the Immigrant Council of Ireland		Kilkenny LCDC	Appendix B of this report.	When the Kilkenny Migrant Integration Plan is launched (Q1 2021)
5	Review all actions of the Action Plan at least twice yearly and in line with the Local Economic and Community Plan Review process and adapt as needed	Recommendations in Section Five of this report. Particularly important when the Government publishes new policy on integration and accommodation for asylum seekers.	Integration Steering Group		Ongoing
6	Actions should be included into the annual Local Economic and Community Plan, and the Steering Group should report regularly to the Local Community Development Committee.		Kilkenny LCDC		Each year
7	Engage with other Integration groups regionally	An initial conversation is being facilitated by Glenree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation			Ongoing

ACCESS TO PUBLIC SERVICES					
	What?	How?	Lead agency	Resources	Timeframe
8	Provide public sector duty training, with a focus on equality and diversity to all public sector staff	Either in-house training in the local authority and other agencies, or external training by e.g. Carlow College	Kilkenny LCDC and agencies and groups on the LCDC	IHREC tools	2021-2023
9	Explore the possibility of champions of equality for the public sector duty from all public services to be identified, trained form a support and information sharing network in the county.		Integration Steering Group		2021
10	Ensure that migrants and service providers are aware of the various services which exist.	The asset mapping in this report should be distributed widely to services, including schools and to migrant associations.	Integration Steering Group CKLP	Asset mapping provided and updated annually	2021
11	'Ensure that DEASP staff in Kilkenny are familiar with national policy on interpreting so they can provide the best possible service to customers		Department of Social Protection, Health Service Executive		Ongoing
11.1		Ensure that services and voluntary groups dealing with migrants (Citizens Information, Immigration Services Ireland) are aware that social welfare and health services should provide interpretation and translation, and help migrants to access these services.	Integration Steering Group	Details in asset mapping provided; HSE Intercultural Strategy	2021
12	Enquire if community groups funded by Kilkenny County Council, CKLP or are involved with the PPN are currently promoting migrant integration in their local areas.	Included as an awareness raising question on funding applications.	Kilkenny County Council Community Section; CKLP. Kilkenny PPN	Details in asset mapping provided; HSE Intercultural Strategy	2022

COMBATING RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA

	What?	How?	Lead agency	Resources	Timeframe
13	Promote awareness of the channels for reporting and addressing racism and discrimination.	Develop an awareness campaign about how to report racist incidents.	Joint Policing Committee And PPN, Integration Network	Asset mapping in this report	2021-ongoing
14	Ensure that racist graffiti is given highest priority for removal.	As outlined in the National Migrant Integration Plan, each local authority should have a policy on the removal of racist graffiti.	Environment SPC		2021

EDUCATION, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

	What?	How?	Lead agency	Resources	Timeframe
15	Improved coordination between schools, youth services and adult learning classes in terms of ensuring that children and their parents are receiving the language supports that they need.	CYPSC plan to map the current provision of language supports for access to education, training and employment for children and their families, and to develop an action plan to address the barriers identified in the research.	CYPSC	NB: From CYPSC Strategic Plan	2021
16	Support the integration needs of young people from new communities.	Research and an action plan to be developed by CYPSC	CYPSC	NB: From CYPSC Strategic Plan	2021
17	Increase awareness of anti-racism within schools in Kilkenny through partnering with a local school to implement the Yellow Flag Programme.	The Yellow Flag anti-racism and diversity programme provides an eight-step award scheme. Some work is being done locally by the Kilkenny Traveller Community Movement. The Football Association of Ireland do 'Show the Red Card to Racism' workshops in schools. Involve parents (from both migrant & non-migrant backgrounds) in anti-racism initiatives in schools.	CYPSC; Kilkenny Traveller Community Movement;	https://yellowflag.ie/ Show the Red Card resources: https://theredcard.ie/teachers/ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nde7Clx-NUXo	Sept 2021 for new Yellow Flag. Schools Red Card resources online during COVID

EMPLOYMENT AND PATHWAYS TO WORK

	What?	How?	Lead agency	Resources	Timeframe
18	Engage with employers in a dialogue on diversity and non-discrimination	Through the Partnership Kickstart connections	CKLP		2021
19	Provide diversity and anti-racism training to employers.		Kilkenny LEO, Kilkenny Chamber of Commerce, CKLP		2022
20	Ensure that attention to the needs of different migrant groups is mainstreamed in employment services.	This is currently being examined in the evaluation of the Partnership's New Start programme	CKLP		2021



ACTIVE CIVIC AND CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT					
	What?	How?	Lead agency	Resources	Timeframe
21	Encourage awareness amongst migrants that everyone has the right to vote (and stand) in local elections (including asylum seekers) and hold a voter registration drive.	The Immigrant Council of Ireland provide voter registration workshops.	Kilkenny County Council	IHREC tools	2023
22	Encourage representation of migrant associations on local authority policy committees.		Kilkenny PPN.		Ongoing
23	Encourage local representatives and interested migrants to participate in the migrant-councillor internship scheme.		Kilkenny County Council	Immigrant Council of Ireland are currently launching the second phase of this programme	2021-2023
24	Develop a forum for community groups to enquire what has worked for them in encouraging migrant participation, and disseminate this as best practice. Provide training for voluntary groups to support them in equality and diversity practices.	Sports clubs have waived fees for migrants with little disposable income.	Kilkenny PPN.		2022
25	Ensure that specific supports are available to refugee families who are no longer benefitting from resources provided through the resettlement programme, on the basis of needs identified	Development of mainstreaming strategies. Include in SICAP annual planning where appropriate	CKLP, SICAP Sub-group	Resettlement Evaluation and final report	2021

5

IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING & REVIEW

IMPLEMENTATION

1. The research for this report was conducted by a steering group consisting of Kilkenny County Council, Kilkenny LEADER Partnership and County Kilkenny Public Participation Network. This will form the basis for an ongoing steering group for implementation, to be expanded to include relevant agencies and a migrant representative to be elected through the PPN (see 3. below). Details for participants to the consultation for this Action Plan who have indicated that they would like to be actively involved in the implementation of the Action Plan have been supplied to the steering group.
2. This steering group will coordinate the first step of agreeing with agencies their role in the implementation of the actions listed in the Integration Action Plan. This task can go in parallel with inviting further representatives on to the Steering Group, and should not wait until this task is complete. Once agreed, each lead agency will be responsible for implementing the agreed action, with the support and oversight of the Steering Group.
3. Migrant representation should be drawn from nominated leaders of migrant, intercultural or integration groups registered with the County Kilkenny Public Participation Network. Migrant associations and groups should be encouraged to register with the PPN, and leaders of registered groups should be encouraged to put themselves forward as the PPN representative on the Integration Stakeholder Group. The representative would not hold their place as an individual, but as a representative of their association and the wider PPN group. As such, another member of the elected association could stand in at meetings.
4. A wider Kilkenny Intercultural Network should also be formed, comprising all migrant, intercultural or integration groups in the PPN; representatives from each of the main agencies and other groups with an interest in integration issues. If the Kilkenny Immigrant Services application to the National Migrant Integration Fund is successful, there is a part of the role devoted to building capacity among migrants in particular for such a Network. This can serve as a channel for consultation and dialogue with the various migrant groups, a way to disseminate information about events and opportunities, and a call to participate in specific actions in the Integration Action Plan.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

1. The Action Plan will initially cover the period 2021-2023, but should be a rolling three-year plan. The Integration Action Plan and the overseeing Steering Group must be flexible enough to respond to current events. These include:
 - a. the Government White Paper on ending direct provision, scheduled to be published before the end of 2020. This will have implications for all local authorities in terms of providing housing.
 - b. the commitment by the current Government to produce both a new National Migrant Integration Plan, and an anti-Racism Plan during their term of office.
 - c. the need to adapt actions to suit varying levels of restrictions during the pandemic.
2. The Steering Group should review all of the actions twice yearly to monitor progress and check relevance. If actions are deemed to be overtaken by events, they should be replaced by more relevant actions. New actions should be added in response to events, or as other actions are completed. If there is a delay in completing a specific action, the Steering Group should liaise with the lead agency, to determine the cause of the blockage and to re-assign or re-design the action accordingly.
3. The Integration Action Plan should be approved by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) and Kilkenny County Council. The Integration Steering Group shall provide regular reports to the LCDC and Kilkenny County Council.

6

APPENDICES

CONSULTATION AND METHODOLOGY

Work on developing a new Integration Action Plan for County Kilkenny began in March 2020, following an open call for tenders by Kilkenny County Council, which was won by Hannah Grene, Barncat Consulting.

Over 25 interviews by phone with service providers and members of the former Integration Planning took place in March and April. An online survey, open to all living and working in County Kilkenny, was also carried out in four languages, and gathered over 200 responses. Given the continued Covid-19 restrictions, it was agreed to postpone further consultation until September 2020. An interim report, based on the service provider interviews, together with a literature review and analysis of CSO 2016 data was presented in June 2020.

In September 2020, given continued restrictions, it was decided to forego further in-person consultation. Instead, a series of five thematic focus groups, with a mix of service providers and migrant representatives were held in October 2020. These groups came up with a broad range of actions for potential inclusion into the Action Plan.

We would like to thank all those who participated in the research, including all the representatives from the organisations listed below, members of the former Integration Planning team, migrant representatives and all those who completed our online survey.

LIST OF PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS	
An Garda Síochána	Kilkenny County Council
Carlow College	Kilkenny Islamic Cultural Centre
Carlow Volunteer Centre	Kilkenny LEADER Partnership
Children and Young People’s Services Committee	Kilkenny LifelinKK
Church of Ireland	Kilkenny Public Participation Network
Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection	Open Circle Arts
Eurobug International Youth Work - Training and Collaboration	Ossory Youth
Football Association Ireland	Respond Resettlement Team
Kilkenny GAA	St John’s Junior School
Health Service Executive	Twilight Community Group
Immigrant Council of Ireland	Vantage Dymensions
Immigrant Services Kilkenny	Waterford County Council
Irish Lebanese Cultural Association	Wexford County Council
Kilkenny African Community	Wicklow County Council

CONCERNS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

During our consultations with service providers, migrant representatives, elected local representatives and others with an integration issues, many issues were raised which can only be addressed on a national level. While these issues cannot be directly addressed in our Action Plan, it is important that they are duly recorded and taken into consideration at national level. We have therefore compiled this record of observations, suggestions and concerns at national level, and will submit these to the Immigrant Council of Ireland (as a campaigning NGO) and to the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration (as the primary Government contact point).

- Better recognition of non-Irish qualifications
- Better provision and funding for interpretation and translation services, to an expanded number of service providers
- 'Mystery shopping' of services to identify possible problems in the way that service users are treated.
- Better visibility and representation of persons with a migrant background in the public service
- We need to have a more positive portrayal of migrants in the media.
- Immigration policy needs to be improved and lengthy delays in processing addressed.
- Ending long delays in processing asylum applications
- Legislation and reporting on hate crime should be strengthened, and witnesses and victims of racist incidents encouraged and empowered to come forward.
- Review of policies with potential for discrimination, especially those based on length of residence in the country or county.
- Additional language and literacy support which will be needed for school children should be identified in advance of their local enrolment, e.g. for programme refugees.
- Additional training for teachers in welcoming diversity and challenging racism.

REVIEW OF KILKENNY INTEGRATION STRATEGY 2013-2017

'UNITING THE DIVERSE' KILKENNY INTEGRATION STRATEGY 2013-2017 A BRIEF REVIEW

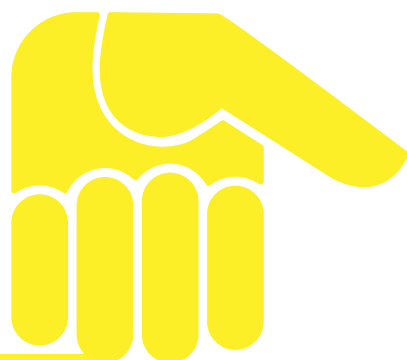
WEAKNESSES

- Extremely ambitious plan
- Over reliant on volunteer actors in Kilkenny Integration Forum as lead on half the actions, and as overall driver



- Strong buy in from local authority and migrant group representatives
- Highly participative process
- Detailed plan with clear timelines
- Identified lead organisation for each action

STRENGTHS



CHALLENGES

- Reduction in guidance and resources nationally
- Fatigue and interpersonal clashes led to disbanding of Integration Forum, leaving Strategy without a driver



- Continued engagement between local authority, service providers and various migrant communities
- Many of the actions achieved and ongoing

SUCCESSES

The following brief review was commissioned by Kilkenny County Council, Kilkenny LEADER Partnership, and Kilkenny Public Participation Network, as part of the work in developing an updated Integration Action Plan for County Kilkenny. It reviews 'Uniting the Diverse', Kilkenny Integration Strategy 2013-17, and is based on a series of interviews with members of the original Integration Planning team and other service providers and migrant representatives.

Around the beginning of the 2010s, there was a great deal of momentum around integration issues in Kilkenny. Kilkenny city had welcomed a sizeable group of South Sudanese refugees under a resettlement programme, and agencies and individuals were working well together to make this a success. As the official two-year resettlement programme wound down, an Integration Forum was established to continue the positive work, while opening the way for a wider integration process for all ethnic minorities. The work was strongly supported by the Council, by their Community Section, and by the then mayor of Kilkenny, Malcolm Noonan. In 2010 funding was secured from the Office for the Minister for Integration, as it was then, to support the Integration Forum. This forum proceeded to develop a long-term Integration Strategy for the county, with the support of the Integration Centre, a national NGO.

12 members of the Forum formed an Integration Planning Team. In a highly participatory process, it was decided that the members of the Forum (a mix of individuals representing various ethnic minorities, and local officials with a remit for integration), would co-lead the development of the Strategy. Most of the team received training in Participatory Learning Action from the Centre for Participatory Strategies in Galway in 2011. They then conducted eleven participatory learning sessions, and 16 semi-structured interviews in a first phase, covering 129 individuals in total, with a second phase involving three further participatory action planning meetings, and follow up phone calls with service providers to identify lead organisations for the actions proposed.

The ultimate end result was a document that provided a review of integration policy nationally and internationally; a statistical profile of ethnic minorities; a documenting of the action planning process; key findings in Kilkenny and finally an Action Plan. While the document was detailed and thorough, one participant commented that it was not suitable for a general audience, and that in that participant's particular community, people asked 'what does this mean for me?'

The Action Plan was organised under five main themes: employment and economic activity; education and training; active civic and civil participation; social inclusion (in terms of services) and social inclusion (in terms of cultural identity and addressing discrimination). For each theme, between four and seven actions were identified, with a total of 26 actions. The way in which each action was structured was commendable. Each was given a clear timeframe and expected outcomes, and both a lead organisation and possible strategic partners were identified. However, the Action Plan was also extremely ambitious – scarily ambitious as one participant in this review process put it. Of the 26 actions, many were ongoing or repeating. Another participant commented that scope should have been left for greater flexibility, allowing the strategic plan to evolve in response to changing circumstances.

The participatory manner in which the strategy was developed may have contributed to its ambitious nature. Some participants felt that the urge to ensure that the strategy was 'owned' by the groups for whom it was developed should have been better balanced with greater buy-in by service providers, and a better understanding of what was feasible in terms of service provision and resourcing. While it was very positive that many of the actions were assigned to a wide range of service providers, almost half (12) of them identified the Kilkenny Integration Forum as the lead partner, either alone or with an organisation. One participant explained that, in some cases, the Kilkenny Integration Forum was identified as lead partner where a more appropriate lead organisation had not yet been found, in the hopes that the Forum could find one in future.

Where another organisation was the lead, the Kilkenny Integration Forum was always listed among the strategic partners.

Unfortunately, the forum did not survive for the lifetime of the Integration Strategy. As noted above, the action plan envisaged a very large workload for what was a voluntary group, and participants in this review cited fatigue and burnout among Forum members as leading to its eventual collapse. As frequently happens with voluntary groups, despite the constitution of the Forum allowing for a wide membership and a number of sub-groups, a small number of members carried out a large amount of the work.

Interpersonal and intergroup tensions also surfaced in the work of the Forum. While again, this is not uncommon for such voluntary groups, participants in this review found it particularly upsetting in the Integration Forum, in that these clashes sometimes amounted to intergroup discrimination and racism. Participants observed that although most members of the group were keen to promote integration into Irish society, and to represent their own ethnic group, they were sometimes less interested in, and even hostile to, intercultural exchange with other minority ethnic groups. One participant referred to this as 'the elephant in the room', noting that ethnic minorities are not a homogenous group.

Resource constraints played a part too. In 2014, the Integration Centre, which had been instrumental in developing the Strategy, and continued to play a part in supporting the Forum, wound up its operations which had been funded through Atlantic Philanthropies. The collapse of the Forum under these circumstances left many participants feeling downhearted and disillusioned by the experience, and certainly had a negative impact on the implementation of the Strategy.

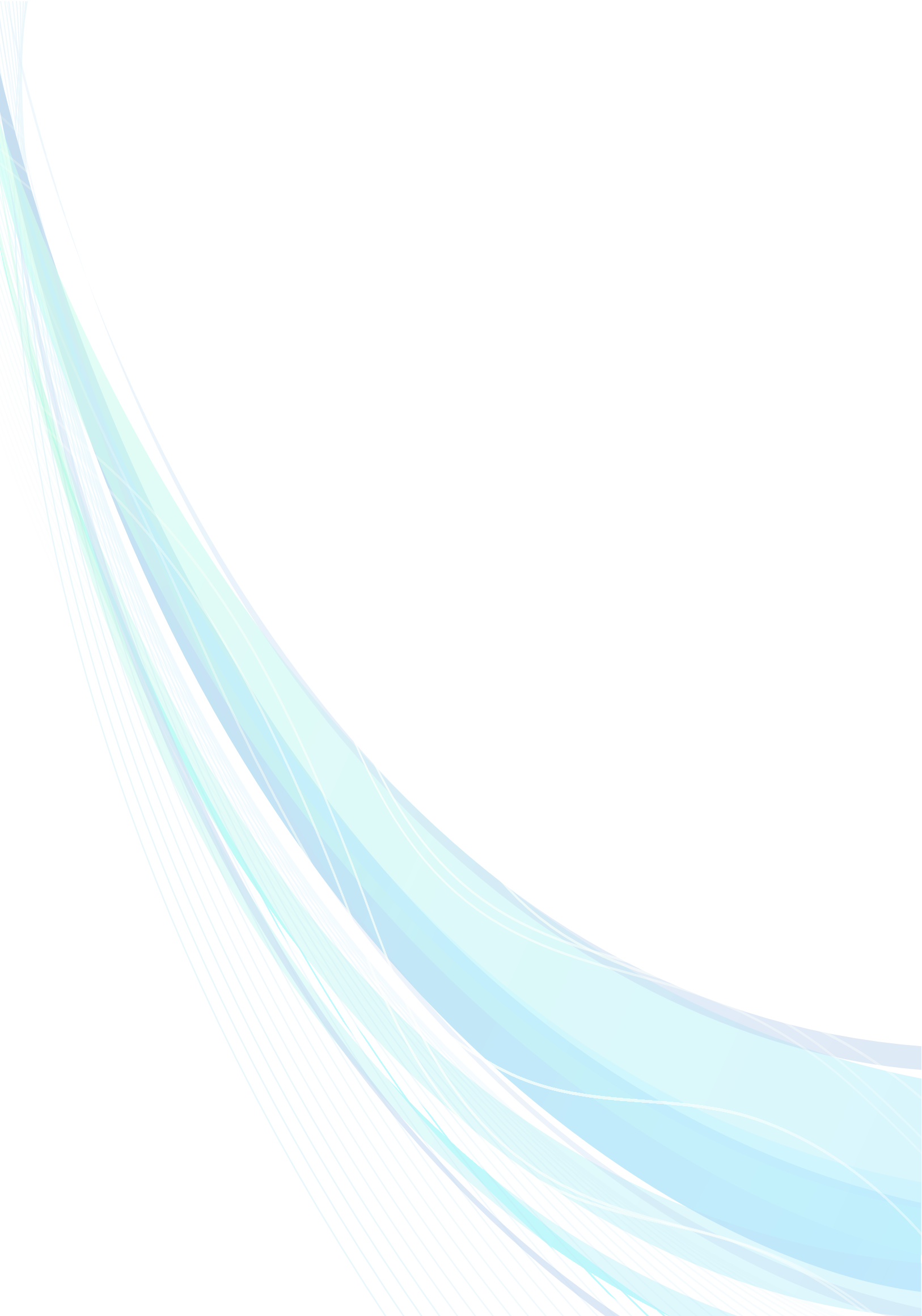
However, it would be unfair to allow the difficulties experienced to overshadow the very real successes of the Forum and other service providers in advancing the actions outlined in the Strategy, and in providing a voice to migrant communities in Kilkenny. A fully accurate assessment of progress on each of the actions is difficult, three years after the expiry of the plan. However, a broad assessment shows that approximately half of the actions were either completed within the lifetime of the plan (e.g. voter registration drive prior to local elections in 2014) or are currently ongoing in some form (e.g. annual cultural diversity day). A further ten were partially achieved, and only three were identified as not achieved at all. This was sometimes due to changes in structures, such as the dissolution of the County Development Boards in 2014, upon which the Social Inclusion Measures Group ceased to exist.

It is noteworthy, also, that of the twelve members of the 2012 Integration Planning Team, we were able to speak to eight of them for this review eight years on. This in part can be attributed to the fact that Kilkenny County Council Community section has provided continuity of support for migrant communities which is frequently missing due to staff turnover or changes in roles. A

All participants spoke very highly of Kilkenny County Council's Community section's efforts to support the Integration Strategy. For the most part, Kilkenny County Council and other service providers in the county appear to continue to have a relatively high level of engagement with various migrant communities. There is good participation of migrant groups through the Public Participation Network (PPN), and a migrant representative has recently been appointed to the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC).

Hannah Grene
Barncat Consulting
May 2020







Ireland's European Structural and Investment Funds Programmes 2014-2020
Co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union



EUROPEAN UNION
Investing in your future
European Social Fund



Riailtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland
Funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development



Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme
LCDC
Coiste um Fhorbairt Pobail Aitiuill
Chill Chalmhagh
Kilkenny Local Community Development Committee



KILKENNY LEADER PARTNERSHIP

"The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022 is funded by the Irish Government through the Department of Rural and Community Development and co-funded by the European Social Fund under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020"