

Country Operations Plan 2003

IRELAND

Part 1: Executive Committee Summary

Context and Themes:

UNHCR Liaison Office's work in Ireland can be divided into two main themes, namely: *Strengthening of Asylum* and *Support to UNHCR and refugees worldwide*. LO Dublin does not foresee any major shift in Ireland's asylum policies in 2003. The Irish economy remains relatively stable despite the recent global turmoil, and slow growth is expected. The number of new asylum-seekers is expected to remain at around 10,000. The number of recognised refugees should increase, as a result of an enhanced decision-making process. The Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC), as well as the Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT), will be firmly established and fully staffed. In 2003, evaluations of impact/output of all asylum-related institutions will be a prominent feature in the asylum area. Government funding towards institution-building may decrease in the asylum sector due to the fact that the main asylum institutions have been almost fully established. Efficiency in asylum processing, as well as the rate of deportations of unsuccessful asylum-seekers in 2002, will influence Ireland's policies in 2003, although it is not anticipated that Ireland's asylum system will alter in any major respect. It is anticipated that the Government will alter certain aspects of the asylum procedure and policies through amendments to the Refugee Act and related legislation. As policies evolve and become more complex particularly in the transition towards EU harmonisation, UNHCR will need to re-enforce its presence in order to maintain its credibility as a serious and expert partner.

Public opinion and perception of refugees will continue to vary, and respond to Government policies in the area of asylum, in particular in relation to the implementation of reception and integration measures, management of the asylum system, and removal rates. The main media are anticipated to remain relatively balanced. NGOs and Refugees Support Groups will continue to urge UNHCR to pronounce itself on national refugee and asylum issues.

Ireland will remain committed to supporting UNHCR as one of its lead UN agencies and will continue to aim towards allocating 0.7% of its GDP to development assistance by 2007.

LO Dublin has no implementing partners in Ireland but does operate in partnership with a broad range of NGOs, Committees and other institutions. LO Dublin remains the only UN agency in Ireland.

Selected Program Goals and Objectives:

Theme 1: Strengthening Asylum

Main Goals:

- Persons in need of international protection have access to the territory
- Asylum-Seekers have access to fair, efficient and effective asylum procedures and are treated in accordance with international standards.
- Public Opinion is receptive to the protection and solution needs of refugees

Principal Objectives

- Measures that aim to combat irregular migration and smuggling will include adequate safeguards against direct and indirect refoulement

Related Outputs

- UNHCR positions promoted, Interventions made, comments submitted, and discussions held, with key Government interlocutors on draft legislation, and proposed regulations in the area of immigration control
- Promotion of transparency at points of entry, including benefits of airport project to monitor procedures; identification of implementing agency for this task; acquirement of agreement of Government of need and desirability of airport project

• Comprehensive migration policies are developed and implemented • Organised refugee movements into Ireland are promoted • Asylum-seekers have access to procedures in which their claims are heard fairly and promptly • Asylum systems are capable of dealing with complementary systems of protection and temporary protection in situations of mass influx • Asylum-seekers are treated in accordance with international standards • Xenophobic trends diminish in favour of increased tolerance, and the public at large understands the relevance of refugee protection, and the difference between economic migrants and refugees	• Engagement in discussions on migration policies vis à vis enhancing the asylum system, and show-casing examples of best practice; promoting and discussing the relative importance of ECHR and other human rights instruments to the area of asylum • Promotion of increase in Ireland's resettlement quota, speedier processing and mechanism for enhancing response to emergency cases • Promoting speedier family reunification processing • Training of Immigration officers and NGOs on international obligations, safeguards, benchmarks for admissibility • Promotion of decentralisation of legal services, legal clinics, and legal education • Promotion of single asylum procedure accessible to all persons in need of international protection whether under 1951 Convention or under complementary forms of protection • Training and awareness-building of Government officials regarding UNHCR recommendations on reception standards, particularly regarding separated asylum seeking children, and women • Pronouncements on domestic issues made promptly • Brochures, posters, and other P.I. material targeting general public are produced and distributed in partnership with NGOs and government initiatives • Field visits for VIPs and journalists organised and implemented • Journalists (radio/print/TV) international media provided with UNHCR's positions on national and international refugee and asylum issues • Targeted briefing materials on migration and asylum are prepared and distributed widely. • Visits to regional dispersal areas, with coverage by local media are organised
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Theme 2: Europe's support to UNHCR and refugees world-wide

Main Goals: • Ireland and private individuals/corporations will increase support to UNHCR. • The Government, politicians and the Irish people at large will give more and better informed support to UNHCR and to refugee problems	
Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
• Ireland will contribute more to UNHCR • Contributions are gradually secured from	• Information material prepared and distributed to key "establishment" allies and parliamentarians on UNHCR funding status and operational commitments • Analysis completed of potential for engaging

private individuals • UNHCR's image is recognised, respected and viewed as relevant • Influential stakeholders and actors within national authorities, institutions, the corporate sector and civil society support UNHCR and its protection concerns	VIPs as role models in Irish society as partners in highlighting UNHCR's mandate • UNHCR latest positions and recommendations made available to wide range of media; UNHCR's international mandate promoted • A network of commentators who will counter misperceptions is established • Visits to schools of journalism are organised • Posters, brochures, information leaflets and education packs are widely distributed to government, media, educational institutions and the general public. • Public awareness activities at the grassroots level (exhibitions and participation in seminars/conferences both local, regional and national) are undertaken • Trade Unions, Religious leaders, the police, parliamentarians and MEPs are provided with information on specific caseloads and EU issues • Lobby for UNHCR at Ministerial level on EU harmonisation
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