



# **Citizens Information Services in Ireland & Migrants**

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**Citizens Information Board**

# Citizens Information Board (CIB)

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- a statutory agency in Ireland
- remit to support the provision of information, advice and advocacy on social services
- supports national network of Citizens Information Services (CIS's)
- 3 channel approach to information
  - On-line [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie)
  - Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS)  
– national lo-call service
  - Citizens Information Services (CIS's)

# CIS's

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- 42 CIS's nationwide/254 outlets
- County wide
- Funded and supported by CIB
- Independent/locally based/Boards of Management
- + hosts for other service providers (Free legal advice, Money Advice etc).

# Immigration – policy context in Ireland

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- Significant immigration into Ireland in recent years in context of rapid growth in economy
- Over 10% of population (2006 Census)
- National Action Plan Against Racism 2005 – 2008
- Institutional structures -Junior Minister & Office for Integration
- Integration a key policy concern (one stop shop model mooted)
- Link between integration policies and wider social inclusion measures
- Access to information & integration strategies

# Immigration

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- Immigration, Residency and Protection legislation – proposed changes
- Provision of Interpretation & Translation services by government service providers (National Consultative Committee on Racism and Inter-Culturalism NCCRI - Research 2008)
- Research carried out by CIB on information needs of foreign nationals in Ireland
- Migrants and experience of discrimination - Equal Status and Employment Equality legislation

# Usage of CISs by migrants

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- **CIS's dealt with 612,840 callers and 890,145 queries in 2007.**
- **23% of these migrants – based on national survey carried out in 2008**
- **(potentially 150,000 of callers were migrants)**
- **Migrants over represented as clients compared to share in national population**
- **16% EU migrants and 7% non EU.**
- **Some CIS's with 50%+ of clients migrants (Dublin City Centre)**
- **Polish 36%, UK 10%, Nigerians 5% Latvians 4% Romanians 4% Lithuanians 3%**

# Data collection

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- CIS's have recently moved to electronic data collection
- Previously paper records only /monthly returns
- + national surveys
- Records monthly caller profiles/query types, nationality, action taken
- Social policy implications identified

# Types of Information/Advice queries presented to CIS's

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- **Social welfare (39%) of queries overall**
- **EU nationals lower level of social welfare queries and higher levels of Employment Rights and Tax**
- **Non EU nationals had higher proportion of Legal/Justice queries (15% compared to 4% overall)**
- **EU citizens received a higher proportion of advocacy than Irish**
- **Non EU/EEA received a higher proportion of overall interventions (information, advice/advocacy)**

# Information /discrimination Issues

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- Immigration system issues
- Employment rights discrimination
- residency rights & habitual residence condition for access to welfare benefits
- undocumented - status issues
- Position of refugees/asylum seekers in 'direct provision'
- Family re-unification

# Information Issues

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- Separation – non EEA spouse/partner's residency dependent on relationship with primary migrant
- Romanian/Bulgarian nationals & barriers to access labour market
- More recent trends – unemployment, redundancy, transferring benefits, 'exit information' needs

# CIS's responses (service delivery)

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- CIS's involved in local information initiatives - information packs, pilot interpretive services, anti-racisms and diversity strategies with local authorities etc
- Targeted information provision and outreach
- Partnering migrant organisations locally



# Supports to CIS's

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- On-line information resource  
citizensinformation.ie + translated content
- Publications/entitlements  
series/periodicals/EU Supplement
- National training programme
- Specialised support to CIS's contracted-  
Immigrant Council Ireland –helpline
- Core funding for Refugee Information Service

## NGO provision of Information/Advocacy services

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- Strong NGO sector involvement in provision of information to migrants
- Wide range of migrant led organisations
- Development & social inclusion programmes locally with focus on migrants

## Current provisions; shortcomings/issues

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- Access to information & services varies
- Language issues; poor signposting, inadequate referral processes
- Difficulties in dealing with government services
- Migrants lack of understanding of institutional structures and service organisation models
- Enforcement/redress issues

# Responses

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- Better pre- arrival and post arrival information + demand for 'exit' information
- Information provision for migrants losing jobs
- Prioritise groups who are disadvantaged
- Linkages with service providers & enforcement agencies
- evidence & social policy feedback