



ENARO
Staff Exchange Programme
RIA - Ireland

18th – 30th April

2004



See also the COA website: http://coaweb/cb_kgb/standaards/rapport.htm

Monique Hendrickx

July 2004

Contents

Documentbeheer.....	1
Contents.....	2
1. Preface.....	4
2. The reception of asylum seekers in Ireland.....	5
2.1 The Reception and Integration Agency, RIA.....	5
RIA and return.....	6
RIA and integration.....	6
Kildare mobile homes site	11
2.1.7 Adult education.....	11
2.1.8 Health service.....	12
2.2 Policy on sanctions.....	12
3. The asylum procedure.....	14
- Apply to the Minister of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to be granted permission to remain in the State ('leave to remain');.....	15
- Voluntary return;.....	15
- Consent to a deportation order (a 'deportation stamp' is put in their passport).....	15
SPIRASI / CCST.....	17
4. Changes and political issues.....	18
5. Brief summary, impressions and recommendations.....	19
I found that the reception of asylum seekers in Ireland could be compared with the reception in the Netherlands a decade ago: many activities and supplies, much boredom, which had a hospitalising effect on asylum seekers without activating them. Many things were not compulsory.	19
The accommodation facilities in Ireland are similar to those in the Netherlands.....	19
If Europe wants to standardise the facilities of accommodating asylum seekers, it will take some time to realise it. The time that a country has already been dealing with asylum seekers but also the specific problems of a country can make a great difference. The rules, laws, economy and the tasks of the reception organisations vary greatly in the different countries. The European treaty on the standardisation of accommodation for asylum seekers was not signed by Ireland, mainly because asylum seekers in Ireland have the right to work.	19
Asylum seekers can attend free English language courses and free computer classes at any time. No difference is made between asylum seekers with or without a negative decision.....	19
RIA is only an administrative and organising organisation, and the organisation has hardly any contact with asylum seekers.	19
The asylum procedure in Ireland can be compared to the asylum procedure in the Netherlands before the 2000 Aliens Act.	19
Rejected asylum seekers can apply for permission to stay in the country, they can contest a deportation order and apply for asylum for a second time, among other things. During that time they are entitled to accommodation by RIA.	19
The first asylum seekers came to Ireland only ten years ago.	19
Return, repatriation, integration, the policy on sanctions and illegal work are not major issues, because until now they have not created pressing problems. Ireland's economy is getting better, and the number of asylum seekers is not very high.....	19

Most rejected asylum seekers leave the country voluntarily, because if they don't, they risk deportation which gives a stamp in their passport. This makes it impossible to apply for a visa to return to the State legally..... 19

There are many visa applications for Ireland, and many applications are granted..... 19

Like in the Netherlands, Ireland has many asylum seekers working illegally. They usually work with a false passport..... 19

The number of applicants for asylum has decreased since last year when the High Court decided that parents could not longer claim family reunion with their Irish-born child (any child born in Ireland can automatically get the Irish nationality). 19

It is unthinkable for Irish people to deny people a home, especially when children are involved. The system applied in the Netherlands, whereby accommodation and facilities are stopped at the time that all legal means are exhausted and the asylum seeker is no longer in the procedure is for Irish people unthinkable and unacceptable. They therefore opened deportation centres for EU members who have no job and no home. 19

As there are no constraints on travelling between Ireland and Great Britain, it is not clear how many people entered or left Ireland via Great Britain..... 19

They often use the word 'deportation' in Ireland..... 19

40% of the applications for asylum are made by Nigerians (most of them pregnant women). Repatriation or deportation is difficult, as the Nigerian Embassy does not really co-operate..... 19

The recent enlargement of the EU is an issue that worries the Irish; they assume that large numbers of people from the recently joined countries will come to Ireland..... 19

ENCLOSURES..... 21

 Basic themes to be researched in all three countries:..... 22

 Departure location..... 25

 Integration..... 25

1. Preface

This report is the result of the exchange programme from 18th until 30th April 2004, during which I was sent to Ireland. The goal of this exchange programme was to examine how Ireland deals with repatriation, return, integration, unaccompanied minors and their return, vulnerable groups and sanction policies, all this on the level of a social worker. I tried to get as many answers as possible to my research questions while taking into consideration that RIA is an organisation different from COA: RIA is an administrative organisation; there are no social workers, only staff.

During these two weeks, the staff of RIA (the Reception and Integration Agency) guided me through regulations and provided much information, and they gave me a lot of impressions. Wherever I went, I was received with warm hospitality. I was impressed by the fact that the organisations I visited were very open about their work. I was very impressed by the visit to the ORAC: no standard talk, but reality. I saw more things there than I have seen in the Netherlands, the problems they struggle with, and the practical issues. No one was ever too tired to answer one of my many questions.

We had a number of presentations:

- RIA;
- Accommodation issues including procurement issues, contracts and contractual obligations;
- Reception standards, inspections;
- House rules and the complaints procedure in accommodation centres;
- Education;
- European Refugee Fund;
- Medical issues;
- Health Board / UMAs (unaccompanied minors);

We visited

- Various centres (reception and accommodation centres);
- The ORAC (Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner);
- SPIRASI (Spiritan Asylum Services Initiative);
- The National Consultative Committee on Racism;
- Legal Service for Refugees;
- Immigration Division (immigration and repatriation issues);
- IOM (International Organisation for Migration).

This report gives a summary of these themes, together with the impressions I got. Almost all organisations asked me about the system in the Netherlands. Some were shocked about the amount of money that asylum seekers receive; some were surprised about the New Aliens Act. Though some thought that the Netherlands had a better Aliens Act than Ireland, most of them didn't.

The last part of this report gives the conclusions and recommendations, both for Ireland and the Netherlands. When this reports mentions "he" let it be clear that it also refers to women.

I wish to thank all the people who guided me, who gave me information and who inspired me.

This report is intended for anyone that is interested in organisations dealing with the reception of asylum seekers in other countries. As many questions as they had about our system in Ireland, as many I had about Ireland when I returned.

Not only will this be a short review of the asylum procedure, but also a report about how the system and the reception of asylum seekers work in practice. I usually compared it with the system in the Netherlands, and

some things surprised me, and some shocked me. It made me also think of our system in the Netherlands, and I often wondered: 'Are we too far ahead?'

If we want one Europe with one standard reception of asylum seekers, shouldn't we also have a standard asylum procedure? And is that feasible? Every country has its own problems: Ireland, for one, with the policy that children born in Ireland entitle their parents to a residence permit whereby half of the asylum seekers are from Nigeria, or from the Czech Republic, where most of the asylum seekers are only staying passing through, or seeking a place to spend a couple of months.

It also depends on politics. In Ireland, the arrival of asylum seekers is not a real threat for Irish society. Ireland's economy has grown rapidly in the last decade, unemployment has decreased and many Irish citizens that left the country in bad times have returned and have jobs. They call it "The Irish Tiger".

Before I left I wondered: what can we learn from Ireland?

2. The reception of asylum seekers in Ireland

2.1 The Reception and Integration Agency, RIA.

The provision of accommodation and the co-ordination of other support services for asylum seekers are the responsibility of the Reception and Integration Agency, which is part of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and is responsible to the Minister for its activities. The Agency also deals with the integration of refugees into Irish society. The Agency was established in November 1999. One of the conditions was that the centres would be spread equally over all 26 counties in Ireland. The number of asylum seekers also had to be in proportion to the number of inhabitants. At the moment there are centres in 24 counties.

The RIA is engaged in and encourages local support groups. The RIA also organises conferences for these groups and there is a small grants scheme for such groups. The RIA is also the authority responsible in Ireland for the substantial financial support scheme operating under the ERF, established by the European Commission. The aim of the ERF is to assist governmental and non-governmental organisations mainly in the reception of asylum seekers and in the integration of refugees and those who were allowed to stay.

There is a complaints procedure to handle complaints made by residents about a failure of the centre to provide any of the services, or about the house rules.

RIA has an inspection team which conduct comprehensive inspections of each of the properties (commercial and state-owned) at least twice a year. The inspections are always unannounced, and the inspectors look at all aspects of the accommodation centre in relation to the property. Any diminution in standards that comes to the attention of the inspection team is immediately acted upon and proprietors are requested to make any changes and improvements deemed necessary. When necessary, follow-up inspections are arranged. Diminutions in standards are treated very seriously by the Agency, and in cases where they have not been remedied, contracts have been terminated in the past. Besides the inspections by RIA, inspections are also carried out by the fire department, the health department, etc.

RIA has an information desk in the centres, which is open to the asylum seekers just once in a few weeks, depending on the size of the centre. The main task of RIA is guidance, and asylum seekers are often referred to other organizations.

RIA and return

Return is an issue at present, but nothing is done with it in practical terms. When the procedure of the applicant is finished, other organizations will take over. The RIA gives information about the IOM, but does not act upon it.

RIA and integration

When asylum seekers are granted a permit, the RIA does not help them with finding a house; local support groups are more helpful in this respect. Asylum seekers leave the accommodation centre soon after the permit is granted, often with the help of the network the asylum seeker has built. RIA helps them when they have a house. What the help consists of, and what RIA does for them has not become clear to me. When refugees cannot rely on a network, it is hard to find an affordable house. Most houses in Ireland are privately owned and there are only a few state-owned houses. State-owned houses are purposely built for the low-income group. At the moment, a fixed percentage of the houses to be built must be council houses (affordable by people with low incomes). There are long waiting lists, and families have priority. For refugees who have stayed longer than two years in organised reception, there are some “step down” centres in Ireland where they can get used to having their own money and where they get information about the rules and regulations.

2.1.1 The accommodations

There are two kinds of accommodations, reception centres and accommodation centres. Asylum seekers stay in reception centres for about two weeks, and are then transferred to accommodation centres where they stay until a final decision is made about their application. There are three reception centres, all in Dublin, and 69 accommodation centres (seven of which are self-catering centres) providing accommodation for approximately 6,500 people.

The total of 72 centres are of a mixture of state-owned and commercial accommodation. They include

- 53 hotels, hostels, guesthouses (B&B): privately owned
- 4 hotels and hostels: state-owned
- 3 mobile home sites: state-owned
- 2 system-built facilities: state-owned
- 7 self-catering centres: state-owned and privately owned

There are special centres for women, for men and for families or single mothers. They adjust the centre to the current population.

2.1.2. Supply and facilities

Most centres have a special catering team for cooking meals. Every 9 weeks the menu is changed. The food is diverse, 4 menus, with different kinds of meat. Lunches and dinners are similar, as some people prefer their hot meal at noon, and some in the evening.

Most centres often provide meals based on a nations' staple food. In Camden Hall, Mosney, Baleskin, and Knockalisheen I joined the meals several times. There was ample choice and the food was of a good quality, though as far as I could see, it was European food.

The contracts between RIA and the owners/managers of the centres include a specified list with details about the meals.

Most centres do not allow residents to keep food in the rooms. For families, I saw people standing in line for food with all kinds of trays to put the food in. There are special centres where they allow residents to cook; these centres are usually for people with special needs or people that are very ill. They receive extra money for buying food.

Some centres have kitchens in the rooms. Asylum seekers are allowed to cook, but they do not receive extra money for this. Most centres do not allow them to have even a kettle in the room. Inspections by the

owner/manager are carried out on a regular basis. Any kettles, cooking rings, etc. are taken away and given back when the owner leaves the centre.

All centres have a medical department with doctors and nurses. On their arrival in the country, asylum seekers are invited to have a free medical check-up, including a tuberculosis test. If they do not attend the first medical check up, they will be invited again when they stay in an accommodation centre. Tuberculosis tests and medical check-ups are voluntary, but families usually avail the opportunity.

Washing powder, toilet paper, cleaning agents, baby food and baby milk, diapers or money for diapers, shampoo, toothpaste and soap bars are handed out to the asylum seekers. An expectant mother receives a maternity package that includes a baby bath and clothes for the baby.

Every centre has a laundry room with washing machines and dryers. Used bedclothes and towels can be changed for fresh ones, but they may also wash them themselves.

The manager is responsible for the cleanliness of the building, including the rooms. Most asylum seekers keep their rooms clean, but if they don't, the manager has to do it. One manager told me that this was also an opportunity to check the rooms every week. This makes it easier to uphold a certain standard, maintenance can be carried out promptly, and the rooms can be checked for prohibited items, such as electric kettles.

Asylum seekers are allowed to drive a car as long as the insurance and the taxes are paid, though it is difficult for them to get an insurance policy. The system in Ireland for getting a driving licence is as follows: a person with a driving licence teaches the trainee, who must put a big "L" on the car (he is allowed to own a car) and then he can drive. At some point, within two years, the pupil must take a driving test.

Asylum seekers have the right to vote for local elections, but not for national elections.

The Community (or Social) Welfare Officer has consulting hours in every centre, and his task is to make the payments and give information about social welfare entitlements. The social welfare officers are part of the Health Board. Ireland has 10 different Health Boards, which differ from district to district.

- The asylum seeker is entitled to a weekly basic payment under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme of EUR 19.10 and EUR 9.55 for each child (under the age of 18 years). Diapers are given by the accommodation centre or else the child will receive € 12.70 each week for diapers. It is possible to get additional payments for exceptional needs if the direct provision centre (reception or accommodation centre) is not providing in those. The asylum seeker must apply for it, for instance, for money for a buggy (€ 130). If the social welfare officer rejects the application, the asylum seeker can appeal this decision.
- Twice a year, once in summer and once in winter, money is paid to buy clothes: € 190 per adult, € 95.25 per child.
- If an asylum seeker must travel to Dublin for an interview, he will get a bus ticket plus € 12.70 for food. If necessary, accommodation to spend the night will be arranged.
- From May 1st 2003, Irish-born children no longer receive child benefit (€ 120 per child per month), but the child benefits already awarded to children will not be stopped.
- Under the Social Welfare Act 2003, asylum seekers and persons that do not stay legally in the State are no longer entitled to receive a rent supplement. Before the enforcement of this Act, a Social Welfare Officer could decide to grant persons a private rent allowance. There was heavy moral pressure on it, and rent allowance was often not refused. Until September 2003, it was also common that pregnant women applied for and were granted this kind of private rent allowance. Rent allowances are still granted in some cases. Asylum seekers who have stayed in direct provision centres for a long time (about three years) and have not yet received a decision about their application for asylum, can apply for private rent allowance and are usually not refused. The rent

allowance (privately rented accommodation) was a weekly basic payment of € 124.80 for the first adult, € 82.80 for the partner/spouse and € 16.80 for each child (under 18) living together.

- One may also get a Supplement Payment towards the cost of the rent, provided that the Community Welfare Officer is satisfied about the tenancy, that the person is not over-accommodated and that the rental is reasonable for the area. The Supplement Payment is € 12.00 per week.
- A once-off payment is made annually to asylum seekers (both in privately rented accommodation and in direct provision centres) for school-going children aged between 2 and 18. The payment is intended to assist in providing the necessary clothing and footwear according to requirements, i.e. school uniforms, etc.
- Other additional supplements that can be applied for are: diet supplement, special heating supplement, exceptional needs.

Every week, the Community Welfare Officer orders his office to make out the payment cheques. The cheques are then sent to the provision centre where the reception desk will hand them out to the beneficiaries. The cheques can be cashed at the post office. The social welfare officers are entitled to check if people really need the money and can stop the benefit in certain circumstances.

Transfers from one accommodation centre to another can only be done for special reasons: medical reasons, additions to the family, family with children over 10 (10+ children no longer need to share a room).

Most centres have visiting hours between 10 am (some from 8 am) and 10 pm. Most centres allow visitors only in the special community living rooms. Smoking in the rooms is allowed nowhere.

The manager of the building makes the rules, such as whether or not visitors are allowed in the rooms, of kettles in the room, of taking food to the rooms, etc.

2.1.3. The reception centres

After making the application for the ORAC, the asylum seeker is sent to one of the reception centres. There are 4 reception centres in Ireland, all in Dublin. They will stay at a reception centre for about two weeks; they can have themselves medically checked or have a health screening, but this is on a voluntary basis.

This time is used to examine whether the asylum seeker needs special attention (medically and/or psychologically) and to match him with a suitable accommodation centre.

Children do not go to school in reception centres, except when they have to stay longer (all EU members stay in Baleskin where they must stay longer to check if they can enter the asylum procedure).

After a few weeks, asylum seekers are transferred to one of the many long-term accommodation centres in the country (they will be notified of this transfer the day before). RIA will arrange busses, as train services do not cover the whole country, and the asylum seekers often have much luggage. A RIA member of staff is present at the reception centres to give information during the transfer time.

The Parnell West reception centre.

This centre accommodates 82 single male residents. It is a former hotel, chandeliers still hanging on the ceiling. A manager, his assistant and a guard (and household staff for cleaning and cooking) are responsible for all duties, and they handle most problems.

The asylum seekers have nothing to do, and they usually sit in the coffee room drinking coffee, watching television, playing pool, and that's about it. The rooms are provided with a TV set and accommodate 2 or 3 persons; every room has an 'en suite'. The manager has the right to check the rooms at any time.

The kitchen staff make three meals a day (two hot meals a day). The meals are varied and based on the residents' nationalities. Visitors are allowed between 8 am and 10 pm but cannot be entertained in the rooms. The rules are very strict.

The Baleskin reception centre.



Baleskin is a reception centre mainly for asylum seekers from the 12 accession countries, and Rumania and Nigeria. People must report twice a week (Nigerians must report only in the first two weeks). Reporting must be done to a RIA member of staff coming to the reception centre, and in person; a family member cannot sign in for someone else. If they fail to have signed in twice, a memo is sent to ORAC. Asylum seekers can be exempted from the reporting requirement if they have a valid reason. In the office where people must report, fingerprints can be checked in case there is doubt about the person's identity. For nationals from the 12 accession countries, inquiries are made into whether they can apply for asylum. This examination must be ready within six weeks. The prefab building is three years old and built for this purpose. The building is not owned by the state; the owner pays the cost of the building and gets an amount of money per asylum seeker per day.

There are presently 200 residents and 70 people from accession countries. The centre's maximum capacity is 380 residents, which makes it the largest reception centre in Dublin. It is located on a seven-acre site with four accommodation blocks. It is a typical centre for families, women with babies and single women, but accommodates also some single men from accession countries. Where possible, the blocks are divided in those categories. There are 133 bedrooms, with various configurations of 3, 4 and 5 beds. 42 rooms are with en suite bathrooms, 48 rooms with en suite showers and 43 have shower/toilet blocks. All persons have their own electronic keys that only fit their own building and room.

The people eat in a dining room and the food is prepared by a catering service in the building.

Baleskin is located in the suburbs of Dublin, and a bus will take people to town and back every 45 minutes. The bus is free of charge.

The Baleskin centre has a crèche and other activities for children (most children do not attend school), a computer room with Internet, every building has a social room or shared living room with tea, coffee, microwave, refrigerators, couches and TVs. There is a central laundry room. The manager checks the rooms three times a week as many of them leave the accommodation without informing.

Baleskin even had a customer satisfaction programme. Asylum seekers could fill in a form with their opinion about the catering (food, staff, hygiene), housekeeping (laundry and housekeeping services, housekeeping staff, hygiene), management services (reception services, management and reception staff, bus services, security).

2.1.4. The accommodation centres.

Asylum seekers stay for the rest of the procedure (at least two years) at accommodation centres. The larger accommodation centres offer English language courses and computer courses, all organised by local support groups. Various support groups, such as the Spirasi (health information clinic) and the Refugee Legal Service, visit the centres on a regular basis.

Mosney

Mosney is one of the larger accommodation centres in Ireland, with about 700 residents, and an extra buffer of mobile homes that can accommodate 300 people. It used to be a popular holiday camp and even has a private beach, and in former days an own railway station. The nearest village is a couple of miles away. The buildings are like small houses with apartments for 3, 4 or 5 persons. They all have a television with satellite connection, a kitchen, a bathroom and 2 or 3 bedrooms. The residents can make their own meals, but do not

receive extra money for this. For breakfast they are given a box with bread, cornflakes, etc. every week, and milk is given every day.

Management, household staff, kitchen staff, security officers and about 30 volunteers run the centre. RIA has consultation hours every week.

The premises offer many facilities: two crèches (for younger and older children), homework classes, activities for children, special summer activities, a poolroom, a fitness room, a multifunctional room where women can do aerobic exercises and handicrafts and there are creative or art classes. There is a church, the nearby town has a mosque, and the centre also has a supermarket. Standard is: health board, social welfare office and laundry room.

The crèche is open all day and is run by professionals. The crèche started to give parents the chance to attend classes, but now it is mainly for the children's welfare: they will get more attention and abused children or children with anti-social behaviour can be observed.

The children go to school with a bus service run from the centre. As the nearest town is far away, the centre's bus also has a service to town several times a day. Asylum seekers must pay the bus fare only in weekends and at night (€ 2.50).

Asylum seekers that must go to hospital can take a taxi, not because of the distance, but for privacy reasons.



Knockalisheen accommodation centre

Knockalisheen is a centre specially built to accommodate 300 asylum seekers. The centre has six units (4 units for families, one for single women and one for single men), and every unit has a shared living room with microwave, kettle and fridge. Two rooms share one bathroom (the bathrooms for families have a bath), except for the men. Twelve single men share showers and toilets. There are children's activities, a crèche, English language courses and computer classes for adults.



The Clyde House accommodation centre in Limerick

The Clyde House used to be a hostel for tourists and students but is now a 50-room accommodation centre for 100 asylum seekers, all single men. All units have wall beds, which means that there is lots of space left. All rooms have a bathroom.

The centre has a dining room/restaurant, but residents can take food to their rooms. The rooms have television with satellite, a refrigerator and a kettle. Visitors are allowed in the rooms from 10 am to 10 pm. The receptionist checks if the visitors leave at 10 pm. The centre also has many surveillance cameras, and I have not seen a centre with so many cameras. The centre does not have security services, only a receptionist. There is a staff of 13 for catering and cleaning and for manning the reception desk. All rooms are checked (and cleaned if necessary) once a week.

There are no activities in the centre. Doctors and social welfare officers are nearby the centre. There are also a few support groups and there is a mosque in the neighbourhood.



Kildare mobile homes site

200 asylum seekers in 50 mobile homes (caravans) at a former military base.

- 6 mobile homes accommodating 5-6 asylum seekers in 3 bedrooms;
- 44 mobile homes accommodating 3 - 4 persons in 2 bedrooms.

All mobile homes have a toilet and shower, a TV with satellite connection.

It has a central building with a poolroom, laundry room, classrooms, a crèche, and a dining room. Residents can take food to their homes, and most people do so. The centre is in the city of Kildare, with all facilities nearby, such as a school and a market.

2.1.5 Work

In Ireland, asylum seekers are not allowed to work while awaiting a decision on their asylum application. Asylum seekers who lodged their asylum application after July 26, 1999, are not allowed to work, but they can do voluntary community activities.

2.1.6 School

The Department of Justice and the Department of Education are responsible for education. In Ireland, all children must attend school on a full-time basis from the ages of six to sixteen. Depending on the date of birth, the child can attend school from the age of 4 or 5. Primary school is for children aged 6 to 12, post-primary for children aged 12 to 18. Post-primary education consists of a three-year junior cycle (junior certificate), followed by a two-year senior cycle, the so-called leaving certificate.

Schools enrolling a certain number of non-English speaking non-international students are entitled to employ an additional temporary teacher and primary schools enrolling a certain number of non-English speaking pupils will receive grants from the Department of Education and Science. This department also provides an annual grant to schools as a contribution towards the costs of textbooks.

Students under ten living over 2 miles from school, and older students living over 3 miles from school are entitled to make use of the free school bus transport.

Most schools require their students to wear a school uniform. The Community Welfare Officer in the area treats the purchase of the children's school uniform as an "exceptional need".

It is usually the centre's manager that makes the school applications for new children; in Mosney (165 children) a RIA employee arranges this and may even help out in case of problems.

School times in Ireland are as follows: children aged 4 up to 6: school until 1 pm; 7 up to 12: school until 2.30 or 3 pm and from 13 years onwards: school until 4 pm.

2.1.7 Adult education

While awaiting a decision on their status, asylum seekers over eighteen years old do not have access to free state-funded education and are therefore not entitled to move to free post-second level education when they have completed their second-level education. Once an asylum seeker gains the refugee status or is given a residence permit on humanitarian grounds, he will be entitled to state-funded adult education on the same basis as Irish citizens.



Each county in Ireland and some of the cities have a Vocational Education Committee (VEC). These committees organize adult education for all adults and also for asylum seekers. The staff consist both of salaried employees and of volunteers. The Knockalisheen accommodation centre has a VEC employee that teaches English on different levels and organises computer classes, and also runs the centre's library. There are BTEI courses (the 'Back to Education Initiative') for adolescents and adults. The aim is to give people an opportunity to combine a 'back to education' programme with a family, a job and other responsibilities. There is also a community education programme in sewing and quilting.

At the end of April 2004, another extensive programme was started because of the enlargement of the EU. Ireland will be accommodating nationals from new EU member states who have come to Ireland but who do not have an income or accommodation yet. The near future will see the opening of four accommodation centres to be used as departure centres where residents can stay until they must go home. These centres will not be closed. All people from EU countries staying in accommodation centres recently received a letter informing them that they must leave the accommodation centre, that they can work and rent a house.

2.1.8 Health service

Like Irish citizens with low incomes, asylum seekers can apply for a medical card, which gives them free access to all health services. Asylum seekers must apply to the Community Welfare Officer for their medical card. Formerly, when children born in Ireland were entitled to have Irish citizenship, many pregnant women came to Ireland in the last days of their pregnancy, often even without medical report, or even entering the hospital at the time of birth. Hospitals see this as an emergency case, and as most of them came to Dublin, it put a huge pressure on the health care in general and on hospitals in particular. Pregnant women were also granted Private Rented Accommodation.

Dublin has 3 large maternity hospitals, and last year each hospital admitted some 2,000 non-Irish patients. Out of the total of 6,000 foreign patients, some 3,000 were not registered as asylum seekers. The question is: why does this happen? Is it because they asked asylum in another EU country and have their child in Ireland in case the application in the first country is rejected? Or is it to send the child to Ireland to build a future when it is old enough? Another possibility is that they travel via Great Britain, as there is free travelling between Ireland and Great Britain, and no passport checks are made.

Health screenings of asylum seekers in reception centres are for detecting tuberculoses, hepatitis A, B and C, HIV and checking the vaccination needs of parents and children. The screening is on a voluntary basis and, if not done, offered again in the accommodation centre. Information/education on health issues, such as the use of contraceptives, information on pregnancy and issuing free condoms, are mainly done on a local level for initiatives like the SPIRASI. Because of the crisis with the influx of pregnant women in the last few years, there has not been much development in the field of education and information.

2.2 Policy on sanctions.

There is a complaints policy for asylum seekers about reception and other issues, but there is no written sanction policy for asylum seekers. The manager usually gives verbal warnings and this usually may do. If not, the RIA may issue a warning in writing, and if this does not help either, the person can be transferred to another centre. There is no policy for withholding money. Another option is to temporarily deny

accommodation to the person, but this is hardly ever done. When children are involved, accommodation will never be refused.

Money is not withheld. Asylum seekers need not pay a deposit for the goods received. When checking a room after the resident has left they often find that goods are missing. When something is broken on purpose, money will be withheld, but as it is difficult to prove that something is done on purpose, it hardly ever happens.

If parents often leave their children alone and they received several warnings, a child can be taken into custody. There is no special centre for people with unacceptable behaviour. Residents with physical or psychological problems are often placed in a self-catering centre. These problems or complaints can be taken into account when the asylum seeker is applying for a residence status on humanitarian grounds.

If a room has not been occupied for three consecutive nights, it is assumed that the resident has left the centre. If they return after a while, RIA must provide them with accommodation again.

2.3 Vulnerable groups, UMAs

Applications for a refugee status by UMAs (Unaccompanied Minor Asylum Seekers) are processed in accordance with the Refugee Act, 1996 and the Child Care Act, 1991. A child under the age of 18 arriving at the frontiers of the State (port of entry) or at the RAC Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner, and not in the custody of an adult, will be referred to the Health Board. The Health Board may then decide that an application for a declaration as a refugee should be made on behalf of the minor. The minor will not be put in custody but is taken care of by the Health Board. The child will have an own social worker (when he is under the age of 16 years).

With "children", the law means "unmarried children under the age of 18". The "unmarried" part has recently been removed from the law as it caused problems for "children" under 18 who were married (sometimes by force).

The Health Board also aims at family reunion. They interview parents and child separately, and work together with the RAC Refugee Application Commissioner. If a family relationship is doubted, a DNA test will be done to make sure that it is a 'real parent' asking for reunion. If the RAC is in doubt whether the child belongs to the family that entered Ireland together as a family, the Health Board will be informed and requested to investigate the family bonds. Family reunion is often granted when the child gets a permit to stay.

The Health Board has 20 employees in the East Coast area, because all applications for asylum are made in Dublin, which is the hub of the country. The accommodation for UMAs depends on their age and their needs:

- Accommodation with foster families for very vulnerable children requiring special medical or psychological care;
- Special homes with room for 6 children;
- Residential children's homes, also for Irish children;
- Hostel-type accommodations where no professional care is given but where food is provided and a social worker is nearby.
- Hostel-type accommodations with self-catering

When an application for asylum is made on behalf of an UMA, the Health Board prepares the UMA for the interview. It may take weeks, even months before the interview is planned. The Health Board can also ask for postponement and adapted conditions during the interview, as some of these children do not trust anybody (as they were probably told) or are stuck in a false identity.

The Health Board does not have a special programme for UMAs. Some social groups and project workers implement programmes for social interaction and language classes for them so that they will not forget their own language. Sometimes informational programmes for Irish children are adapted for UMAs, including sex education and information about contraceptives and pregnancy.

Pregnant girls have additional problems: they are often afraid to tell who the father is, and sometimes even don't know that they are pregnant. Many of them have been raped. Abortion is not legal in Ireland and adoption is a difficult process whereby the girl must prove with a legal certificate that she is not married, as the law does not provide for married couples to give their child up for adoption. Most girls find it impossible to obtain the necessary documents. Fathers under the age of 17 can be prosecuted, and sex under the age of 17 is prohibited by law.

3. The asylum procedure

Applications for the refugee status are processed in accordance with the 1996 Refugee Act, which was amended by the 1999 Immigration Act and enacted on July 7, 1999. There were many reasons for amending the Refugee Act, but the main reason was harmonisation with the procedures applied in other EU countries in general, and in the United Kingdom in particular.

The number of asylum seekers entering Ireland has increased dramatically in recent years. Below is a list with numbers of applications from 1991 until 2004.

1991:	9	1998:	4,626
1992:	39	1999:	7,724
1993:	91	2000:	10,938
1994:	362	2001:	10,325
1995:	424	2002:	11,634
1996:	1,179	2003:	7,900
1997:	3,883	2004:	1,256 (until March 31, 2004)

Most asylum seekers come from Nigeria, Romania, and the DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo). About 40 to 50% come from Nigeria, but it is difficult to find out why. Some people I spoke with assume that it is because Ireland sent many missionaries to Nigeria. Of all applications, 10% are granted and 90% are rejected.

Asylum applications are submitted to the Minister of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, but are processed by the RAC Refugee Application Commissioner (in the first instance) and by the Refugee Appeals Tribunal, RAT (for appeals). The decisions of the Commissioner and the Tribunal are transmitted to the Minister for final decision within the statutory framework provided by the 1996 Refugee Act. If new facts present themselves, the asylum seeker can apply for asylum for a second time. If the applicant decided to ask asylum for the children separately, the child must be interviewed, whatever its age.

Asylum seekers arrive at the ORAC, the Office of the Refugee Application Commissioner (in Dublin) by themselves, but if they arrive via the airport, the police will take them to ORAC. The application must be accompanied by original travel documents.

An initial interview is held directly with the application, and will include the following subjects:

- the general grounds upon which the application is based;
- the identity, nationality and country of origin;
- the way of entering the State;
- the reason for being in the State;

- the legal basis for the presence in the State;
- any other basic information that the Refugee Application Commissioner may require.

Some interpreters are permanently available at ORAC and interpreters for other languages can be booked. If necessary, the initial interview can be rescheduled. All adults are given a questionnaire to be completed and returned to the ORAC within 14 days.

All applicants are required to have their photograph taken and asylum seekers over the age of 14 to have their fingerprints taken when they make their first asylum application in the State. In 2003, the State started full participation in the operation of the EURODAC fingerprinting system at EU level. Fingerprints will be checked promptly. The applicant also receives a temporary residence certificate, which is similar to the W-document in the Netherlands. The application will take about one hour; waiting for the bus to take them to the reception centres takes longer!

Applicants are notified in writing of the time, date and place of the interview. It is therefore important to keep the RAC informed about the applicant's address. It takes about four to six months before the interview is held. In 2003, about 9,000 interviews were scheduled, of which 40% were prioritised applications (Nigerians, Rumanians). If the applicant fails to return the questionnaire or fails to notify a change of address or to attend the interview, the application is supposed to be withdrawn. ORAC also deals with family reunification

If the decision is negative, there are two options:

1. If the RAC is of the opinion that the application is manifestly unfounded, the applicant and his solicitor will be notified by registered mail of RAC's intention to recommend to the Minister that the refugee status should not be given. Appeal against the intention can be made within 10 working days after the notification was sent. The applicant cannot request a hearing; the appeal is made in writing and will be decided on the basis of the documents sent to the Tribunal on the applicant's behalf.
2. If, following substantive consideration, the RAC is of the opinion that the application should be rejected; the applicant and his solicitor will be notified by registered mail of RAC's intention to recommend to the Minister that the case should be rejected. Appeal can be lodged within 15 working days after sending the notice. The applicant can request a hearing.

If the RAT upholds the original recommendation of the RAC, the applicant and his solicitor will be notified of the decision in writing. Then there are three options open to the applicant:

- Apply to the Minister of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to be granted permission to remain in the State ('leave to remain');
- Voluntary return;
- Consent to a deportation order (a 'deportation stamp' is put in their passport).

If the decision is positive, the Minister will give the applicant a 'declaration as a refugee' and with it the same rights and entitlements as an Irish citizen. The acknowledged refugee is allowed to work, carry on any business, trade or profession, has access to education and training, receives the same medical care, and etceteras.

If the asylum procedure has failed, the case can be brought before the High Court. The asylum procedure is efficient and quick, but most rejected asylum seekers apply for a permit based on humanitarian reasons with leave to remain. This procedure takes much longer. If a deportation order is given, the applicant can object to it. Asylum seekers often see this as a second appeal, but it is actually a formality whereby the court must check if all procedures are followed according to the law. The asylum seeker can make a statement, and if this is sustained, he must present himself at court. This procedure may also take months.

If the asylum seekers' case for a permit to stay is rejected, he must leave the country. However, he can apply for returning to Ireland legally (studies, holiday), even for the purpose of seeking employment, provided they follow the correct entry and registration procedures.

The Immigration Division Building has several departments: a foreign affairs and visa section, citizenship, immigration and deportation. The Gardia National Immigration Bureau deals with applications for the refugee status, family reunion, study visas, etc. There are daily consultation hours, even on Saturday. A special kind of card with a photograph and chip gives quick information.

The Garda (Police) National Immigration Bureau, established in May 2000, is responsible for carrying out deportation orders and for dealing with illegal immigrants and for people working illegally.

The Immigration Division, the Deportations Department, deals with voluntary returns.

Below is a list with the number of voluntary returns:

1999:	378	
2000:	248	
2001:	356	(3 of them assisted by IOM)
2002:	506	(110 of them assisted by IOM)
2003:	762	(401 of them assisted by IOM)
2004:	246	(166 of them assisted by IOM) (data available until April 26, 2004)

The number of people returning voluntarily is relatively high. The main reason is that rejected asylum seekers will get a deportation stamp in their passport, and this can cause problems when they leave their country of origin again and it makes it more difficult to obtain a (work)visa for Ireland.

In 2001, some 36,000 work visas and permits were issued to people outside the EEA (European Economic Area), and there were 10,000 applications for asylum. Most requests for visas come from Pakistani and Nigerian nationals. When the applicant has a job, the visa is often sustained. Foreigners can also apply for a visa for educational or medical reasons.

Change of law

On January 23, 2003, the Supreme Court ruled that the Immigration Division of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform could no longer endorse applications for a residence permit based on being the parent of an Irish-born child. This also means that the parent of a child born in Ireland can be deported. In June 2004, a referendum will be held on whether or not the separate procedure for parents applying for a resident permit based on their being the parent of an Irish-born child must be stopped. Until then, RIA will continue to accommodate these persons.

Another way of obtaining the Irish nationality was to be married to an Irish citizen for at least 3 years. This has also changed now, and on the whole one can say that the Irish nationality will no longer be awarded automatically.

Ireland acknowledges the dual citizenship, but not all countries accept dual nationalities and may suspend the citizenship of their former citizens with the result that the refugee becomes stateless.

3.1 The organisations involved

Local support groups (volunteers):

These support groups organise many activities in the larger centres.

Department of education:

This department is responsible for teaching English and computer classes in the larger centres.

Refugee Legal Service:

This service is an independent body established by the Legal Aid Board to provide legal assistance to persons applying for a declaration as a refugee. Their assistance is given through advice and representation. The applicant must pay € 6 for legal advice; the costs are € 35 for representation before the RAT or the High Court (where applicable), minus the € 6 already paid, which makes the balance on € 29. However, this amount is often refunded because of the asylum seekers' financial position.

The RLS has one head office and two regional offices and a staff of 125 consisting of 21 solicitors, 42 paralegal employers, and 62 administrative or RDC staff. The solicitor works independently; he instructs the barrister whose main job is to represent the client in court. All work by the paralegals is done under the direction and supervision of the assigned solicitor. They receive € 456 per client. There are specially trained solicitors for UMAs; they call them the Children's Unit.

SPIRASI / CCST

CCST, the Centre for the Care of Survivors of Torture, was established in 2001 and dedicated to the care and rehabilitation of the survivors of torture. It is a local support group, mainly funded by sponsors.

The activities include:

- Psychosocial help, outreach or home visits, vocational guidance, football, art groups, client orientation groups.
- Training, free computer and English language training courses. Students can get an official certificate for both classes. When mothers of small children cannot afford a crèche and are therefore unable to attend class, the lessons are held at their homes. Education is partly paid by the Dublin municipality, and most of the teachers are volunteers. Classes, materials and examinations are free of charge.
- Clinical services: medical examinations, counselling, physiotherapy, and massage. SPIRASI gives advice, treatment (no medication) and does examinations to know whether a person has been molested or abused. They make reports and send them to the applicant's solicitor (medico-legal report). The SPIRASI Health Department can apply for funds to the ERF (European Refugee Fund), which is a department of RIA.
- Conducting research, such as a research into the question why refugees have problems with finding jobs. Another problem for refugees is the recognition of certificates from their country of origin. At the moment they hold negotiations about the recognition of diplomas and certificates, and offer post-graduation courses.
- Giving presentations at schools
- It is a centre of information for many organisations
- Providing information to asylum seekers, and publishing a newspaper made for and by asylum seekers.

SONAS

SONAS stands for Support Organisation for the Needs of Asylum Seekers. They provide an independent and confidential one-to-one support service. Their members help the asylum seeker with finding service providers, such as legal and medical services, help them find accommodation, education, counselling services, sports and leisure, local information and voluntary services. SONAS sometimes has consultation hours in accommodation centres.

Doras Luimni

In 2000, Doras Luimní was started in Limerick as a group of people connected for their concern about the needs of a group of asylum seekers who were expected to arrive in Limerick. Doras services include legal advice and support, language classes, computer training, cultural orientation, and support for asylum seekers; they also prepare asylum seekers for the interview, and help them overcome language difficulties. They give awareness education about cultural diversity, racism and related issues at schools and to various groups, colleges, community groups and others. Doras activities include regular visits to hostels, social evenings and outings, music and art workshops or exhibitions, mother-and-baby groups, advice and support, sports and recreation, and advice and guidance on housing.

IOM International Organization for Migration

IOM Dublin has been active in Ireland for 2.5 years now, and is sponsored by the Irish government and the ERF. IOM Dublin assists rejected asylum seekers or migrants who have fallen victim to dubious travel agents, and they help stranded students and other migrants voluntarily return to their country of origin. The assistance includes information and documentation, and they assist in making travel arrangements, departing from Ireland, both in transit and upon arrival.

IOM Ireland initiates some pilot programmes, especially for Nigerian and Rumanian asylum seekers, and for UMAs and parents with Irish-born children. In the 2.5 years of its existence, the IOM has handled about 600 requests from 60 different nationals.

The IOM also investigates what kinds of activities are needed in the country of origin, and what kind of training or education is required. The IOM may even arrange crèche facilities so that parents can run a business or go to school, and may even pay school fees, etc. Other tasks of IOM include giving information about service providers (people working with asylum seekers, staff, managers, community welfare officers) and about returning to the country of origin as an option. These services providers bring repatriation and voluntary return and IOM to the asylum seeker's attention. When asylum seekers submit an application with the IOM, they are not seen until the last stage of return. It is often not possible for asylum seekers to present themselves to their embassies, as most embassies have their representations abroad.

IOM is currently running a Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme for Unaccompanied Minors in Ireland. There is one employer at IOM who is specialised in the return of UMAs.

The principles of the programme are as follows:

- Voluntary return must be in the child's best interest. The Health Board decides whether it is in the child's best interest to return home or not.
- The country of origin and its family situation must be assessed as being safe for the child to return.
- The parents or guardians must accept the child after its return.
- The child must be willing to return.

IOM works closely with the Health Board, and with other relevant agencies and international NGOs (non-governmental organizations) like the UNHCR and Amnesty International, and IOM's international network to have sufficient information when a decision must be made. IOM provides assistance in travel arrangements, documentation, and transit and transport assistance in the home country. Reintegration support is tailored to the specific needs of the child and its family and may include assistance in re-entering the education system or referral to appropriate health and social services.

Once a person returned to his country, IOM will continue guidance for a couple of months by phoning, by advising and by arranging all sorts of matters for this person.

IOM intends to develop the integration of invited refugees: how to prepare them for society or (in case of invited refugees: how to prepare them before entering the State).

4. Changes and political issues

A referendum on a change in the constitution will be held on June 1, 2004. At present, about 50% of all asylum seekers entering Ireland are pregnant women, and 90% of them are in the last stage of pregnancy. Irish law prescribes that any baby born in Ireland will have the Irish citizenship. A parent can then apply for family reunion with the child. In 2003, the rules changed and they will no longer get a house and social welfare automatically, nor will the parent automatically be entitled to family reunification with their Irish-born child.

In 1999, it was decided that asylum seekers were allowed to work without restrictions after having lived in the country for two years. However, if they had paid work, they had to pay money for their accommodation. Six months after introducing this system, the rules were cancelled.

5. Brief summary, impressions and recommendations

- I found that the reception of asylum seekers in Ireland could be compared with the reception in the Netherlands a decade ago: many activities and supplies, much boredom, which had a hospitalising effect on asylum seekers without activating them. Many things were not compulsory.
 - The accommodation facilities in Ireland are similar to those in the Netherlands.
 - If Europe wants to standardise the facilities of accommodating asylum seekers, it will take some time to realise it. The time that a country has already been dealing with asylum seekers but also the specific problems of a country can make a great difference. The rules, laws, economy and the tasks of the reception organisations vary greatly in the different countries. The European treaty on the standardisation of accommodation for asylum seekers was not signed by Ireland, mainly because asylum seekers in Ireland have the right to work.
 - Asylum seekers can attend free English language courses and free computer classes at any time. No difference is made between asylum seekers with or without a negative decision.
 - RIA is only an administrative and organising organisation, and the organisation has hardly any contact with asylum seekers.
 - The asylum procedure in Ireland can be compared to the asylum procedure in the Netherlands before the 2000 Aliens Act.
 - Rejected asylum seekers can apply for permission to stay in the country, they can contest a deportation order and apply for asylum for a second time, among other things. During that time they are entitled to accommodation by RIA.
 - The first asylum seekers came to Ireland only ten years ago.
 - Return, repatriation, integration, the policy on sanctions and illegal work are not major issues, because until now they have not created pressing problems. Ireland's economy is getting better, and the number of asylum seekers is not very high.
 - Most rejected asylum seekers leave the country voluntarily, because if they don't, they risk deportation which gives a stamp in their passport. This makes it impossible to apply for a visa to return to the State legally.
 - There are many visa applications for Ireland, and many applications are granted.
 - Like in the Netherlands, Ireland has many asylum seekers working illegally. They usually work with a false passport.
 - The number of applicants for asylum has decreased since last year when the High Court decided that parents could not longer claim family reunion with their Irish-born child (any child born in Ireland can automatically get the Irish nationality).
 - It is unthinkable for Irish people to deny people a home, especially when children are involved. The system applied in the Netherlands, whereby accommodation and facilities are stopped at the time that all legal means are exhausted and the asylum seeker is no longer in the procedure is for Irish people unthinkable and unacceptable. They therefore opened deportation centres for EU members who have no job and no home.
 - As there are no constraints on travelling between Ireland and Great Britain, it is not clear how many people entered or left Ireland via Great Britain.
 - They often use the word 'deportation' in Ireland.
 - 40% of the applications for asylum are made by Nigerians (most of them pregnant women). Repatriation or deportation is difficult, as the Nigerian Embassy does not really co-operate.
 - The recent enlargement of the EU is an issue that worries the Irish; they assume that large numbers of people from the recently joined countries will come to Ireland.

Comments

- I hope that I succeeded in propagating the Dutch way of accommodating asylum seekers and the advantages of activating asylum seekers by letting them cook for themselves.
- I also informed them about the Dutch new 2000 Aliens Act, which puts emphasis on the asylum seekers' own responsibility for arranging their return to their country of origin. I hope I was able to get the idea across that asylum seekers must be talked into returning to their country if the asylum procedure has failed. I told them about my experiences in my work as a counsellor for our department's guidance programme, and I warned them that the issue of return and repatriation would become more pressing in the years to come.
- Realising that it is up to the manager to organise activities or not, the difference in systems can cause problems and that is why I think that it must be standardised.
- As there are large numbers of asylum seekers from Nigeria (mainly pregnant women) it is easier to make an educational programme focussed on their particular needs.
- In the Netherlands, our attention is focussed on repatriation. Case managers have been appointed to encourage and to convince asylum seekers to return to their county, but I think that this development has gone too far. It is more human and fair to let counsellors openly talk to asylum seekers about their future in the host country and let the asylum seeker decide what to do with it. But I assume that many countries (including Ireland) are not ready for this.
- We should look again at the amount of food and the pocket money given to asylum seekers in the Netherlands. It has not been raised in the last few years. Is it still linked to social benefits? Asylum seekers in the Netherlands get much less money than they get in Ireland.
- The fact that an asylum seeker gets a 'deportation stamp' in his passport makes that many rejected asylum seekers leave Ireland voluntarily. This system works in Ireland, because you cannot get a visa when you have a deportation stamp in your passport. I wonder, would this also work for the Netherlands?
- All asylum seeker children in the Netherlands should get extra education in their mother tongue, as this will make reintegration into their original society easier.
- The word 'deportation' is used in Ireland. Though this word has an extra dimension in the Netherlands because of its history, it is the right word for expelling a person from the country.

If I had the opportunity to go to Ireland again, I would like to see the step-down centres, where refugees make their first steps towards integration. I would like to know what RIA does in these step-down centres and how they help refugees integrate. I would also like to see a departure centre for EU citizens, and a UMA centre, and I would like to attend the RIA consultation hours. Furthermore, I would like to know how the language-of-origin courses are taught.

When I was in Ireland it took me some time to get an overall picture of RIA and the reception of asylum seekers. I asked specific questions, and I received many answers, but questions still pop up while writing this report. I recommend that participants of the Exchange Programme prepare themselves by investigation the reception system of the country to be visited before going. I myself did not have the time and the appropriate information before I left. I hope that this report induces people to study the situation in the visited country before leaving.

I also spent much time preparing a PowerPoint presentation about COA in English, but it appeared to be unnecessary. The contact persons in Ireland did not expect a presentation, and I assume they already had much (general) information about COA. Almost all organisations I visited and RIA staff I spoke with were interested in COA and the Dutch 2000 Aliens Act. If any of my colleagues goes to Ireland, I hope he/she asks RIA beforehand what kind of information or presentation they are expected to give.

ENCLOSURES

- Enclosure 1: RIA Monthly Statistic Report, March 2004
- Enclosure 2: List of accommodation costs in the EU, October 29, 2003
- Enclosure 3: Map of current asylum accommodation centres in Ireland
- Enclosure 4: Blank contract between RIA and owner/manager of a reception/accommodation centre
- Enclosure 5: Information leaflet for applicants for the refugee status in Ireland
- Enclosure 6: Questionnaire for application for the refugee status
- Enclosure 7: Schedule of the asylum procedure, April 20, 2004
- Enclosure 8: Schedule of the numbers of deportations and 'leave to remain'
- Enclosure 9: Schedule of the numbers of charter flights in 2002, 2003 and 2004.
- Enclosure 2 1 t/m 9 are not available in digital form, but can be ordered by contacting me
(Monique Hendrickx)
- Enclosure 10: Research questions

Relevant internet sites:

www.justice.ie

www.iomdublin.org

www.orac.ie

www.ccst.ie

Enclosure 10

Exchange programme April 2004
(Sweden, Ireland, Belgium)
RESEARCH QUESTIONS
DRAFT – *version 01.04.04*

Basic themes to be researched in all three countries:

Orientation:

- orientation centre

Return

- Return Centre (*Terugkeercentrum*)
- Departure Centre (*Vertrekcentrum*)
- Unaccompanied Minors and their return

Integration

Reception:

- Policy on sanctions
- Vulnerable groups

RETURN

Return Centre: Make a short description of the system and describe what this means for both the residents and the staff members. What specific problems and solutions do occur?

The general question is that we must know about motivating asylum seekers to return voluntarily, and what task there is for the social worker in case of a voluntary or forced return. How is this organised, and how exactly does the social worker do this? And what are the effects of this system?

- Location
 - Are all centres of this organisation the same, and if they are different, what are the differences, and why?
 - Do you like the centre, and what was your (first) impression?
 - What kind of location is it (old building, specially-made building)?
 - Is it an open, closed or semi-open building?
 - If it is an open building, must the residents report at certain times?
 - Do they allow visitors?
 - If it is a closed centre, who is living there (only singles, families, or only family fathers)
 - Is there any security, and if there is, how is it organised?
 - Where do the residents live? (in apartments, rooms, large rooms, together with families, single men, single women)
 - Are there any general safety measures or only for specific residents? And if so, what safety measures, and how are they implemented?
 - Are there special policies on the safety of women and girls?
 - Are there special rooms / corridors/ buildings for women and girls, and if so, how is this arranged? What are the criteria? Are there any special arrangements, security, or staff?
 - How many residents live in the centres; how many men and how many women?

- How are the sanitary conditions?
 - Do the residents feel safe in the centre?
 - What arrangements were made for food or cooking?
 - What is the geographical situation (near a city or an airport)?
 - Do the residents like the centre? Do they feel safe?
 - Are there any medical arrangements?
 - What do the residents do during the day?
 - Are there any children, and if so, how is their education organised?
 - Are there any social or cultural possibilities for the residents?
 - Are there any special arrangements for women or children?
 - Is there a special centre for women?
 - Do any incidents occur (arguments, fighting) between the residents?
 - What is the nature of these fights, and does it happen often?
 - What is the role of the social worker, security or the local police?
 - What happens when things get out of hand (sanctions)?
 - Are asylum seekers obliged to help in the centre?
 - How is this organised, and what kind of activities do they expect?
 - Are the programmes compulsory or optional?
 - How do they avoid that people are only physically present without real participation?
 - Do they check that people carry out their duties, and if they do, how?
 - What are the consequences for asylum seekers who do not participate?
 - Can an asylum seeker choose where to live?
 - Does the asylum seeker get any financial support if he does not live in the centre?
 - What are the duties for someone who is not living in the centre?
 - How are asylum seekers involved in decision-making in the centre and in the organisation?
 - What is the policy on sanctioning?
 - What are the sanctions and when are they used?
- Programmes / methodically
 - In what kind of programmes can asylum seekers participate?
 - Does it involve 'empowerment training'?
 - What is the main language in the programmes?
 - Do they learn much about Ireland, democracy, European Community?
 - How are 'pull-and-push' factors used methodically?
 - How are individual and group meetings used in the method?
 - Are the programmes aimed at staying in the host country or on going back to their country of origin?
 - Is there a crèche in the centre?
 - How is this organized, how is this related to the parents' own responsibility?
 - Are asylum seekers allowed to work?
 - Are there specific rules about working?
 - Do they have to pay a contribution when they have a paid job or when they have money?
 - Do asylum seekers work illegally?
 - What is done against illegal work?
- Logistics
 - At exactly what time in their procedure do people come to this centre?
 - How long do residents stay in this centre?
 - What is the distribution of nationalities in the centre?
 - How is the distributing process organised?
 - Can residents choose between centres for reasons of family, study, hospital?
 - Is there a central office organising the distribution of persons?

- Is there a need to have free rooms always available?
- After how long need people be transferred?
- Are the residents obliged to live in this centre or are there other possibilities?
- Are all residents in the same phase in their procedure?

- Material issues
 - Do residents get pocket money or food boxes?
 - Are there any differences in what residents get and why / when?
 - Do the residents have duties to carry out (work, services, school) to get pocket money?
 - How is it arranged from the administrative point of view?
 - What does the food box contain?
 - How is the cleaning of the centre arranged?
 - Is there a television room, second-hand clothes shop, playgroup or crèche, playing room, sport fields?

- Services
 - How many staff members are working in the centre?
 - What are their jobs?
 - What is their education?
 - Are they specially trained (juridical, psychosocial, practical)?
 - How are medical services organised

- Motivating their return
 - What role does 'return' play in the centre?
 - Do residents have discussions or interviews about returning?
 - With whom? (Centre, staff, aliens police)
 - What is the time (in procedure) content, meaning and goal of these discussions?
 - Are there any interpreters present at these discussions? (when, and when not?)
 - How is the cooperation between the social worker and the police officer during these conversations?
 - How is the cooperation organised in general?
 - How is the information about the residents organised?
 - What files or information systems are used, and how?
 - Does the social worker have information about the legal procedure?
 - Does the social worker know the reason why a resident applied for asylum, and does he or she mention or use these facts when motivating the resident to return?

- Staff
 - How is staff trained to handle the subject of return with residents?
 - Do they handle the subject of return only in the special 'return discussions'?
 - Do staff members have contact with residents outside these special return discussions?
 - Do staff make house calls?
 - Are there special cultural activities to refer to the residents' ethnic background, or which make them homesick? (posters of countries, music evenings, language class for kids, books in their own language, internet access, special television connections, papers, ethnic cooking)
 - What is the staff's role in this?
 - How do staff members deal with return and residents, do they follow their own feeling and mood, or are there regulations or training courses?
 - Is there any counselling for staff members?
 - Is there a hierarchical structure for staff and management?
 - Do staff get special training or have they access to country information?
 - What information? (political , education, prices of houses, job offers)

- How are residents expected to arrange and prepare their departure?
 - What is paid for them and what not (train ticket, translation of papers, visit to embassy)
 - How is this financial system administratively organised?
 - Do residents get other facilities to arrange their departure (phone calls home, internet)
 - Are there special 'return courses' for residents? If there are, what subjects, duration of the course, what certificates?
 - What is the role of the organisation, and what do staff of external organisations do? (Police, Immigration Service, IOM, churches, volunteers)
 - Are there any group sessions about return, and how are they organised?
 - Is there paper or multimedia information about return?
 - Does the social-worker system cooperate with the contact-person system?
 - Is there one contact person for one corridor, for single men, for one nationality?
 - What are the positions of staff working in the centre?
 - How is the work divided? What skills are demanded for the different jobs?
- Public relations
 - How is public relations organised?
 - How is the relation with the local community?
 - What is society's viewpoint of this centre?

Departure location

We have the same basic questions for the departure location as for the return location. Some additional questions:

- Is the departure location a closed or open centre?
- Does the social worker speak with the residents about their return?
- What method do they use?
- How is forced departure realised. Is it done in the dark of the night, or is it done openly?
- Is there an atmosphere of fear, or reluctance or just waiting until it is done?
- Do people know the time of departure beforehand? (Do they have the chance to pack and say good-bye)
- How is it organised?
- Are they transported by a van, or bus / big bus / police van? Who collects the residents?
- Who accompanies them (police, social worker)?
- How do they deal with reluctant, sick or wounded residents, children and babies?
- Will someone go with them on the plane, in what circumstances?
- Will someone go with them to deal with any problems with customs in the country of origin?
- Are there problems during the trip?
- Are there any problems in general in the centre?

Unaccompanied minors and their return

The same questions and issues apply to Unaccompanied Minors. The special circumstances and methods used must be examined, and how is this done?

- What is the definition of an Unaccompanied Minor in this organisation?
- How many Unaccompanied Minors are there in Ireland?
- What countries are they from?
- Do they have special problems?
- Do Unaccompanied Minors live in a centre, or somewhere else?
- Do Unaccompanied Minors have a say in where they want to live?
- Is their legal procedure different from the procedure of adult asylum seekers?

Integration

(Here the main question is what they do, and not how they do it.)

- What happens to the asylum seeker when he gets a status?

- What are the differences for the asylum seeker in the reception centre or living elsewhere?
- What services are offered (house/accommodation, education)?
- What courses are compulsory, what courses are optional?
- What task do reception organisations have in this?
- Are refugees with a resident status transferred to another reception centre?
- Are there other services available? (financial, medical, education for children)
- Do they have standard educational products (same everywhere) or adapted?
- Is there a basic plan or does it depend on the possibilities/education of the individual?
- Is there a digital information system in the reception organisation connected to the municipality?
- Does moving to a house depend on the results of the basic education?
- Is there a different method for elderly, handicapped, sick, reluctant or pregnant people?
- Is there a crèche or a playgroup?