



**INTERNATIONAL
PROTECTION:**

A FAIR

SYSTEM

THAT

WORKS

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Introduction

Sinn Féin has a plan to fix our broken international protection system. A plan for a system that works well, works quickly, where the rules are applied, where fairness is paramount, and where people are treated with dignity and local communities are treated with respect. An equal application of the rules is the key to achieving public confidence in the system.

Sinn Féin is clear that our migration policies must be decided by an Irish government, not by the European Union.

Our perspective on migration is informed by our Republican values and principles - equality, economic and social justice, sovereignty, anti-racism and anti-colonialism.

Across the world, people are being forced from their countries by war, famine, escalating climate crisis and persistent inequality. Almost uniquely amongst developed western countries we understand from experience the human, economic and societal impact of emigration on those countries which people are fleeing today. Ireland, and other developed countries, can and must do much more to address these causes which are forcing people to migrate.

Ireland needs an international protection system where the rules are applied fairly and that is not plagued by a lack of capacity, delays and lack of enforcement. We need a system where someone who is deemed to be in need of international protection is granted asylum in a timely manner, and when someone is deemed not to be in need of international protection then he or she should be returned safely and without delay to their country of origin. We need a system which treats all those fleeing conflict and persecution equally be they from Ukraine or other parts of the world.

For the system to work we must end the profiteering by private interests, we must proactively involve communities and we must locate new purpose built centres where the capacity and the services exist to support them not deprived communities that are already struggling with a lack of services, amenities, facilities and decades of abandonment by government.

Those who are granted asylum should be integrated into our communities and into Irish society. These are people who want to use their skills and abilities to contribute positively to the country which has given them refuge.



It is time to create an international protection system that safeguards the cohesion of society for all who call Ireland home, a system that ensures fairness for local communities, decency, common sense, the protection of human rights and that also commands public support.

To deliver a fair international protection system that works Sinn Féin will:

- End private profiteering and move to state run accommodation.
- Put new centres only in areas which have the capacity to deal with them and where services exist to support them.
- Create a standard, transparent and consistent approach to community consultation, including opportunity for submissions.
- Treble the staffing across the system to allow fast and fair decisions to be made and to ensure greater follow up on deportation orders to ensure that those not be eligible for international protection actually leave.
- End the two tier system so that all those seeking international protection are treated equally irrespective of where you come from.

Faster Decisions

Resource the system

The International Protection Office (IPO) and International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) are overwhelmed. Applications are increasing and are currently taking over 18 months to process. This needs to be speeded up so that those who are fleeing war or oppression are quickly given certainty, welcomed and integrated into Irish society.

We propose:

- Tripling staff numbers at the IPO from 400 to 1200.
- Tripling resources for the IPAT.

Safe Countries of Origin

The concept of 'safe countries of origin' is longstanding in EU and Irish law. A person from one of these countries can still make an application for IP, however they must rebut the presumption that their home country is safe for them. The processing of IP applications made by persons from safe countries of origin can be accelerated.

Sinn Féin propose:

- Amending the International Protection Act 2015 to allow for the partial designation of some countries as safe which would facilitate greater use of accelerated processing.

Bilateral arrangements with Britain

Sinn Féin raised the issue of immigration co-operation directly with the British Prime Minister Keir Starmer. We highlighted the urgent need for bilateral arrangements between Dublin and London to ensure safe return of asylum seekers.

Sinn Féin propose:

- Agreeing revised bilateral arrangements with Britain to ensure those IP applicants who should be processed in Britain can be promptly returned there

Enforcement of decisions

In 2023, there were 5,717 applications for asylum refused, withdrawn, or determined inadmissible. 948 were issued with deportation orders, and only 80 of those orders were enforced. A total of just 317 people were confirmed to have left.

The government's policy is not to follow up on applicants post-decisions, and to expect unsuccessful asylum seekers to depart themselves without oversight or verification.

If someone is willing to leave themselves voluntarily that is better for everyone, but if they are not then the rules have to be enforced. Deportation orders need to be followed up on.

Sinn Féin propose:

- Greater following up on deportation orders to ensure that people who are determined to not be eligible for international protection here in Ireland actually leave.
- Greater implementation of legal provisions for fines on airlines and other carriers transporting passengers with no documents and for prosecutions of individuals.
- Agreeing bilateral arrangements with Britain on immigration management at ports and airports

Human Rights Compliance

Sinn Féin policy would ensure human rights compliance.

Everybody must be treated with decency and respect at all times. The assessment of applications must involve due process, the right to appeal and access to legal advice.

We will ensure that accommodation is provided in a decent way to people in a safe location, with access to shelter and the facilities necessary to ensure dignity and privacy.

Sinn Féin propose:

- Inviting the Children's Ombudsman and HIQA to periodically report on the standards of all International Protection accommodation.

Moving away from private profiteering - Redesigning our IPAS accommodation system

Our current system for the provision of accommodation for those seeking international protection has seen massive profiteering by a number of individuals in the private sector. These people who are making millions have no regard to either the communities impacted or the welfare of those seeking international protection.

We are committed to ending direct provision over the longer-term. However, given the very significant escalation in the numbers coming here, the priority in the short to medium term must be the provision of accommodation centres to afford shelter, safety and the necessary services to those fleeing war and persecution.

Sinn Féin's accommodation strategy is twofold. Firstly, in the short-medium term, we propose prioritising the creation of temporary emergency accommodation to meet the most basic needs of Ukrainians and asylum seekers for shelter and safety. In doing so, we would aim to reduce reliance on buildings and land that should be used for other purposes.

Secondly, Sinn Féin would prioritise the provision of permanent reception and processing centres with the majority of beds being state-owned. This will help to alleviate the need for emergency forms of accommodation and return a significant number of beds to the tourism sector.

Sinn Féin propose:

- Transitioning our IP Accommodation system to greater use of purpose-built state-owned beds while reducing reliance on profit-driven commercial providers which are often of poor quality and in unsuitable locations.

Locating Accommodation Centres

Over-reliance on commercial providers by government has resulted in private interests dictating where accommodation is located. This is unacceptable and has resulted in an unfair spread of accommodation.

The process of identifying suitable locations should instead commence with a pre-assessment of the needs of communities. This should be the norm and is the only way to ensure that the needs of both the community and new arrivals can be met.

The system will work best, and where it has worked best in the past, is where centres are located in areas which have the services and the capacity for them. This means better outcomes for both communities and those seeking protection including the better integration of successful applicants.

Criteria such as the availability of services including GPs and school places, proximity to transport and existing levels of disadvantage in areas should govern the selection of locations for accommodation. The Pobal HP Deprivation Index should be used for this purpose.

New IPAS centres should only be placed in areas which are best resourced to accommodate them.

Sinn Féin propose:

- The use of criteria such as the availability of services and levels of economic and social disadvantage to determine the selection of locations for accommodation. This will mean locating new centres in areas which have the capacity to deal with them and where services exist to support them.

Community Consultation

The approach by the government to the process of consultation and communication with local communities around the placement of IPAS has largely failed.

While the government has recruited a number of staff for Community Engagement Teams, they are under-resourced and lack the authority to achieve anything on their own.

We recognise that emergency accommodation is not like a normal planning application. However, it is not an unreasonable request for a formal process of submission. This can give shape or direction to residents who want to express concerns, but do not have any truck with the far right, disorder, or violence or provocative actors.

Sinn Féin propose:

- The creation of an honest, consistent multi-departmental and multi-agency approach to community consultation.
- The Department of Children would be obliged to conduct a Community Services Audit in connection with any reception centre, outlining what capacity exists in terms of Medical, Educational, Community, Transport and Housing Services.
- A standard structured form of consultation which creates a designated portal operated by IPAS for submissions and observations. IPAS would be obliged to have regard to this, and issue a public response.

Integration

Across Ireland we have countless examples of those who have sought refuge being successfully integrated into communities. It is crucial that successful international protection applicants are welcomed and supported to integrate into Irish society.

There is a huge appetite amongst communities to engage in integration efforts. This is evidenced by the volume of applications made when calls for funding are issued. Existing funds are oversubscribed.

Sinn Féin propose:

- Investing more funding for community integration and anti-racism projects.
- Carrying out an audit to ensure that the money that is being spent is properly targeted.

Planning for the end of the Temporary Protection Directive

We are utterly opposed to Putin's war on Ukraine, and the devastation it has caused. The people of Ukraine deserve peace and an end to war.

The Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) is due to conclude in March 2026. Sinn Féin has been calling on the Government to provide a clear plan for this. The uncertainty is unfair on Temporary Protection applicants.

Sinn Féin have been clear that standard Irish immigration laws will apply when the TPD expires.

Ukrainians who wish to remain here after the expiration should begin to apply for work permits now and if they are from a part of Ukraine that is unsafe they could apply for International Protection.

Ending the Two Tier System

Ukrainians are the only people to whom beneficiary status under the EU's Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) has been awarded since its introduction in 2001. This gave them an automatic right to live, travel and work in the EU.

The (TPD) itself did not require Ireland to extend full access to social welfare to all TPD beneficiaries nor the decision to extend full automatic medical cards to every TPD beneficiary for 12 months without a means-test. Those were decisions of the government.

In the current absence of access to universal healthcare for all citizens the criteria for access to medical cards should be applied fairly and equally.

The government decision to extend an €800 tax free monthly payment to landlords for TPD beneficiaries who move into their properties in the private rental sector has been a mistake and created an unfairness in the private rental sector. Sinn Féin would end this unfairness.

Sinn Féin proposes:

- **Ending the two tier system.**
- **Signalling now that when the Temporary Protection measure for Ukrainians ends in March 2026 immigration rules will apply. Work permits or International Protection can be applied for.**
- **Unwinding all special supports for beneficiaries of temporary protection that exceed the requirements of the TPD and amending the International Protection Act 2015 to harmonise entitlements for people fleeing war or persecution.**
- **Developing an assisted return to Ukraine scheme for those beneficiaries of TPD who can safely do so.**

EU Migration Pact

Sinn Féin opposed the vast majority of measures contained within the EU's Asylum and Migration Pact, because the majority of the Pact's measures were not in Ireland's interests.

Sinn Féin supported opting into two measures contained in the Pact, namely the Asylum Migration Management Regulation and the Eurodac Regulation. We did so for two primary reasons:

We have to be able to return those who seek to make an asylum application here to the first EU country that they entered or applied for asylum in before travelling onwards to Ireland.

We have to be able to access the fingerprint database, to ensure we have more information on who enters the State and to assist with vetting, conducting checks, tackling child trafficking and to return asylum seekers to other EU countries as appropriate.

Now that the government have opted Ireland into the EU Migration Pact that decision cannot be overturned.

Sinn Féin propose:

- **Maximising Irish sovereignty to the greatest possible extent when transposing the now binding EU measures into Irish law.**

- Effectively implementing the return of asylum applicants to the country where they first applied.
- Calling for an urgent review of the operation of Frontex to ensure that it is compliant with human rights law.
- Continued support for search and rescue mission particularly in the Mediterranean.
- Both at the EU and national level, ensuring that countries are held to account for international human rights and humanitarian law violations.



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