

Information needs of migrants – outcomes of research into Citizens Information Services

Roundtable on Barriers to Integration
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Usage of mainstream information services by migrants

Research and surveys carried out on behalf of the Citizens Information Board indicates that migrants are accessing generalist information services in relation to information on rights and entitlements and have been significant users of CIS's nationally

- Citizens information 3 channel approach (online, phone and drop-in) – citizens information.ie a 'one stop shop' information source had 2.2m users in 2008
- In a 2008 Survey of Citizens information Services 23% of callers nationally (drop in service) were migrants, 16% EU and 7% non EU/EEA
- Jan to June 2009 – country of origin (non mandatory field) recorded electronically for 50% of clients to CIS's – 12% of these (49,000) were migrants
- Outreach profile – CIS's in addition to fixed services provide targeted outreach to migrants

- Dublin City Centre and Fingal CIS's recorded the highest number of migrants of Dublin services
- Information providers are offered training on inter-culturalism as well as a range of training relating to the specific information needs of migrants
- Specialist back up support provided to CIS's/ dedicated helpline – regional spread of CIS's accessing back up service and increase in numbers of CIS's using service

Specific information needs

- EU migrants had queries in relation to welfare entitlements, employment rights and taxation while non EU/EEA had a higher proportion of legal queries
- Many migrant lack understanding around legislation governing rights
- Key information areas
 - Job loss and immigration status
 - Residency rights
 - Undocumented issues
 - Position vis a vis nationals of Romania/Bulgaria
 - Family reunification

Research objectives

- To map range of information requirements of migrants
- Take into account the different categories and different 'transition points'
- Describe actual pathways
- Factors which hinder or assist in accessing information/services
- Describe models of information provision
- Assess impact of information initiatives

Outcomes of research into information needs:

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Information requirements

- External information that needs to be delivered outside of national territory
- Information to deal with legal and administrative aspects of migration
- Information about institutional and administrative frameworks
- pre-arrival and post arrival information and in some cases 'exit' information

Current methods of information provision

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- Range of initiatives undertaken by statutory and NGO sectors at national and local level
- Statutory service providers have developed a range of responses to information needs
- Support for specialist providers
- Key input of range of NGO's
- Initiatives at local level
- Anti racism and diversity strategies
- Wide range of migrant led organisations providing information and services

Limitations of current provision

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Despite the various initiatives- limitations in current provision persist

- General barriers to access to information
- Access varies according to
 - information need
 - the starting point in the information search
 - immigration status
- response of the intermediaries/service providers
- language difficulties/poor signposting /inadequate referral processes

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- Interpreting and translation provision/ no single owner (NCCRI Research)
- reluctance in some cases to approach 'official information providers
- duplication
- Delays in processing applications
- Insufficient resources allocated to basic information provision by service providers

Integration strategies

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- Integration of immigrants into Irish society a significant policy concern
- Involves responding in a socially inclusive and mainstream manner to the different needs of people of different nationality, culture, language and religion.
- Link between integration policy and wider social inclusion measures, strategies and initiatives and at ensuring a public policy focus that avoids the creation of 'parallel societies'.
- Access to information as an integral part of integration strategies at both national and local levels.

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Key considerations for integration/information strategies:

- maximising the potential for joint working and collaboration between state and NGO providers
- different strategies of information provision may be needed for different categories of migrants
- Inclusion of a user perspective on information and service provision
- need to prioritise groups who are disadvantaged and to tackle issues and problems of access
- migrants information needs differ in some respects from national population – compliance with complex legal requirements

Responses

- Responding to the needs of those excluded from mainstream activities
- Clarity around information and policies
- Need to address barriers that arise from a functionally organised system
- Provision of advocacy support

- Additional data collection mechanisms
- Involving migrants in service delivery and responses
- Improved dialogue to address fragmentation and disconnects
- Building on existing networks and expanding use of networks