



Office of the  
Refugee Applications Commissioner

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Strategy Statement 2013 - 2015

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## **Foreword by the Refugee Applications Commissioner**

I am pleased to present the fourth Strategy Statement for the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner covering the period 2013-2015.

This document aims to establish a clear direction for our activities in the next three years. Alternatively, this may be for a shorter period to be determined when the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill is enacted and commenced.

Under the new legislation, ORAC will be subsumed into the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) which will then be responsible for determining applications for refugee status at first instance as part of a wider single procedure which will also consider and make determinations on subsidiary protection and other matters.

In the interim, ORAC will continue to undertake its existing statutory responsibilities under the Refugee Act, 1996, relevant statutory instruments and EU law in an efficient and fair manner and contribute to the transitional planning for the commencement of the new statutory framework.

Our new Strategy Statement builds upon our third Strategy Statement (2010-2012) and reflects much of its framework and contents.

While our mission remains unchanged, our goals and strategies for their achievement have been updated, as appropriate, to reflect the diverse needs of our customer base, our staff and our different stakeholders. A particular emphasis continues to be placed by ORAC on the effective and efficient use of allocated resources.

Much of our existing processing framework in ORAC, which is supported by our new Strategy Statement, provides a comprehensive basis for the new single procedure to be introduced under the revised legislation.

I want to pay tribute to our staff for their hard work and commitment to our statutory duties and for continuing to ensure a high level of professionalism in their important investigation and decision making work.

I also wish to thank our key stakeholders for their ongoing cooperation and support within our respective statutory frameworks.

David Costello  
Commissioner.



## Mission Statement

The mission statement of the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner in accordance with the Refugee Act, 1996\* is:

(i) *to investigate applications from persons seeking a declaration for refugee status and to issue appropriate recommendations to the Minister for Justice and Equality,*

*and*

(ii) *to investigate applications by refugees to allow family members to enter and reside in the State and report to the Minister for Justice and Equality on such applications,*

and in so doing, to provide a high quality service to our customers through the implementation of policies and procedures which are fair and open, treating all applicants with courtesy and sensitivity.

\*The statutory functions of the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) are set out in the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) and relevant secondary legislation such as the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations, 2006 (SI No. 518 of 2006), European Communities (Asylum Procedures) Regulations, 2011 (SI No. 51 of 2011) and Refugee Act, 1996 (Asylum Procedures) Regulations, 2011 (SI No. 52 of 2011).



## Our Values and Guiding Principles

In carrying out the work of the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner we are guided by the following key values and principles:

### Independence

- To maintain independence of process and decision making.

### Fairness and Respect

- To provide fair and transparent procedures which are notified to applicants where available in a language they understand.
- To treat applicants with respect.
- To provide all interested parties with all available information regarding our procedures, services and decisions.
- To acknowledge the contribution, input and views of other agencies involved in the asylum area.

### Firmness

- To ensure firmness in implementing our statutory obligations.

### Service

- To provide a high quality service to applicants and other stakeholders.
- To deliver that service in a manner that is at all times professional, effective and respectful.

### Accessibility

- To make our services and information accessible to people with disabilities in line with the Disability Act, 2005.

### Commitment to Staff

- To foster an environment in which staff can work effectively and develop their potential for the benefit of the Office specifically and their careers generally.
- To enable staff to operate in a knowledge intensive environment which requires an in-depth understanding of a wide range of complex, legal, cultural and human issues.

### Commitment to Excellence and Professionalism

- To encourage the highest standards of job performance possible from each member of staff.
- To perform every aspect of our work to the highest professional standards ensuring high quality outputs.

### Openness

- To seek and recognise the views of applicants, their representatives, stakeholders and interested groups.
- To demonstrate accountability for our actions through transparent procedures.

### Efficiency in the Use of Available Resources

- To ensure efficiency in our response to challenges in the optimum use of available resources without compromising quality.



- To utilise new technology to improve services, performance and the working environment.

**Partnership**

- To have a consultative approach to workplace innovation and management of change.
- To value diversity, actively seek contributions and commit to open discussion.
- To foster a culture of participation, openness and mutual respect.

**In holding all these values and principles, it is critical to maintain flexibility in both our structures and strategies so that we can respond appropriately to changing demands.**



## INTRODUCTION

### Our Mandate

The Refugee Act, 1996 states that the Refugee Applications Commissioner shall be independent in the exercise of his or her functions which are of a statutory and non-statutory nature. The key statutory responsibilities are:

- to investigate applications from those who seek a declaration for refugee status and to issue appropriate recommendations to the Minister for Justice and Equality on such applications,

and

- to investigate applications by refugees to allow family members to enter and reside in the State and report to the Minister for Justice and Equality on such applications.

Under the 1996 Act it is also the Commissioner's responsibility:

- to issue Temporary Residence Certificates to asylum seekers.
- to comply with any Ministerial directives concerning the prioritisation of certain categories of applicant.
- to direct the presentation of the Commissioner's case to the Refugee Appeals Tribunal where recommendations made by the Commissioner are appealed to the Tribunal.
- to furnish to the UNHCR, the Minister as well as relevant Government agencies, information as provided for in legislation.
- to refer unaccompanied minors to the Health Service Executive (HSE) in line with section 8(5) of the Refugee Act, 1996.

While ultimately responsible for fulfilling these statutory functions under the 1996 Act, the Commissioner may delegate these functions to any member of staff.

The Commissioner also has non-statutory functions. These include:

- to ensure that all applications for asylum at first stage are treated and processed in a fair, courteous and efficient manner.
- to issue directives on the practical application of the Refugee Act, 1996 and on procedures and standards of work.
- to ensure that adequate information on countries of origin of asylum seekers and international jurisprudence and practice in the area of asylum is available to staff.
- to participate in international fora on asylum related matters.
- to manage staff performance and training and development.
- to deal with press and other queries.
- to prepare and manage the budget and Business Plan for the organisation.



## **Our Strategy Statement**

This Statement continues to build on the achievements of the Office to date. Our strategies, structures and processes must all be aligned for ORAC to be effective. As we implement the strategies and related process changes set out in this Statement, we will ensure that our structures continue to evolve to support our strategies, by developing Annual Business Plans, giving effect to our Customer Service Action Plan and reviewing our progress in Annual Reports. Our aim continues to be the development of an integrated organisation, which brings a case and risk management approach to the way we do our business.

The Strategy Statement and its implementation will be subject to ongoing review to ensure its responsiveness and relevance to our legislative and business environment. This process will have particular regard to the planned subsuming of ORAC into the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service and, subject to the approval of the Houses of the Oireachtas, the introduction of a single procedure in the State in the context of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill.

## **Statement Structure**

The Statement sets out five High Level Goals which will guide us over the period of its application together with the objectives, associated strategies and indicators against which progress can be judged.

Part 1 of the Statement provides an analysis of our policy and working environment and sets out three High Level Goals covering the operational areas of the Office:

- to investigate applications for refugee status and for family reunification within minimum timeframes.
- to maintain the highest standard of investigation and decision-making.
- to ensure applications for asylum and family reunification are dealt with in an open, fair and impartial manner and that the integrity of the process is preserved.

Part 2 focuses on two High Level Goals which cover our customer and business strategies:

- to maintain excellent customer service.
- to efficiently and effectively manage our organisation and its resources in line with best practice, taking into account allocated resources and having regard to the development and training of our staff.

## **Consultation**

The Strategy Statement has been informed by the views and feedback received on foot of consultations held within the Office.



## **Implementation and Review**

The implementation of this Strategy Statement is relevant to all staff in ORAC. It will be reflected in our business planning process and service delivery.

At unit level, business plans will contain annual action programmes to implement strategies and achieve goals and will provide for regular reviews of progress throughout the year.

At individual level, the business plans will be used as a basis for role profiles and goal setting in the Performance Management and Development System. Progress in achieving our stated goals will be set out in the Annual Report which the Commissioner presents to the Minister for Justice and Equality.



## **Critical Success Factors**

The following factors have been identified as being critical in determining our ability to achieve our goals and objectives:

- **Sufficient resources and appropriately trained staff**  
The availability of suitably trained staff to complete the work without compromising quality is fundamental to the achievement of targets.
- **The support of our staff and our support of them**  
Well trained, committed and motivated staff are central to the successful delivery of services.
- **Independent Status**  
Independence guaranteed by statutory provisions is important for the effective working of the Office within its present statutory framework.
- **Access to Information**  
Appropriate information on the countries of origin of asylum seekers, international reports and relevant jurisprudence are essential for the evaluation of applications for refugee status.
- **Standards, Systems & Procedures and Work Practices**  
The work of the Office must be organised and based on the application of the highest professional standards and practices for the performance and management of the work with clear guidance and good communication.
- **Information and Communications Technology**  
Maximising the application of Information and Communications Technology is key to the efficient discharge of the functions of the Office.
- **Co-operation of applicants and legal representatives**  
Timely and complete responses required from asylum applicants and their legal representatives in order to achieve the organisation's goals and objectives.
- **Liaison with other Government agencies and offices**  
Effective and co-ordinated liaison with other agencies providing services to asylum applicants is important to the effective working of the Office.



## Structure

The work of the Office is structured around the following Units:

- Administration and Arrangements
- Case Processing
- Corporate and Customer Service Centre
- Dublin Regulation
- Family Reunification
- Investigation and Liaison
- Judicial Review
- Policy and Procedures
- Presenting
- Reception
- Reporting and Analysis Unit (RAU)
- Research (COI) and Legal Analysis
- Single Procedure Transition Team
- Staff Support and Training



## **Part 1**

### **Policy and Working Environment and High Level Goals 1-3**



## **Policy and Working Environment and High Level Goals 1-3**

### **Overview**

ORAC carries out its mandate within a complex and ever changing environment. Both internal and international factors can influence ORAC's working environment and context. For example, conflicts and country conditions abroad can result in refugee movements, which in turn affect the number of applications for asylum in Ireland, as do economic and social factors such as migration patterns into and within Europe. Domestic immigration policies and changing Government priorities can have a direct impact on the workload and on the nature and type of cases that we receive. Policy development in the area of asylum in the European Union also has an important impact on ORAC's mandate. In this context, it is necessary to be able to adapt quickly to changing demands. Some of the main factors affecting our organisation and environment are set out below.

### **Diversity, Scale and Complexity**

ORAC is fully committed to applying fairness to all aspects of our work. We recognise that some applicants who apply for a declaration as a refugee have experienced very difficult circumstances and we respect the diversity of cultures of applicants with whom we deal. Importantly, it means that we acknowledge that the determination of each individual application directly affects the lives of people. The fact that over 70 countries are currently represented in our applicant population creates its own challenges for the Office. The considerable cultural and language diversity among our applicants raises ongoing communication issues, as well as issues related to interpretation and translation to and from a large number of languages. Although the trend is that of a decrease in application numbers, cases are often complex and driven by a variety of factors such as mixed migration, broader grounds for protection, security concerns and lack of verifiable documentation. The total unpredictability of the number or origin of applicants to this Office will continue to provide an ongoing test of the flexibility and versatility of our staff and other resources.

### **Legislative Environment**

Legislation in the asylum area is still evolving in Ireland and will change during the period of this Statement, including in the context of Ireland's membership of the European Union. This will require flexibility in our systems and procedures. Legislative developments, including those which arise as a result of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill, will provide a legislative framework which overhauls the governance of asylum and immigration matters in Ireland. The Bill will consolidate legislation in the area and provide for future developments. As part of this new legislation the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner will be subsumed into the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) which reports directly to the Minister for Justice and Equality.

### **Jurisprudence**

ORAC must follow decisions of the High Court and the Supreme Court and they require appropriate responses from us to the judgements laid down. ORAC must also take account of jurisprudence emanating from the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights.



### **Liaison with other bodies**

ORAC continues to build on efforts it has initiated over the past years to establish new and flexible mechanisms to enhance ongoing dialogue and to ensure that we are responsive to the issues raised during ongoing consultations with our stakeholders. This includes meetings with stakeholders on specific issues.

### **International Developments**

ORAC must also take account of and, where possible, shape, developments in relation to asylum practice and procedures in the European Union. This includes developments in the area of legislation and the implementation of the Common European Asylum System as well as work underway within the European Asylum Support Office, to develop practical cooperation in areas such as training and quality of recommendations.



## High Level Goal 1

### **To investigate applications for refugee status and for family reunification within minimum timeframes.**

#### **HLG 1 Objective No 1**

To ensure the maximum number of recommendations for a declaration of refugee status issue within minimum timeframes, in line with fair procedures and having due regard to legislative requirements on prioritisation as set out by the Minister for Justice and Equality

Over the next three years, the priority of this Office is to continue delivering quality recommendations in a consistent, timely and legally robust manner on first instance applications for refugee status to the Minister for Justice and Equality. Our continued focus will be to schedule interviews for applicants on the day they apply for asylum. Where possible, we will ensure all new Ministerial prioritised cases are dealt with within seventeen to twenty days from the initial date of application and process all other cases as quickly as possible. As the number of asylum applications on hands has continued to decline and having due regard to ongoing changes in asylum trends, ORAC will seek further reductions in case processing timelines to ensure we minimise median processing times, optimise the number of recommendations issued per month while still ensuring our ongoing objective that our recommendations meet quality standards and are in line with fair procedures. Having the required level of trained caseworkers is always paramount for this to be achieved.

#### *Strategies to Support Objective*

- Process all new compliant prioritised cases within 17/20 days of initial application and reduce processing times for other (non-prioritised) cases predicated on having all sanctioned staff in place and fully trained. Special arrangements will continue to apply to applicants in detention and to unaccompanied minors.
- Maximise monthly interviews completed and recommendations made having due regard to resources available and changing trends in application numbers.
- Apply processes and procedures to effectively implement the directives of the Minister for Justice and Equality.
- Prepare, implement and review annual business plans with a strong focus on outputs.
- Maintain an effective pre-interview preparation process. The expertise of legal support from within and outside ORAC will be maximised for the more difficult and complex cases.
- Apply a proactive scheduling policy to make use of interviewer availability in order to maximise the number of interviews completed and recommendations made. This policy will ensure interviews are scheduled in a manner which reduces the likelihood of call back interviews having due regard to fair procedures.



- Streamline operational processes to maximise productivity in processing applications and monitor and review processes (including those in relation to quality) on an ongoing basis to ensure that planned outcomes are achieved, having due regard to changing trends in asylum applications and resources available.
- Support Case Processing Units and staff in their work through the provision of training, accessible, reputable and timely country of origin information and policy guidelines.
- Ensure that we have the necessary training resources in place to cater for our current and future training needs including in relation to the implementation of the planned new legislative framework.
- Maximise the use of information and communications technology including the Asylum and Immigration Strategic Integration Programme (AISIP).
- Develop internal quality assurance programme to ensure the monitoring of the recommendations issued.

#### *Performance Indicators*

- Processing times are within guidelines set down.
- Maximisation of scheduling, interviews and recommendations made on a monthly basis, having due regard to changing trends in asylum applications, resources available, quality decision making and fair procedures.
- Compliance with Minister's directives.
- Effective and timely delivery of the actions and projects set out in ORAC's Business Plans.
- Focused interviews and reports with reduction in the number of call backs, complaints and potential judicial reviews.
- Extent to which interviewer availability is fully optimised as evidenced by monthly reports.
- Achievement of set targets of interviews completed and recommendations finalised within agreed timeframes, having due regard to changing trends in asylum applications, resources available, quality decision making and fair procedures.
- Efficient and timely access to Country of Origin Information (COI) systems in place, in liaison with the Refugee Documentation Centre (RDC), together with relevant training and policy guidelines.
- Adequately trained staff - appropriate staff training delivered as required.
- Maximum use made of information and communications technology.
- The issuing of quality and legally robust recommendations ensuring the number of judicial reviews are minimised.



## **HLG 1 Objective No 2**

To achieve the full and efficient application of the EU Dublin II Regulation and, in due course, the EU Dublin III Regulation, having due regard to the criteria for determining the Contracting State responsible for processing asylum applications.

### *Strategies to Support Objective*

- Investigate and prepare determinations on all Dublin cases in an effective, efficient and fair manner having due regard to legislative and regulatory timescales.
- Maintain links with other Contracting States and relevant agencies to achieve effective implementation of the Dublin Regulation.
- Liaise with other relevant Units within ORAC and with other relevant Divisions of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) and the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) to ensure that all provisions of the Dublin Regulation are implemented to maximum effect.
- Carry out any investigation necessary using the Dublin Regulation Unit's investigative capacity to maximise outcomes.
- Streamline procedures to maximise productivity in processing Dublin II cases particularly by ensuring that all staff have the necessary training to multi-task and monitor and review policies and procedures continuously to ensure planned outcomes are achieved.
- Ensure that the use of relevant information and communications technology including Eurodac, AISIP and DubliNet are maximised to the full, both in terms of their investigative and technological contributions.
- Ensure that relevant domestic case law and that of the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights is made available and that this case law informs the determinations prepared under the Dublin Regulation.

### *Performance Indicators*

- Processing times are within guidelines set down.
- Maximum use made of Dublin II Regulation and, in due course the Dublin III Regulation, in order to transfer cases to other participating States within prescribed timeframes and the relevant statutory frameworks.
- Active co-operation with relevant Units in ORAC and enhanced co-operation with the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) and with the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) in relation to the operation of the Dublin process.



- Maximum use made of the Unit's investigative capacity in order to enhance the quality of determinations.
- Planned outcomes achieved within agreed timeframes.
- Maximum use made of relevant information and communications technology including Eurodac, AISIP and DubliNet both as investigative and technological tools.
- Dublin II recommendations are legally robust having regard to domestic and international case law.

### **HLG 1 Objective No 3**

To achieve optimum productivity in processing applications for family reunification within minimum timeframes.

ORAC will continue to prepare and complete comprehensive legally robust reports, within minimum timeframes from the date of referral to the Commissioner, on family reunification applications from those granted refugee status under the Refugee Act 1996, who subsequently seek permission for family members to enter and reside in the State. In preparing these reports we set out the relationship between the refugee concerned and the subject(s) of the application, the domestic circumstances of the person(s) and forward these reports to the Minister for Justice and Equality for consideration and decision.

#### *Strategies to Support Objective*

- Process all applications for family reunification within minimum timeframes and, to the fullest extent possible, in chronological order of receipt from the Minister for Justice and Equality.
- Liaise with the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) to achieve effective processing of family reunification applications within statutory framework.
- Deliver the actions and projects set out in ORAC's Business Plan in relation to family reunification.
- Monitor and review family reunification procedures to ensure objectives are being achieved and to ensure that the procedures continue to be relevant.
- Monitor and review the questionnaires to be completed by applicants to ensure that they capture all the necessary information while remaining accessible to the applicants.
- Ensure that we have the necessary training resources in place in relation to family reunification to cater for our current and future training needs and to ensure that staff are in a position to carry out all the functions of the Unit.



- Enhance the quality of investigations and reports by making maximum use of research material provided by the RDC and by using AISIP as an investigative tool.
- Examine the feasibility of using other assessment techniques to establish the bona fides of an applicant and his/her relationship to the subject(s) of the application.
- Engage fully in the business transformation process by working with other areas of INIS with particular reference to family reunification aspects to ensure smooth transition to one INIS Family Reunification Unit, following enactment of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill.
- Ensure that the appropriate guidance notes and training are in place to enable staff to have a clear and shared understanding of the mission, policies and procedures of the unified Family Reunification Unit.

#### *Performance Indicators*

- Section 18 (Refugee Act, 1996) reports prepared within agreed timeframes.
- Effective communications with the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service.
- Achievement of set targets in the Business Plan in relation to family reunification within agreed timeframes including in relation to completion of quality reports.
- Family Reunification procedures, including questionnaires reviewed and amended as appropriate.
- The use of other assessment techniques examined to determine if they could enhance the quality of investigation of family reunification applications.
- Maximum use made of resources of the Refugee Documentation Centre in order to provide comprehensive and impartial country of origin information on matters such as formalities of marriage and adoption.
- Effective engagement with the business transformation process to ensure smooth transition to a single INIS Family Reunification Unit following the enactment (subject to the approval of the Houses of the Oireachtas) and commencement of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill, with agreed procedures, processes, documentation and training in place.



## **HLG 1 Objective No 4**

To prepare and plan for the introduction of a single procedure and address fully and effectively any amendments to the Refugee Act, 1996 as they arise.

The Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill aims to consolidate legislation in the immigration and asylum areas and provide for future developments. The Bill provides for the introduction of a single procedure to determine all aspects of a person's application to remain in the State (refugee status, subsidiary protection and leave to remain type issues), and will result in ORAC being subsumed into the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS).

ORAC will continue to work with INIS in regard to the introduction of the new legislation and transition to the single procedure.

ORAC will continue to review and, where necessary, revise its procedures and policies to take account of emerging trends and challenges in the refugee status determination area, and of national and international jurisprudence.

### *Strategies to Support Objective*

- Continue to engage fully in the business transformation process in INIS and with other relevant agencies and stakeholders regarding planning for the new legislative framework associated with the introduction of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill and the single procedure.
- Inform staff about the legislative amendments and particularly those with direct implications for ORAC.
- Develop and deliver the required appropriate training to facilitate efficient and effective implementation of new legislative changes as they occur.
- Ensure that the required changes to structures, processes or procedures are developed to cater for the proposed legislative amendments.
- Ensure that ORAC has the necessary resources in place to implement legislative changes.

### *Performance Indicators*

- Effective and full participation in the relevant project groups in INIS planning for the new legislative framework and the single procedure.
- Staff informed about the new legislation especially any aspects with direct implications for ORAC.
- Trained staff in place to effectively implement the legislative changes.



- New structures, processes and procedures in place within agreed timeframes.
- New work practices in accordance with legislative amendments implemented within agreed timeframes.
- Procedures and policies are in line with developments in legislation, jurisprudence and international best practice.



## High Level Goal 2

### **To maintain the highest standard of investigation and decision-making.**

#### **HLG 2 Objective No 1**

##### To investigate and assess applications to a consistently high standard

The focus of ORAC since its establishment is to deliver well reasoned, legally robust, consistent and high quality recommendations on applications for refugee status and family reunification in an efficient and fair manner and in accordance with the law and best international practice.

This will be achieved by developing and enhancing our training practices (including the European Asylum Curriculum), policy and procedures and research arrangements prior to interview, in conjunction with the use of the various internal and external research facilities available to this organisation. Our quality assurance systems ensure that up to date information is being used, also taking into account the requirements of vulnerable applicants such as persons with disabilities, victims of trafficking, unaccompanied minors and victims of torture. Our procedures are also being continually monitored and enhanced to ensure the requirements of these vulnerable groups are met.

##### *Strategies to Support Objective*

- Develop staff by continuing to invest in high quality training, on the job mentoring and feedback as well as support structures.
- Ensure case processing staff are fully supported in carrying out their work responsibilities and enabled to do so in a dignified manner.
- Continue to develop and apply processes and procedures designed to standardise case processing methodology.
- Ensure that all ORAC areas are consulted in relation to the development and introduction of any new or changed procedures.
- Maintain and further develop COI resources, in liaison with the Refugee Documentation Centre (RDC), including training on accessing the resources provided by the RDC such as the eLibrary system as well as relevant and reliable and reputable websites where quality and concise information is available as a source of guidance on recurring and complex issues in applications.
- Provide support (with training and input by legal experts) to ensure the legal rigour and language of the statutory reports supporting ORAC recommendations, as appropriate.
- Enhance co-operation with UNHCR in relation to the effective and fair operation of the first instance asylum process, including the development of Quality assurance initiatives and the delivery of training.



- Maintain, further develop, implement and monitor a Quality Assurance system.
- Implement procedures, including ongoing training programmes, to take account of the special needs of vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors and victims of torture.
- Provide quality and timely interpretation and translation needs.
- Attend EU, EASO and other relevant international fora to keep up-to-date with developments in relation to asylum matters and provide reports to all relevant staff.
- Implement the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and strengthen cooperation among EU Member States.
- Provide timely and appropriate responses to requests from the Refugee Appeals Tribunal under section 16(6) and 16(7) of the Refugee Act, 1996.
- Cooperate with EU and other states in the exchange of information to protect the integrity of the asylum process within relevant statutory frameworks.
- Utilise the AISIP and AVATS systems as a reference for applications.
- Utilise the ORAC Investigation Unit in liaison with INIS investigations where required.

#### *Performance Indicators*

- Quality training (including use of the European Asylum Curriculum, where appropriate) and development opportunities and other necessary support provided to ORAC staff.
- Standardised and up to date policy and procedures developed in relation to the management and investigation of applications.
- Cross Unit Procedures Review Group and satisfactory cross unit communications in place.
- Quality, up-to-date, reliable, objective COI systems maintained and developed in liaison with the RDC, with particular reference to selected countries where recurring and complex issues arise.
- Efficient and timely COI systems including maximum use made of the resources of the Refugee Documentation Centre.
- Legally robust recommendations in accordance with relevant legislation leading to a minimum number of judicial reviews.
- A Quality Assurance system in place which provides information for monitoring and review in relation to quality and consistency of investigations.
- Enhanced liaison with UNHCR generally and UNHCR confidence in our Quality Assurance systems.



- Procedures and trained caseworkers in place to deal with the special needs of vulnerable groups.
- An interpretation and translation service with a quality assurance mechanism.
- EU, EASO and other relevant international meetings and workshops attended and reports and relevant information on best international practice disseminated within ORAC.
- Implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and strengthening of cooperation between EU Member States.
- All section 16(6) and 16(7) requests responded to promptly.
- Misuse of the asylum process identified in cooperation with other EU states and integrity of process protected on an ongoing basis.
- To ensure that AISIP and AVATS systems are used to their full effect, and the information and data accessed through AISIP will lead to better and more efficient decision making.
- To ensure that AISIP and other systems are used to providing better management data and statistics.
- To ensure that there is maximum co-ordination between the various IT systems in ORAC and other relevant agencies.

## **HLG 2 Objective No 2**

### To continue to have transparent and impartial procedures

ORAC will carry out its duties in a manner which is clear, professional and efficient thereby ensuring all applicants are treated with fair, open and impartial procedures. ORAC will continue to endeavour to consult with, as appropriate, and to issue clear and precise information to all the relevant stakeholders which will keep them updated with all relevant changes to procedures, legislation and service delivery.

#### *Strategies to Support Objective*

- Provide comprehensive information concerning the application process to applicants, where available, in a language they understand, in line with our statutory obligations.
- Undertake initial and substantive interview with the assistance of an interpreter, in line with our statutory requirements.



- Provide information on an ongoing basis especially with regard to changes in procedures - to the Refugee Legal Service, Customer Service Liaison Panel, the UNHCR and other relevant stakeholders.
- Enable applicants who have special needs to access and participate in the asylum process.
- Support vulnerable applicants insofar as practicable to access and participate in the asylum process.
- Maintain and further develop current procedures for referral of applicants who appear to be unaccompanied minors to the HSE.
- Seek the views of the Customer Service Liaison Panel in relation to procedural issues, where appropriate.

#### *Performance Indicators*

- Applicants provided with comprehensive information regarding the asylum process in a language they understand, in line with our statutory obligations.
- Initial and substantive interviews completed with the assistance of an interpreter, in line with our statutory requirements.
- Refugee Legal Service, Customer Service Liaison Panel, UNHCR and other stakeholders informed of changes to processes and procedures.
- Access to the asylum process complies with the legislative requirements in relation to applicants with special needs.
- Fair and effective procedures in place in relation to vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors.
- HSE referral procedures in respect of those who appear to be unaccompanied minors, monitored and updated where necessary.
- Customer Service Liaison Panel feedback on ORAC's procedural matters considered and addressed as appropriate.



## High Level Goal 3

**To ensure applications for asylum and family reunification are dealt with in an open, fair and impartial manner and that the integrity of the process is preserved.**

### **HLG 3 Objective No 1**

To identify as quickly as possible, in an effective and fair manner, those applicants who come within the definition of a refugee contained in Section 2 of the Refugee Act, 1996.

For an applicant to be granted refugee status, he/she must establish that he/she has suffered past persecution and have a well founded fear of persecution based on one of the grounds set out in the Refugee Act, 1996, i.e. race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. Interviews are conducted on a one to one basis within ORAC in a non-adversarial manner to ensure the interviewer is able to get the full facts from the applicant in relation to their background, history and their activities in their country of origin. The forward looking fear of returning to their country of origin is covered as well as any past persecution in their country. In addition to material submitted by applicants in supporting their claims, caseworkers should have timely access to relevant country of origin information to consider conditions in the applicant's country of origin as well as assessing the credibility of the applicant.

This Office will continue to ensure that fraudulent claims are dealt with in a speedy manner while also ensuring our protection obligations under national and international law are met.

### *Strategy to Support Objective*

- Maintain and support an environment which facilitates the applicant in freely communicating the circumstances surrounding his/her application.
- Apply processes and procedures to implement effectively the directive of the Minister for Justice and Equality in relation to the prioritisation of certain applications being processed.
- Maintain and review procedures in relation to a detained person wishing to apply for asylum recognising that such a person is prioritised under the terms of the Refugee Act, 1996.
- Analyse and screen applications for the early identification of possible well founded cases. This may include the use of language analysis where appropriate.
- Maintain an effective and proactive scheduling policy to enable applicants to be scheduled for interview as quickly as possible.
- Maintain an effective pre-interview preparation process to ensure focused interviews and reports.
- Analyse and investigate issues in order to support and enhance interview preparation.



- Provide timely and well reasoned recommendations aided by information technology and supported by good report writing and reliable country of origin information and other Refugee Status Determination research material.
- Maximise monthly interviews scheduled and completed and recommendations made having due regard to resources available.

#### *Performance Indicators*

- Quality information collected and recorded.
- The directive of the Minister for Justice and Equality in relation to the prioritisation of applications fully implemented.
- ORAC notified as soon as a detained person wishes to make an asylum application and the person visited at the place of detention by ORAC staff within three working days for their application to be processed.
- Early identification of possible manifestly well founded applications.
- Applicants scheduled for interview on day of application in so far as possible.
- Effective pre-interview preparation as evidenced by quality, up-to-date, reliable and objective COI and Refugee Status Determination research material.
- Effective investigative process in place to support the interview process.
- Objective research and analysis of claims completed and legally robust and high quality recommendations made to the Minister for Justice and Equality.
- Maximisation of monthly interviews scheduled and completed and recommendations made having due regard to changes in asylum trends and resources available.

#### **HLG 3 Objective No 2**

##### To detect and minimise abuse of the asylum process

It is essential that we fully honour our international obligations under national and international law in relation to asylum seekers who have a genuine fear of persecution. This is the basis for the processes and procedures in place in ORAC in order to fully assist those seeking protection from persecution. Regrettably, it has been found that some applicants make claims which cannot be substantiated or which prove fraudulent or fail in other ways to co-operate with the asylum process. These applications do a disservice to asylum seekers and the public at large and can result in the resources of the organisation being utilised in less than the most efficient and effective manner. It is important for the integrity of the asylum process that those who do not meet the statutory requirements for refugee status, or who should be excluded from protection, are not allowed to avail of or misuse this important process.



The AISIP IT system and other relevant IT systems enable staff in ORAC to access up to date details regarding a person, any applications they have made in the past or are in the process of making, the status of those applications and the history of any previous asylum or immigration applications. These systems will continue to be utilised in order to verify and support asylum claims or to identify any inconsistencies.

*Strategies to Support Objective*

- Continue to work with UNHCR with a view to improving procedures to preserve the integrity of the asylum process.
- Provide an investigative support to other areas in ORAC.
- Assess and translate relevant documents submitted by applicants as quickly and professionally as possible.
- Liaise and enhance co-operation with the Garda National Immigration Bureau, INIS and with other relevant State agencies, to detect and prevent misuse of the asylum process.
- Maximise use of fingerprinting, including the AFIS electronic fingerprint system and the EURODAC system, to detect applicants who may apply more than once in the State and/or in more than one Contracting country to the EU Dublin II Regulation.
- Maximum use to be made of the AVATS system to check if applicants have previously been issued visas to enter Ireland.
- Maintain and review security features on Temporary Residence Certificate.
- Identify as quickly as possible those who fail to co-operate with the investigation of an asylum application and take appropriate action.
- Investigate possible misuse of the asylum process as provided for in national and international legislation, in order to protect its integrity.
- Liaise with the Reception and Integration Agency to update addresses of applicants.
- Implement legislative provisions designed to identify unfounded applications.
- Continue to develop COI resources, in liaison with RDC, to assist in the identification of false claims.
- Continue to use language analysis, where appropriate, in order to assist in establishing the veracity of an applicant's claim to be from a particular geographic area or speech community.
- Identify swiftly applicants who may have to be excluded from Refugee Status in accordance with the law.



- Continue to implement procedures to assist in arriving at an opinion as to whether a person should be deemed an adult or a minor in relation to their asylum application.
- Continue to implement procedures to detect impersonation of applicants.
- Use AISIP and other relevant IT systems to the fullest extent, to establish an applicant's immigration history, and to identify any potential abuse of the system.

#### *Performance Indicators*

- The confidence of relevant stakeholders including the UNHCR in our process as evidenced by feedback, advice and comment.
- Investigative support provided as required.
- All documents assessed and translated professionally and promptly.
- Ongoing liaison with the Garda National Immigration Bureau, INIS and other relevant State agencies, to detect and prevent misuse of the asylum process.
- Maximum use made of AFIS, AVATS, EURODAC and other relevant IT systems and multiple applicants identified.
- Security features on Temporary Residence Certificate maintained and reviewed.
- Applicants not co-operating with the asylum process in line with their statutory obligations notified and a recommendation made in accordance with statutory requirements.
- Decisive action taken in respect of applicants who fail to cooperate with the investigation of their application.
- Misuse of the asylum determination process investigated and dealt with having due regard to national and international protection obligations.
- Ongoing liaison with RIA maintained.
- Effective implementation of legislative provisions dealing with unfounded applications.
- Quality COI research developed and in place, in liaison with the RDC and other relevant sources.
- Language analysis interview carried out and report made available to caseworker in appropriate cases, in order to assist in establishing the veracity of an applicant's claim to be from a particular geographic area or speech community and to be considered in conjunction with all other elements of the asylum claim.
- Exclusion clause applied appropriately in the report to the Minister for Justice and Equality and at oral hearings at the Refugee Appeals Tribunal.



- Agreed multi agency approach to age assessment best practice.
- Early detection of impersonation by checking the details of applicants on arrival for interviews.
- Better informed asylum recommendations.

### **HLG 3 Objective No 3**

#### To represent the Commissioner at appeal hearings at the Refugee Appeals Tribunal

We will continue to provide high quality and maximum possible representation at oral appeal hearings in the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. Hearings will be serviced by Presenting Officers with the required knowledge, training and expertise to represent the Commissioner.

#### *Strategies to Support Objective*

- Continue to provide and train ORAC staff to represent the Commissioner to the maximum extent possible having regard to resources available at Appeal Hearings of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT).
- Consider grounds of appeal and prepare a strategy to address the issues raised by the applicant and their legal representative(s).
- Work closely with the Refugee Appeals Tribunal within statutory framework, to ensure that the maximum number of hearings are scheduled for Presenting Officers to represent the Commissioner at Appeal hearings.
- Respond at appeal hearings to the issues raised in the applicant's appeal and to assist the Member of Tribunal in reaching a fair and just decision.
- Provide timely and appropriate responses to requests from the Refugee Appeals Tribunal under section 16(6) and 16(7) of the Refugee Act, 1996.

#### *Performance Indicators*

- Commissioner represented with a quality input at oral hearings in RAT.
- All grounds of appeal considered and a strategy prepared to respond to the grounds of appeal.
- Number of appeal hearings at which Commissioner can be represented is maximised.
- Effective responses provided at appeal hearings to the issues raised in the applicant's grounds of appeal.
- Timely and appropriate responses to Refugee Appeals Tribunal requests under section 16(6) and 16(7) of the Refugee Act, 1996 within 2 weeks, in so far as it is possible to do so.



### **HLG 3 Objective No 4**

#### **To develop our own policies and procedures to preserve the integrity of the asylum process.**

We are committed to equipping our caseworkers and decision-makers with the knowledge and skills to deliver high quality, fair, consistent and legally robust recommendations by providing high quality and objective Country of Origin Information (COI) including via the Refugee Documentation Centre (RDC), the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and other relevant sources.

ORAC will also manage in a proactive, effective and efficient manner its judicial review caseload.

#### *Strategies to Support Objective*

- Ensure that the necessary policies and procedures are in place, to support caseworkers in the investigation and determination of asylum applications.
- Continue to deliver in-depth training in refugee status determination and COI research, in liaison with the RDC, to ORAC authorised officers.
- Manage the provision of objective COI and refugee status determination material including making maximum use of ORAC's internal investigation capacity and the services of the RDC and the EASO country reports.
- Ensure our COI sources are up-to-date, relevant and reliable as possible, and available to ORAC authorised officers in a timely manner.
- Manage ORAC's response to legal challenges, in particular, in order to support the integrity of the asylum process, in close cooperation with the Chief State Solicitor's Office, and with other stakeholders.
- Provide accurate and timely management information on legal challenges to ORAC, and contribute to the ongoing review of such challenges and their implications for policies and procedures of the asylum process.
- Continue to develop in-house knowledge of historic and evolving caselaw, including national, CJEU, ECtHR and other States.
- Minimise the costs arising from legal challenges to ORAC, in liaison with the Chief State Solicitor's Office and other relevant stakeholders, and contribute to the payment of Bills of Costs within the legislative timeframes.
- Prepare quality responses to judicial review applications.
- Provide feedback to caseworkers and other relevant staff on issues which gave rise to a successful judicial review or RAT set aside decisions.



*Performance Indicators*

- Legally robust policies and procedures in place to support ORAC refugee status determination recommendations.
- ORAC authorised officers who are highly trained in refugee status determination and COI material, in place.
- Reliable, up to date and good quality, objective COI, from a variety of professional sources, used to support ORAC refugee status determination recommendations, family reunification reports and ORAC's input at hearings of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal.
- Maximum use made of ORAC's internal investigation capacity and the services of the RDC.
- Reliable, up-to-date and relevant COI from public sources, which has been assessed by the RDC and/or is available from recognised COI databases such as the UNHCR's RefWorld database, utilised.
- Continued to interact proactively with the Chief State Solicitor's Office and other stakeholders as necessary, in order to reach efficient decisions on finalising cases, in instances of clear error or mistake, thereby minimising costs to the Exchequer, and also to ensure robust defence of legal challenges where this is deemed appropriate.
- Observations, instructions and, where necessary, affidavits forwarded to the Chief State Solicitor's Office within Court deadlines, in consultation with other relevant stakeholders.
- Resources to support in-house knowledge of caselaw, including participation in external networks, maintained and kept under review.
- Resources, such as statistical information, to support the provision of accurate and timely management information to senior management concerning legal challenges to ORAC are maintained and kept under review.
- Bills of Costs efficiently reviewed and processed, to meet legislative timeframes.
- Units in ORAC aware of relevant Court judgments and legal opinions and Refugee Appeals Tribunal set aside issues/decisions.



## **Part 2**

### **Customer Services and Business Support and High Level Goals 4 and 5**



## High Level Goal 4

### To maintain excellent customer service.

#### HLG 4 Objective No 1

##### To deliver high quality customer service.

One of our main priorities is the provision of a professional, high quality and efficient service to all our customers. Working with our Customer Service Liaison Panel we will seek to maintain our high standards of customer service and continue to develop systems to help asylum seekers engage fully in the asylum application process.

##### *Strategies to Support Objective*

- Ensure that all customers are made aware of the standards as set out in the Customer Charter and review the Customer Charter annually.
- Implement and monitor the Customer Service Action Plan and report on performance against standards in the Annual Report.
- Implement and monitor the Customer Complaints Procedure.
- Carry out surveys of customers to determine the level of customer satisfaction with the ORAC's service delivery.
- Ensure that internal and external communications are addressed in each Unit's business plan and that they are reported on in each Annual Report.
- Support continuous development of staff by investing in high quality customer service training, as required.
- Provide high quality information in response to enquiries.
- Record and monitor communications using correspondence tracking systems.
- Liaise with Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS), Department of Social Protection, UNHCR, Reception and Integration Agency (RIA), Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT), Refugee Legal Service (RLS), Health Service Executive (HSE), An Garda Síochána and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who represent the interests of asylum seekers and refugees as well as other relevant stakeholders.
- Ensure that all stakeholders are made aware of any relevant developments in ORAC.
- Engage fully in the INIS business transformation process.



### *Performance Indicators*

- Customer Charter leaflet issued to every new applicant. Customer Charter reviewed annually and any issues progressed.
- Customer Service Action Plan implemented, monitored and reported on in Annual Report.
- Feedback from ORAC stakeholders including through customer surveys.
- An operational Customer Complaints Procedure in place and monitored.
- Focused programme of customer surveys in place.
- Internal and External Communications addressed in Units' business plans.
- Internal and External Communications reported on in the Annual Report .
- An established programme of customer service training in place.
- Targets in Customer Service Action Plan and Customer Charter achieved.
- Correspondence tracking systems in place.
- Liaison meetings held with relevant stakeholders.
- Information provided on relevant developments in ORAC to stakeholders.
- Full engagement in the INIS business transformation process.

### **HLG 4 Objective No 2**

#### To provide clear information to customers regarding the asylum process.

Information on the refugee determination process and the family reunification process will continue to be made available to customers in a clear, transparent and accessible manner. All queries and enquiries (written, in person, telephone and/or email) will be dealt with promptly and completely.

#### *Strategies to Support Objective*

- Ensure the Information Leaflet for Applicants for Refugee Status is available in a range of languages and that all forms which issue up-to-date.
- Ensure that information is made available in a user friendly format.
- Assess the requirements of persons with a disability and those with special needs and provide the information in an appropriate format where possible.



- Ensure a comprehensive Records Management System is in place to support customer service provision.
- Respond to correspondence in a prompt manner.
- Update the Customer Service Liaison Panel on significant new developments at meetings of the Panel.
- Participate at seminars and other public fora where information on the asylum process is made available.
- Ensure that corporate documents and information relevant to the asylum and family reunification process are available and up-to-date on the ORAC website.
- Carry out customer surveys to assess customer satisfaction.
- Ensure that all applicants are aware of their entitlements under the Data Protection Acts, 1988 and 2003.
- Update and make maximum use of ORAC website as means of communication.

#### *Performance Indicators*

- Information Leaflet for Applicants for Refugee Status available in a range of languages and all forms which issue to applicants up-to-date.
- Information provided in a user friendly manner to all applicants.
- Information available in appropriate formats to persons with a disability and special needs.
- Comprehensive Records Management System to support customer service process in place.
- Responses to correspondence issued within the timeframes set out in the Customer Service Action Plan.
- Customer Service Liaison Panel meetings held and any significant developments notified to members.
- ORAC participation as appropriate at seminars and other public fora.
- All corporate documents, information and website data available and up-to-date.
- General level of satisfaction with customer service as established by customer surveys.
- Data Protection entitlements made known to applicants in an appropriate manner.
- ORAC website updated and maximum use made of it for communication purposes.



### **HLG 4 Objective No 3**

#### **To provide a comprehensive and effective complaints procedure.**

Feedback and comment on all aspects of ORAC services are welcomed and encouraged. Having due regard to our statutory obligations, any customer who is not satisfied with the standard of customer service provided by the Office may contact us in writing. We will investigate the complaint promptly, through our complaints procedure.

#### *Strategies to Support Objective*

- Ensure that information regarding the Customer Complaints Procedure is available through the Customer Service Liaison Panel, ORAC website and other fora.
- Ensure the Customer Complaints Procedures are adhered to in full.
- Notify all applicants of complaints procedures.
- Utilise, as appropriate, methods of redress set out in Customer Complaints Procedures.

#### *Performance Indicators*

- Information regarding the Customer Complaints Procedure available through the Customer Service Liaison Panel, ORAC website and other fora.
- Effective complaints procedure in place.
- Information regarding complaints procedure provided to all applicants.
- All avenues of redress set out in the Customer Complaints Procedures explored.



## High Level Goal 5

**To efficiently and effectively manage our organisation and its resources in line with best practice, taking into account allocated resources and having regard to the development and training of our staff.**

### **Public Sector Reform**

The priorities of the Public Sector reform programme shape our commitments and actions in this area. ORAC will continue to respond to the challenges posed by the ongoing use of modern management practices and the effective and efficient use of resources. We will also continue to utilise strategic and operational planning as well as reviewing performance measurements and continuing to improve the quality, consistency and efficiency of our decision making.

A key determinant in the management of change under current and future public sector agreements will be the ability of the organisation and its staff to cater for reduced resources, both human and financial, especially by optimising the use of flexible work practices including ICT solutions.

Our organisational structure is reviewed continuously to ensure that it supports good internal and external communication and co-ordination of our activities to achieve effective and efficient outcomes having due regard to the planned organisational changes in the context of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill. Reliable and robust internal operations are essential in order to support our key public service commitments and maintain effective working relationships with all our stakeholders.

### **HLG 5 Objective No 1**

Ensure our strategic business planning and individual performance planning frameworks support optimum performance by the organisation.

### **Planning**

Strategic and business planning continues to be an integral part of the work of each unit within ORAC to ensure a coherent approach to the development, management and implementation of our goals. The Corporate, Strategic and Business Plans are reflected in the role profiles and goal setting of each staff member under the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS). This enables us to specify individual objectives in greater detail and to define the actions required to achieve them.

### *Strategies to Support Objective*

- Respond to public sector reform in a manner that sustains and enhances the capacity of the organisation to carry out its functions.



- Prepare annual business plans.
- Regularly monitor and review business plans and respond to findings as appropriate.
- Review the management of risk throughout the Office and report on a regular basis.
- Implement PMDS.
- Review Strategy Statement on an annual basis.

#### *Performance Indicators*

- Priorities and objectives of Public Sector reform programme complied with.
- Agreed Business Plan ready for the start of each year following staff consultation.
- Quarterly Business Plan review reports completed and any relevant issues addressed.
- Quarterly Risk Management review reports completed.
- Individual PMDS role profile and goal setting forms and reviews completed within prescribed timeframe.
- Strategy Statement reviewed regularly.

### **HLG 5 Objective No 2**

Manage human resources to meet the business needs of the organisation and the development needs of staff.

#### **Human Resources**

ORAC's staff are its most valuable resource and we fully recognise that a skilled, adaptable and motivated workforce will enable us to achieve the objectives and standards required to meet our business needs. The professionalism, commitment and integrity of the staff are vital to our continued success. Ensuring that we use staff resources effectively while at the same time facilitating staff to develop their careers will be a continuing challenge. We facilitate family-friendly working and flexible working arrangements responsive to the needs of staff, the organisation and its stakeholders. We are committed to improved human resource management through the development, implementation and ongoing review of a formal Human Resource Strategy.

#### *Strategies to Support Objective*

- Keep our organisation structure under ongoing review and deploy staff in the most efficient and effective manner to meet the requirements of the business and strategic objectives of the Office.



- Continue to implement our Training and Development Strategy 2012-2014.
- Develop the expertise and capacity of staff members in the context of significant organisational change.
- Continue to apply family-friendly initiatives in accordance with agreed public service policies and having due regard to the needs of the organisation.
- Continue to implement and review our equality policies and programmes.
- Continue to implement PMDS.
- Continue to monitor and review the extended pilot e-working scheme in line with business needs.
- Engage fully in the INIS business transformation process.

#### *Performance Indicators*

- Resources and organisational structure of office utilised in most efficient and effective manner and regular reviews conducted of organisation structure and staffing levels.
- Implementation of the commitments contained in the Training and Development Strategy and progress monitored.
- Range of Work/Life Balance Schemes available to staff having due regard to the needs of the organisation and public service policy in this area.
- Implementation of the equality programme and annual reports on progress provided to the Partnership Committee.
- Implementation of PMDS and its integration with HRM policies.
- Extended pilot e-working scheme reviewed as required.
- Full engagement in the INIS business transformation process.

#### **HLG 5 Objective No 3**

Make optimum use of ICT solutions to support the business needs of the organisation.

#### **Information and Communication Technology**

Information and communications technology play a key role in supporting ORAC's business objectives and enhancing the service delivery of the organisation. ICT support is provided by the Department of Justice and Equality through the CITRIX framework.



The further development of IT systems, over the period of the strategy, will have a major impact on our ability to meet our high level goals. Furthermore, we will continue to enhance our internal management information systems to help us to better meet the information and communication needs of the Office.

*Strategies to Support Objective*

- Maintain management information and IT systems to facilitate analysis of applications, the issue of recommendations and to meet other needs of the organisation with a view to, *inter alia*, protecting the integrity of the asylum process.
- Liaise with IT Division, Department of Justice and Equality in maintaining and improving our ICT environment including the optimum use of the ORAC Management Live system and Asylum and Immigration Strategic Integration Programme (AISIP).
- Utilise other specialist systems to meet the needs of the Office.
- Provide suitable e-working and flexible working technological aids/solutions.
- Provide ICT training in organisation as required.
- Maintain website and keep up-to-date.
- Utilise existing systems to provide up-to-date statistical and management information to support business planning with particular reference to the use of the services of the ORAC/INIS Reporting and Analysis Unit.
- Engage fully in the business transformation process in the context of INIS shared services approach to the development and distribution of statistical and management information in the context of the ORAC/INIS Reporting and Analysis Unit.
- Engage fully in the INIS business transformation process to ensure that arrangements are in place for IT requirements in the context of the implementation of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill.
- Maintain and support ORAC's IT and telecommunications infrastructure within the context of the CITRIX framework.

*Performance Indicators*

- Maximum and effective use made of existing IT solutions (including ORAC Management Live system and AISIP) to support business needs of the organisation.
- Introduction and successful utilisation of other specialist systems as required.
- Successful implementation of e-working and flexible working technologies.
- Appropriate ICT training identified and provided.
- Website information current and correct.



- Management information and up-to-date accurate statistical information provided to support business planning.
- Full engagement in the INIS business transformation process from a statistical and management information perspective and in the context of the Reporting and Analysis Unit, INIS.
- Full engagement in the INIS business transformation process and arrangements put in place for IT requirements in the context of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill.
- Secure and stable ICT infrastructure in place.

#### **HLG 5 Objective No 4**

Manage financial resources in the context of Public Sector Reform in a manner consistent with the requirements of the Office.

#### **Financial Management**

ORAC receives an annual allocation of funding from the Department of Justice and Equality for which the Secretary General of the Department is the Accounting Officer and the accounts for ORAC are included in the annual Departmental accounts. The Office will continue to:

- Utilise in an effective and efficient manner the resources allocated for the implementation of our work functions.
- Prepare budgets and estimates relating to our needs within the context of INIS Shared Financial Services framework.
- Ensure effective management and control of financial resources.
- Operate sound financial administration.
- Maintain, monitor and report on financial performance.
- Prepare ORAC's Appropriation Account.
- Comply with the requirements of the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General and liaise with the Shared Services Unit of INIS, the Internal Audit and relevant Finance Units of the Department of Justice and Equality, where necessary.
- Fully comply with public procurement requirements.

#### *Strategies to Support Objective*

- Implement the provisions of the ORAC Financial Policy Procedures Document.



- Implement sound financial planning, monitoring and administration to ensure most effective and efficient use of resources, having regard to the terms of Public Procurement Guidelines and prompt payments legislation.
- Continue to implement monitoring and control mechanisms to ensure value for money.
- Continue to use the ORACLE Financial Management System.
- Monitor expenditure and provide cost/benefit analysis of major expenditure.

#### *Performance Indicators*

- Continued implementation, throughout all areas of ORAC, of the provisions of ORAC's Financial Policy Procedures Document.
- Public procurement and prompt payments requirements complied with.
- Government accounting requirements fully met.
- ORACLE Financial Management System used effectively.
- Effective and efficient management of ORAC's annual financial allocation.

#### **HLG 5 Objective No 5**

To effectively manage the services and facilities of the Office.

#### **Organisation**

To ensure, within the INIS Shared Services framework, that all of ORAC's organisational, accommodation and other essential support needs are fully operational, maintained and serviced including the provision of a sound Health and Safety Strategy.

#### *Strategies to Support Objective*

- Implement a sound effective Health and Safety Strategy for the organisation in line with current legislation.
- Deliver all of ORAC's organisational, accommodation, cleaning and security and other essential support needs in a timely fashion.
- Ensure that Energy Awareness is monitored in line with commitments in the Energy Action Plan.
- Operate a timely and efficient internal and external mail delivery and distribution system.



### *Performance Indicators*

- Full compliance with Health and Safety legislation.
- Timely delivery of all of ORAC's organisational, accommodation, cleaning and security and other essential support needs.
- Energy Awareness monitored in line with commitments in the Energy Action Plan.
- Implementation of a timely and efficient internal and external mail delivery and distribution system.

### **HLG 5 Objective No 6**

To build a strong commitment to new ways of working through partnership.

#### **Partnership**

As with the previous Strategy Statements, maintaining and developing partnership will be a priority during the period in which this Statement applies. Having due regard to the responsibilities of senior management in the organisation, we will continue to ensure that partnership is central to promoting internal dialogue and consultation in the process of change and improvement. We will further develop and progress initiatives including workplace learning, promoting diversity and work life balance having due regard to business needs. We will manage business transformation in a partnership way by building capabilities to proactively introduce and manage change as well as tackling challenges. We recognise that effective delivery on a challenging agenda and our targets requires a partnership approach.

#### *Strategies to Support Objective*

- Continue to promote partnership throughout the workplace.
- Ensure partnership involvement in the organisation's strategic and business planning process.
- Deepen the change process in all areas of the organisation and promote best practice.
- Develop a communicative and collaborative environment.
- Encourage the development of new ways of working through partnership aimed at increasing flexibility and improving performance having due regard to the statutory responsibilities of the organisation and business needs.
- Advocate a performance culture whilst maintaining a good workplace environment.
- Promote and create an environment which is responsive to the needs of staff, within the overall framework of the statutory responsibilities of the organisation and business needs.



### *Performance Indicators*

- Bi-monthly Partnership Committee meetings held with observers present and minutes available. Time allocated for unit meetings, PMDS, and business transformation at unit level.
- Partnership embedded and an integral part of the Organisation's strategic and business planning and culture.
- Improved organisational performance as evidenced, for example, by Annual Reports and statistics.
- An efficient, modern and customer oriented organisation.
- Business transformation and modernisation delivered in a timely and effective manner.
- Increased staff involvement in the workplace through staff meetings, working groups and Business Plan meetings.
- Ongoing investment in workplace training and lifelong learning opportunities.
- Staff suggestion scheme in place.

### **HLG 5 Objective No 7**

To provide quality corporate support to the ORAC to discharge its statutory and non-statutory functions and also to effectively monitor the Office's communications, both internal and external.

#### **Corporate Office**

The role of the Corporate side of the Corporate and Customer Service Centre is to oversee the provision of quality administrative and secretarial support to the Refugee Applications Commissioner and the Senior Management Team to enable the discharge of statutory and non-statutory functions. The Office co-ordinates material in response to requests from, *inter alia*, the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, other Government Departments/agencies, other stakeholders and the media. It also prepares all corporate documents and is responsible for their circulation.

#### *Strategies to Support Objective*

- Provide quality administrative and secretarial support to the Commissioner, senior management and the Partnership Committee having due regard to the business transformation process taking place in INIS.
- Prepare and co-ordinate material in accordance with guidelines for release to other Government Departments and agencies, international fora and media as well as responses to Parliamentary Questions.



- Prepare and publish the organisation's corporate documents.
- Ensure that ORAC meets our commitments under the Official Languages Act, 2003.
- Ensure that ORAC meets our commitments under the Data Protection Acts, 1998 and 2003.
- Ensure that internal communications objectives are included in all unit business plans.
- Ensure that external communications objectives are included in all unit business plans.

#### *Performance Indicators*

- Commissioner, senior management and Partnership Committee provided with quality administrative and secretarial support.
- All data prepared and released according to set guidelines.
- Corporate documents published in accordance with statutory stipulations and timeframes.
- Relevant corporate documents are available in Irish.
- Obligations under the Data Protection Acts, 1988 and 2003 are met.
- Quarterly review of internal communication objectives.
- Quarterly review of external communication objectives.
- Full engagement in business transformation process and successful transition of services to INIS.

#### **HLG 5 Objective No 8**

##### Internal support to the Office through the provision of a copying and registry service.

#### *Strategies to support objective*

- Continued delivery of an effective copying and registry service.
- Copy files within prescribed turnaround times.

#### *Performance indicators*

- Files copied within the specified deadlines.
- General level of satisfaction with the level of copying and registry service provided to the Office.



## Appendix 1

### ORAC Management Staffing Structure

<b>Commissioner</b>		
<b>Principal Officer**</b>		
<b>Assistant Principal Officer</b>	<b>Assistant Principal Officer</b>	<b>Assistant Principal Officer</b>
Family Reunification Unit	Corporate & Customer Service Centre*  Staff Support & Training Unit*  Presenting Unit*  Reporting and Analysis Unit (ORAC aspects)*	Judicial Review Unit*  Research (COI) and Legal Analysis Unit *
<b>Principal Officer</b>		
<b>Assistant Principal Officer</b>	<b>Assistant Principal Officer</b>	<b>Assistant Principal Officer</b>
Case Processing Units  Administration & Arrangements Unit	Dublin Regulation Unit  Investigation & Liaison Unit  Reception Unit	Policy & Procedures Unit  Single Procedure Transition Team

\* These Units report directly to the Commissioner.

\*\* 1 Principal Officer vacancy.



## Appendix 2

### ORAC's Main Contact Organisations

An Garda Síochána  
Chief State Solicitor's Office  
Comptroller and Auditor General's Office  
Department of Justice and Equality (Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service)  
Department of Social Protection  
European Asylum Support Office  
European Commission  
European Migration Network (EMN)  
General Directors' Immigration Services Conference (GDISC)  
Health Service Executive  
Houses of the Oireachtas  
Intergovernmental Consultations on Asylum, Refugee and Migration Policies (IGC)  
Irish Prison Service  
NGOs as represented on the Customer Service Liaison Panel  
Office of Public Works  
Office of the Attorney General  
Refugee Appeals Tribunal  
Refugee Documentation Centre  
Reception and Integration Agency  
Refugee Legal Service  
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)



## Appendix 3

### Some Cross Agency Issues involving ORAC

Issue	Dept / Agencies Involved	Action Required by ORAC
Verifying the current address of asylum seekers.	Dept of Social Protection and RIA.	Liaise with Dept. of Social Protection and RIA to verify current addresses.
Informing applicants of their right to seek help with their asylum claim from legal representatives including the Refugee Legal Service (RLS).	Refugee Legal Service Law Society Private Law Firms.	This Office encourages applicants to seek legal advice through the provision of appropriate information.
Representation of the Commissioner at oral appeal hearings of RAT.	Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT).	Provide effective representation at appeal hearings.
Provide replies to statutory requests from RAT under Section 16 of the Refugee Act, 1996.	RAT.	Provide timely and appropriate responses.
Fingerprints transmitted to Garda Headquarters.	An Garda Síochána.	Garda HQ are responsible for storing and maintaining the fingerprints of asylum seekers. They provide results to ORAC on matching fingerprints.
Unaccompanied Minors.	Health Service Executive (HSE).	Liaise with HSE regarding the examination of applications from unaccompanied minors or for family reunification as required.
Effective operation of EU Dublin II Process.	An Garda Síochána Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS).	Liaison with GNIB and relevant INIS Divisions on effective implementation of Dublin II Regulation within statutory frameworks.
Implementation of INIS business transformation process including new legislation.	INIS Divisions.	To participate proactively in key INIS project groups.
Liaison with INIS on policy and legislative developments generally in relation to asylum.	INIS Divisions.	To maintain ongoing liaison as appropriate.



<b>Issue</b>	<b>Dept / Agencies Involved</b>	<b>Action Required by ORAC</b>
Facilitate appropriate access to information required for the investigation / prevention of crime and fraud.	GNIB, Dept. of Social Protection, HSE	Operate agreed liaison arrangements with other bodies in compliance with Refugee Act, 1996, Data Protection and other relevant legislation.
Facilitate transfer of applicants' files in relation to Appeals, Withdrawal of Applications and Ministerial Decisions.	INIS and RAT.	Operate agreed secure file transfer procedures.
Development and implementation of IT Projects including AISIP.	INIS, RIA, RAT and RLS.	Participate in Asylum IT strategy development and implementation.
Training Groups.	UNHCR, RAT, RIA, RLS, INIS and training deliverer.	Participate in asylum area and other training groups.
EURODAC.	INIS, GNIB, EU Commission, other Dublin Regulation States.	Participate in training and other relevant initiatives.
Up-to-date, authoritative, relevant Country of Origin Information.	Refugee Documentation Centre, UNHCR, IGC, other States.	Participation in relevant working groups and committees.
Applicants in detention.	GNIB, Irish Prison Service.	Investigation of applications for asylum – prioritisation.
Preparation and publication of Corporate Documents.	INIS and Houses of Oireachtas.	Submit within the statutory timeframes.
Input into legislative development and practical cooperation in asylum at EU level.	European Commission, European Asylum Support Office, INIS.	Participate in and input into relevant meetings as appropriate.



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