



25th June 2010

## Publication of the 2009 Annual Report of

### THE OFFICE OF THE REFUGEE APPLICATIONS COMMISSIONER

The ninth Annual Report of the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) has now been published.

The Annual Report details the progress which was made during 2009 in delivering on the goals and objectives set out in the Office's *Strategy Statement 2007-2009*. The Refugee Applications Commissioner, David Costello, reported that in 2009 the total number of applications received was 2,689. This represents a 30% reduction in applications compared to 2008 and is also the lowest annual number of applications since 1997.

During 2009, significant progress continued to be made in the processing of applications. A total of 3,908 cases were finalised. At the end of the year, there were some 470 cases on hands, only 87 cases of which were over 6 months.

Applications processed under the Ministerial Prioritisation Directive were completed within 17 to 20 working days from the date of application. Non-prioritised cases were processed to completion within 19 to 21 weeks of the date of application during the early part of 2009. Towards the end of the year, the processing times for these cases were reduced to 8 to 9 weeks, due to proactive management and increased capacity of the interviewing schedule.

During 2009, ORAC continued to make the maximum possible use of the Dublin II Regulation, which determines the Contracting State responsible for processing an asylum application, with some 402 determinations being made, compared with 385 in 2008. This represents an increase of 4.4% on the previous year.

Some 2,395 sets of fingerprints of asylum applicants were sent to the EU EURODAC fingerprinting system with 295 hits, showing those applicants had made asylum applications in other Contracting States.

The Commissioner continued to be represented at appeal hearings before the Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT) and in consultation with the Tribunal, ORAC ensured that the maximum number of hearings per week could be serviced by its Presenting Unit. Some 3,190 hearings were serviced, compared to 2,091 in 2008, which represents an increase of 53%.

**Note: The Annual Report is available on the website of the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner at [www.orac.ie](http://www.orac.ie).**

Contact: 01- 602 8170/8094 oracmail@orac.ie

### **Notes for Editors**

- The Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner is an independent Office which considers applications for refugee status at first instance and makes recommendations to the Minister for Justice and Law Reform on whether such status should be granted. It is also responsible for the investigation and preparation of reports to the Minister on applications from those granted refugee status who subsequently seek permission for a family member to enter and live in the State.

### **Additional key points in the Report include:**

- The top six applicant countries for 2009 were Nigeria (21.2%), Pakistan (9.6%), China (7.2%), Democratic Republic of Congo (3.8%), Zimbabwe (3.4%) and Georgia (3.3%), as compared to Nigeria, Pakistan, Iraq, Georgia, China and the Democratic Republic of Congo for 2008.
- In 2009, 56 applications were received from Unaccompanied Minors seeking asylum, which accounted for 2.1% of the total number of applications received. There has been a substantial reduction in such applications compared to say 2003 when 271 were received.
- ORAC continued to prioritise applications made by persons in detention in line with statutory requirements. A total of 231 applications were received from persons in detention in 2009. This figure constitutes 8.6% of all applications received.
- 450 applications for Family Reunification were received from the Minister for Justice and Law Reform for investigation in 2009, an increase of 10% over the 2008 figures.
- A total of 723 asylum applications were deemed withdrawn from the process for various reasons including applicants failing to co-operate or attend for interview.
- There was a significant decrease in the number of new legal challenges in which ORAC was a respondent during 2009. 92 legal challenges were taken during 2009 (including 13 cases taken in relation to the Dublin II Regulation) compared with 266 cases during 2008, a reduction of some 65%.

**ENDS**