Office of the
Refugee Applications Commissioner

Strategy Statement, 2010-2012

Contents

Foreword by the Refugee Applications Commissioner

I am pleased to present the third Strategy Statement for the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner covering the period 2010–2012.

We, as an organisation, are entering into a period of change in the months ahead. With the enactment of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill, 2008, ORAC will be subsumed into the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS). The INIS will then be responsible for determining applications for refugee status at first instance as part of a wider single procedure which will also consider subsidiary protection and other residence permission issues.

This document sets a clear direction for our activities in the period between its publication and the planned new statutory arrangements under INIS coming into operation. In this regard, it builds upon our second Strategy Statement (2007-2009) and reflects much of its framework and contents.

ORAC will continue to co-operate fully in the transition process connected with the new legislation which will provide a significant challenge to the organisation in the period ahead. We will also continue to undertake our existing statutory responsibilities under the Refugee Act, 1996 in an efficient and fair manner so long as that legislation continues to be in place.

While our mission will generally remain unchanged during that period, our goals, objectives and strategies for their achievement have been updated, to reflect the diverse needs of our customer base, our staff and our different stakeholders, as well as the forthcoming legislation.

The great benefit of many of the elements of this Strategy Statement is that while being clear in terms of delivery, they are flexible in terms of implementation and will therefore continue to provide a very good foundation for carrying work forward in the new processing framework to be put in place by INIS on the introduction of the planned single procedure.

A key strength of our organisation continues to be our staff. I want to pay tribute to their hard work and their ability to respond to the challenge of a constantly changing environment while continuing to ensure the highest standard of investigations and decision making processes.

While significant challenges lie ahead in the context of the introduction of the new legislation, I am confident that by continuing to adopt a creative and open-minded approach to change, these challenges can be fully met by all. We will also continue to respect and meet the organisation's obligations to asylum applicants and refugees under the present statutory framework and the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

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, Equality and Law Reform,*

      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, Equality and Law Reform 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 Office also fully complies with its obligations under the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations, 2006 (SI No. 518 of 2006)

The statutory functions of the Refugee Applications Commissioner are set out in the Refugee Act, 1996 as amended by the Immigration Act, 1999, the Illegal Immigrants (Trafficking) Act, 2000, the Immigration Act, 2003 and the Immigration Act, 2004. Throughout this document, the term "Refugee Act, 1996" means the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended).

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 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, Equality and Law Reform 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, Equality and Law Reform 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 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, effecting 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 the introduction of a single procedure in the State in the context of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill, 2008.

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 contribute to the preservation of the integrity of the asylum process.

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 having particular regard to the development 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 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, Equality and Law Reform.

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.

Staffing and Structure

There are some 160 staff working in the Office which is structured around the following 16 Units:

- Case Processing
- Case Processing Administration and Scheduling
- Copying/Registry
- Corporate Office
- Customer Service Centre
- Dublin Unit
- Family Reunification
- Human Resources (Personnel & Training)
- Investigation and Liaison Unit
- Judicial Review
- Policy and Procedures
- Presenting
- Reception
- Reporting and Analysis Unit (RAU)
- Research (COI) and Legal Analysis
- Single Procedure Transition Team

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. 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, which in turn means being open, honest, lawful, just and without bias. 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 around 100 countries are 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. 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, 2008 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 post of Refugee Applications Commissioner will be abolished and this Office will report directly to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform as part of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS).

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.

Liaison with other Agencies

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 regular meetings with the select organisations on specific issues.

High Level Goal 1

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

HLG 1 Objective No 1

To achieve optimum productivity in processing applications for a declaration for refugee status within minimum timeframes and in the order of priority designated by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

Over the period of this Strategy Statement, our focus will continue on delivering quality decisions in a consistent and timely manner on applications for refugee status at first instance and to make recommendations to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform on whether such status should be granted. Our emphasis will continue to be on the scheduling of applicants for interview on the date of application in so far as is possible. In the main, we will continue to process all new Ministerial prioritised cases within seventeen to twenty days from their initial application and continue to process all other cases as expeditiously as possible. Due to ORAC's achievements in reducing the backlog of applications waiting for a decision and having due regard to ongoing changes in asylum trends, ORAC will continue its efforts to seek efficiencies in case processing activities, with a view to minimising average processing times, maximising the number of decisions made per month and maintaining our objective of a current status. This is contingent on maintaining the required level of trained caseworkers.

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.

- Maximise monthly interviews completed and decisions 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, Equality and Law Reform.

- Prepare, implement and review annual business plans with a strong focus on outputs.

- Maintain an effective pre-interview preparation process.

- Apply a proactive scheduling policy to make use of interviewer availability in order to maximise the number of interviews completed and decisions made.

- Streamline the processes to maximise productivity in processing applications and monitor and review processes 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 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.

- Maximise the use of information and communications technology.

Performance Indicators

- Processing times are within guidelines set down.

- Maximisation of scheduling, interviews and decisions made on a monthly basis, having due regard to changing trends in asylum applications and resources available.

- 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.

- Extent to which interviewer availability is fully utilised as evidenced by monthly reports.

- Achievement of set targets within agreed timeframes.

- Efficient and easily accessible Country of Origin Information (COI) systems in place together with relevant training and policy guidelines.

- Adequately trained staff - appropriate staff training delivered as required.

- Maximum use made of information and communications technology.

HLG 1 Objective No 2

<u>To achieve the full and efficient application of the EU Dublin II Regulation having due regard to the criteria for determining the Contracting State responsible for processing asylum applications.</u>

Strategies to Support Objective

- **Process all Dublin** cases in an effective, efficient and fair manner having due regard to legislative timescales.

- Liaise with other Contracting States and agencies to achieve effective implementation of the Dublin II Regulation.

- Liaise with other relevant Divisions of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) and the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) to achieve the effective implementation of the Dublin II Regulation.

- Streamline the processes to maximise productivity in processing Dublin II cases and to continuously monitor and review processes to ensure planned outcomes are achieved.

- Ensure that the use of information and communications technology including Eurodac and DubliNet are maximised to the full.

Performance Indicators

- Processing times are within guidelines set down.

- Maximum use made of Dublin II Regulation and agreement to transfer cases within prescribed timeframes.

- Achievement of set targets within agreed timeframes.

- 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 II process.

- Maximum use made of information and communications technology including Eurodac and DubliNet.

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 reports on Family Reunification applications from those granted refugee status who subsequently seek permission for family members to enter and reside in the State within minimum timeframes from the date of application. In preparing these reports we set out the relationship between the refugee concerned and the person(s) who are the subject of the application and the domestic circumstances of the person(s) and forward these reports to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform 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.

- Liaise with the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) to achieve effective processing of Family Reunification applications.

- 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.

- Ensure that we have the necessary training resources in place in relation to Family Reunification to cater for our current and future training needs.

- Maximise the application of information and communication technology.

- Engage fully in the change management process to ensure smooth transition to one INIS Family Reunification Unit, following enactment of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill, 2008.

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.

- Family Reunification procedures reviewed and amended as appropriate.

- Maximum use made of information and communications technology.

- Effective engagement with the change management process to ensure smooth transition to a single INIS Family Reunification Unit following the enactment and commencement of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill, 2008 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, 2008 (subject to approval by the Houses of the Oireachtas) will consolidate legislation in the immigration and asylum area and provide for future developments. The Bill is expected to be enacted in 2010 and will result in ORAC being subsumed into the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS). 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).

This Office has been working towards the successful introduction of the new legislation to ensure a smooth and effective transition. In this regard, ORAC has been fully engaged in the INIS change management process for the implementation of the Bill. To meet changing trends and challenges and new developments in refugee status and complementary protection, ORAC reviews work systems on an ongoing basis. This involves updating and modifying our systems and work practices, developing the required policies and procedures and developing training models for any new work processes. We will continue to use a partnership approach in consultation with the staff and review our staffing levels as required having due regard to changing trends in applications.

Strategies to Support Objective
- Continue to engage fully in the change management process in INIS in connection with the planned new legislative framework associated with the introduction of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill, 2008 and the single procedure.

- Inform staff about the legislative amendments and particularly those with direct implications for ORAC.

- Design and deliver appropriate training to facilitate efficient and effective implementation of new legislative changes as they occur.

- Respond effectively to the legislative amendments by way of changes in processes and/or procedures within the dates set by legislation.

- Ensure that ORAC has the necessary resources to implement legislative changes as they arise.

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 processes and procedures in place within agreed timeframes.

- New work practices in accordance with legislative amendments implemented within agreed timeframes.

High Level Goal 2

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

HLG 2 Objective No 1

<u>To maintain a consistently high quality in the investigation and processing of applications</u>.

Ireland has been recognised in the international community for having achieved a level of excellence in refugee status determination and has been praised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as a model of best practice. The focus of ORAC since its establishment is to deliver well reasoned, consistent and high quality decisions on applications for refugee status and family reunification applications in an efficient and fair manner and in accordance with the law.

The strategic priorities across the organisation are focused on further promoting quality, consistency and fair decision making. We will achieve this by maintaining, modifying, enhancing and developing further our training, policy and procedures, pre-interview research arrangements, as well as country of origin (including the use of the Refugee Documentation Centre) and management information and quality assurance systems. This Strategy includes arrangements to take into account the special needs of certain groups of vulnerable applicants e.g. persons with disabilities, unaccompanied minors and victims of torture. We will continue to enhance procedures that have been developed and implemented to ensure that the needs of these vulnerable groups are met.

Strategies to Support Objective

- Develop staff by continuing to invest in high quality training, mentoring and other support structures.

- Ensure Case Processing staff are fully supported in carrying out their work responsibilities and enabled to do so in a dignified manner.

- Apply processes and procedures designed to standardise case processing methodology.

- Ensure effective cross unit communications, including the use of Cross Unit Procedures Review Groups in relation to proposed changes to procedures.

- Maintain and further develop COI systems, including training on accessing relevant and reliable web sites where quality and concise information is available which will include guidelines 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.

- Utilise to the fullest extent possible, the resources of the Refugee Documentation Centre.

- Maintain and further develop and implement a Quality Assurance system.

- Monitor our Quality Assurance in accordance with UNHCR standards.

- 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 and other relevant international fora to keep up-to-date with developments in relation to asylum matters and provide reports to all relevant staff.

- 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 other EU states in the exchange of information to protect the integrity of the asylum process.

- Cooperate with relevant INIS Units in the development of the E-Visa system.

Performance Indicators

- Quality training and development opportunities and other necessary support provided to ORAC staff.

- Standardised policy and procedures developed in relation to the management and investigation of claims.

- Cross Unit Procedures Review Group and satisfactory cross unit communications in place.

- Quality, up-to-date, reliable, objective COI systems maintained and developed and guidelines on selected countries with recurring and complex issues provided.

- Efficient and easily accessible Country of Origin information systems including maximum use made of the resources of the Refugee Documentation Centre.

- Legally robust recommendations in accordance with relevant legislation.

- A Quality Assurance system 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.

- IGC, EU and Eurasil meetings and workshops attended and reports and relevant information on best international practice disseminated within ORAC.

- All section 16(6) and 16(7) requests responded to promptly.

- Abuses in the asylum system identified in cooperation with other EU states and integrity of process protected on an ongoing basis.

- Contribution made to the development of INIS E-Visa system contributing to the effective operation of the asylum determination process.

HLG 2 Objective No 2

<u>To maintain open and fair procedures</u>

ORAC will perform its role and functions in a manner that is transparent, accountable and efficient and will treat all applicants in accordance with fair and transparent procedures. The organisation will continue to make comprehensive, definitive and clear information available to all its stakeholders that reflects changes in legislation and procedures 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 requirements.

- Carry out initial and substantive interview with the assistance of an interpreter, where necessary and feasible, 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.

- Maintain and develop the ORAC website.

- Enable applicants who have special needs 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 requirements.

- Initial and substantive interviews completed with the assistance of an interpreter, where necessary, in line with our statutory requirements.

- Refugee Legal Service, Customer Service Liaison Panel, UNHCR and other stakeholders informed of changes to processes and procedures.

- ORAC's processes, procedures and statistics available through the website.

- Access to the asylum process complies with the legislative requirement under the national disability legislation in relation to applicants with special needs.

- Effective procedures in place in relation to unaccompanied minors.

- Customer Service Liaison Panel feedback on ORAC's procedural matters considered and addressed as appropriate.

High Level Goal 3

To contribute to the preservation of the integrity of the asylum process.

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.

In order to be granted status as a refugee, an applicant must establish that he/she has suffered past persecution or has a well founded fear of future persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion as specified in the Refugee Act, 1996. This Office conducts a face to face interview with each applicant in a non-adversarial manner designed to elicit information about the applicant's claim for refugee status. The caseworker asks questions about the applicant's experiences in the country of origin, including problems and fears about returning, as well as questions concerning the applicant's activities, background and history. Background information concerning conditions in the country of nationality is considered and the applicant's credibility and claim are assessed. A person whose claim cannot be substantiated or which proves fraudulent is, by definition, not a refugee.

Emphasis will continue to be placed on meeting our obligations to refugees under national and international law while at the same time ensuring that our process can deal fairly and speedily with unfounded claims.

Strategy to Support Objective

▪ Maintain an environment which facilitates the applicant in freely communicating the circumstances surrounding his/her application.

▪ Apply processes and procedures to effectively implement the Directive of the Minister 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.

▪ Analyse and screen applications for the early identification of possible well founded cases.

▪ Maintain an effective 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.

- Provide timely and well reasoned decisions aided by information technology and supported by reliable Country of Origin information, report writing and Refugee Status Determination material.

- Maximise monthly interviews scheduled and completed and decisions made having due regard to resources available.

Performance Indicators

- Quality information collected and recorded.

- The Directive of the Minister in relation to the prioritisation of applications fully implemented.

- ORAC is notified as soon as a detained person wishes to make an asylum application.

- Early identification of possible manifestly well founded applications.

- Applicants are scheduled for interview on day of application in so far as possible.

- Maximisation of monthly interviews scheduled and completed and decisions made having due regard to changes in asylum trends and resources available.

- Effective pre-interview preparation as evidenced by quality, up-to-date, reliable and objective Country of Origin and Refugee Status Determination material.

- Objective research and analysis of claims and the making of legally robust and high quality recommendations to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

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 genuine asylum seekers. It has been found that some applicants make claims which cannot be substantiated or which prove fraudulent. These applications do a huge disservice to asylum seekers and the public at large and waste the time and resources of the organisation. It is important for the integrity of the system of international protection 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 for those genuinely in need of protection from persecution.

Strategies to Support Objective

- Liaise with UNHCR with a view to improving procedures to preserve the integrity of the process.

- Assess and translate relevant documents submitted by applicants as quickly as possible.

- Liaise and enhance co-operation with other State agencies, including the Garda National Immigration Bureau, to detect and prevent misuse of the asylum system.

- 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.

- Maintain and review security features on Temporary Residence Certificates.

- Identify as quickly as possible those who fail to co-operate with the investigation of an application.

- Identify as quickly as possible misuse of the asylum system.

- Liaise with the Reception and Integration Agency to update addresses of applicants.

- Implement legislative provisions designed to identify unfounded applications.

- Continue to develop Country of Origin Information (COI) to assist in the identification of false claims.

- Identify swiftly applicants to whom exclusion clauses may apply.

- Continue to implement procedures to assist in determining the age of applicants.

- Continue to implement procedures to detect impersonation of applicants.

Performance Indicators

- The confidence of the UNHCR in our system as evidenced by feedback, advice and comment.

- All documents assessed and translated promptly.

- On going liaison with other State agencies, including the Garda National Immigration Bureau, to detect and prevent misuse of the system.

- Maximum use of AFIS and EURODAC and multiple applicants identified.

- Security features on Temporary Residence Certificates maintained and reviewed.

- Applicants not co-operating are notified and a decision is made in accordance with statutory requirements.

- Deal firmly with applicants who frustrate the investigation of their application.

- Abuses of the asylum determination system firmly dealt with.

- Effective implementation of legislative provisions dealing with unfounded applications.

- Quality COI research developed and in place.

- Exclusion clause applied in the report to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform 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, including fingerprint on the Temporary Residence Certificate at interviews.

HLG 3 Objective No 3

<u>To represent the Commissioner at appeal hearings at the Refugee Appeals Tribunal</u>

We will continue to provide high quality and maximum possible representation at oral appeal hearings in the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. Hearings will be serviced either by ORAC staff or, where relevant, by members of the Commissioner's Presenting Panel.

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).

- Provide and train members of a Presenting Panel, to represent the Commissioner at relevant RAT hearings.

- Consider grounds of appeal and prepare a strategy to address the issues raised by the applicant and their legal representative(s).

- 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.

- Number of appeal hearings at which Commissioner can be represented is maximised.

- All grounds of appeal considered and a strategy prepared to respond to the grounds of appeal.

- Effective responses provided at appeal hearings to the issues raised in the applicant's 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 system.

We are committed to equipping our caseworkers and decision-makers with the knowledge and skills to deliver high quality, fair, consistent and legally robust decisions by providing high quality and objective Country of Origin Information (COI).

Strategies to Support Objective

- Continue to deliver in-depth training in refugee status determination and COI research to ORAC authorised officers.

- Manage the provision of objective COI and refugee status determination material including making maximum use of the services of the Refugee Documentation Centre.

- Ensure our COI sources are up-to-date, relevant and reliable as possible.

- Prepare responses to Judicial Review (JR) applications.

- Provide feedback to caseworkers and other relevant staff on issues which gave rise to a successful Judicial Review or RAT set aside decisions.

- Ensure that the necessary policies and procedures are in place, to support caseworkers in the investigation and determination of asylum applications.

Performance Indicators

- ORAC authorised officers who are highly trained in refugee status determination and COI research.

- Good quality, objective Country of Origin Information used to support ORAC refugee status determination recommendations.

- Reliable, up-to-date and relevant COI from published sources.

- Maximum use made of the services of the Refugee Documentation Centre.

- Observations, instructions and where necessary affidavits are forwarded to the Chief State Solicitor's Office before deadlines.

- Units in ORAC are aware of relevant JR and RAT set aside issues/decisions.

- Legally robust policies and procedures in place to support ORAC refugee status determination recommendations.

Part 2

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

High Level Goal 4

To maintain excellent customer service.

<u>HLG 4 Objective No 1</u>

<u>To deliver high quality customer service.</u>

The provision of an efficient, professional and high quality service to all of our customers as set out in our Customer Service Action Plan will continue to be a priority for ORAC. 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

- Further develop and refine the Customer Service Action Plan.

- Implement and monitor the Customer Complaints Procedure.

- Continue to publish charters of standards for customers and report on performance against the standards in the Annual Report.

- 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.

- 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 and Family Affairs, 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 stakeholders.

- Ensure that all appropriate agencies are made aware of any relevant developments in ORAC.

- Engage fully in the INIS change management process and ensure smooth transition to a shared service within INIS.

Performance Indicators

- Feedback from Customer Service Liaison Panel, other stakeholders and directly through customer surveys.

- An operational Customer Complaints Procedure.

- Publication of a charter of standards for customers.

- Focused programme of customer surveys in place.

- Internal & External Communications addressed in Units' business plans.

- Internal & External Communications reported on in the Annual Report.

- An established programme of customer service training.

- Targets in Customer Service Action Plan and Customer Charter achieved.

- Correspondence tracking systems in place.

- Liaison meetings held.

- Information provided on relevant developments in ORAC to appropriate agencies.

- Full engagement in the INIS change management process and smooth transition to a shared service within INIS.

HLG 4 Objective No 2

To provide clear information to customers regarding the asylum process.

We will continue to make available a wide range of relevant information on the refugee determination process to our customers in an accessible and clear manner. Whether they contact the Office in person, in writing, by e-mail or by telephone we will deal with their enquiry swiftly and provide a complete reply.

Strategies to Support Objective

- Review the Customer Charter setting out our standards.

- Ensure the Information Leaflet for Applicants for Refugee Status is available in a range of languages.

- 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 compliance with the Official Languages Act, 2003.

- Respond to correspondence in a prompt manner.

- Update the Customer Service Liaison Panel on significant new developments at Panel meetings.

- 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 process are available and up-to-date on the ORAC website.

- Carry out of customer surveys to assess customer satisfaction.

Performance Indicators

- Customer Charter reviewed and any issues progressed.

- Information leaflet in a range of languages is provided to all applicants.

- Information provided in a user friendly manner to all applicants.

- Information is available in appropriate formats to persons with a disability and special needs.

- Obligations under the Official Languages Act, 2003 met in full.

- Correspondence replied to within required timeframes in Customer Service Action Plan.

- Meetings held with Customer Service Liaison Panel and Panel informed of significant new developments.

- 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.

HLG 4 Objective No 3

To provide a comprehensive and effective complaints procedure.

We welcome and encourage feedback on all aspect of our services. If our customers are not satisfied with the standard of service they have received from our Office or from any of our staff, having due regard to our statutory obligations, they may write to us and 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 having particular regard to the development of our staff.

Public Service Modernisation Programme

The priorities of the Public Service Modernisation Programme/Transforming Public Services agenda shape our commitments and actions and ORAC continues to respond to this demand by adopting more modern management practices and operations, continuing strategic and operational planning, reviewing performance measurements and continuing to improve the quality, consistency and efficiency of its decision making.

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, 2008. 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 has become 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 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

- 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

- Agreed Business Plan ready for the start of each year following staff consultation.

- Quarterly Business Plan review reports.

- Quarterly Risk Management review reports.

- Individual PMDS role profile forms and reviews completed within prescribed timeframe.

- Annual strategy review reports through the Annual Report.

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 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 review and deploy staff to meet the requirements of the business and strategic objectives of the Office.

- Continue to implement our 2009-2011 Training and Development Strategy.

- 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 the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS).

- Continue to monitor and review the extended pilot e-working scheme.

- Engage fully in the INIS change management process and ensure smooth transition to a shared service with INIS.

- Continue to meet our obligations under the Government's decentralisation programme.

Performance Indicators

- Implementation of the commitments contained in the HRM Strategy and progress monitored.

- 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.

- Implementation of the equality programme and annual reports on progress provided to the Partnership Committee.

- Implementation of the Performance Management and Development System and its integration with HRM policies.

- Extended pilot e-working scheme reviewed at the end of each quarter.

- Full engagement in the INIS change management process.

- Any staff transferred to other Government Departments under the Government's decentralisation programme are replaced in line with organisational requirements.

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, Equality & Law Reform through the CITRIX framework.

The further development of our 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, Equality & Law Reform in maintaining and improving our ICT environment including the optimum use of the ORAC Management Live system.

- 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 change management process in the context of INIS shared services approach to the development and distribution of statistical and management information in context of INIS Reporting and Analysis Unit.

- Engage fully in the INIS change management process to ensure that arrangements are in place for the provision of new residence permits and other IT requirements in the context of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill, 2008.

- 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) to support business needs of 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 change management process from a statistical and management information perspective and in the context of the Reporting and Analysis Unit, INIS.

- Full engagement in the INIS change management process and arrangements put in place for provision of new residence permits and other IT requirements in the context of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill, 2008.

- Secure and stable ICT infrastructure in place.

HLG 5 Objective No 4

Ensure effective use of financial resources.

Financial Management

ORAC receives an annual allocation of funding from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform 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:

- 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 will liaise with the Shared Corporate Services Unit of INIS, the Internal Audit and relevant Finance Units of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 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.

- Operate a co-ordinated monitoring process in respect of all procurement and authorised decisions on expenditure, 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.

- Engage fully in the change management process to ensure smooth transition to a shared service approach within INIS.

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 management of ORAC's annual financial allocation.

- Full engagement in change management process and successful transition to a shared financial service within INIS.

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, stationery 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, Safety and Welfare Strategy for the organisation in line with current legislation.

- Deliver all of ORAC's organisational, accommodation, stationery, cleaning and security and other essential support needs in a timely fashion.

- 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, stationery, cleaning and security and other essential support needs.

- 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. We will manage change 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.

- Develop a partnership approach to workplace innovation.

- 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.

- 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.

Performance Indicators

- Bi-monthly Partnership Committee meetings held with observers present and minutes available. Time allocated for unit meetings, PMDS, and change management 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.

- Change and modernisation delivered timely and effectively.

- Increased staff involvement in the workplace through staff meetings, working groups, Business Plan meetings, conferences and Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) days.

- 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 Office 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 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 change management 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.

- Manage the ORAC website.

- Ensure that ORAC meets our commitments under the Official Languages Act, 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.

- Engage fully in the change management process and ensure smooth transition to a shared service within INIS.

Performance Indicators

- Commissioner, senior management and Partnership Committee provided with quality administrative and secretarial support.

- All data released according to set guidelines.

- Corporate documents published in accordance with statutory stipulations and timeframes.

- Website reviewed at least quarterly and updated as necessary.

- Relevant corporate documents are available in Irish.

- Quarterly review of internal communication objectives.

- Quarterly review of external communication objectives.

- Full engagement in change management 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.

ORAC Management Staffing Structure

Commissioner				
Principal Officer				
Assistant Principal Officer	Assistant Principal Officer	Assistant Principal Officer	Assistant Principal Officer	Assistant Principal Officer
HR Unit (Personnel & Training)	Copying & Registry Family Reunification	Corporate Office Customer Service	Judicial Review Research (COI) and Legal Analysis	Presenting
Principal Officer				
Assistant Principal Officer	Assistant Principal Officer	Assistant Principal Officer		Assistant Principal Officer
Case Processing	Dublin Unit Investigation & Liaison Unit	Administration/Scheduling Reception		Single Procedure Transition Team Policy & Procedures

ORAC's Main Contact Organisations

An Garda Síochána
Chief State Solicitor's Office
Comptroller and Auditor General's Office
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service)
Department of Social and Family Affairs
European Commission
EURASIL
Health Service Executive
Houses of the Oireachtas
Intergovernmental Consultations on Asylum, Refugee and Migration Policies (Geneva)
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)

Some Cross Agency Issues involving ORAC

Issue	Dept / Agencies Involved	Action Required by ORAC
Verifying the current address of asylum seekers.	Dept of Social and Family Affairs and RIA.	Liaise with Dept. of Social and Family Affairs 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 Siochana Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS)	Liaison with GNIB and relevant INIS Divisions on effective implementation of Dublin II Regulation within statutory frameworks.

Issue	Dept / Agencies Involved	Action Required by ORAC
Implementation of INIS change management process.	INIS Divisions	To participate proactively in key INIS project groups.
Liaison with INIS on policy development generally in relation to asylum	INIS Divisions	To maintain ongoing liaison as appropriate
Facilitate appropriate access to information required for the investigation / prevention of crime and fraud.	GNIB, Dept. of Social and Family Affairs, HSE	Operate agreed liaison arrangements with other bodies in compliance with Refugee Act, 1996, Data Protection Act 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	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
Up-to-date, authoritative, relevant Country of Origin Information	Refugee Documentation Centre, UNHCR, EURASIL, 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.

For further copies of this document please contact:

Customer Service Centre

Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner
79-83 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2

Telephone: 01-6028000 Lo-call: 1890 202418 Fax: 01-6028122

Email: oracmail@orac.ie Website: www.orac.ie