Pathways to citizenship through naturalisation in Ireland

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EMN Estonia Conference
Citizenship and Migration – Today and Tomorrow
27 October 2020
Presentation overview

• Recent trends

• Overview of framework and conditions for naturalisation

• Processing of applications

• Citizenship ceremonies

• Conclusions
Acquisition of citizenship through naturalisation in Ireland

Source: Department of Justice and Equality
Decrease in acquisition of Irish citizenship by non-EU nationals...

Most common non-EU nationalities:
1. Nigeria
2. India
3. Philippines
4. Pakistan
5. United States
6. China

Source: Eurostat
...but increase in acquisition of Irish citizenship by EU nationals

![Bar chart showing the increase in acquisition of Irish citizenship by EU nationals from 2014 to 2018. The chart compares the number of non-EU nationals and EU nationals acquiring citizenship.]

**Most common EU nationalities:**
1. Poland
2. Romania
3. UK
4. Latvia
5. Hungary
6. Lithuania

Source: Eurostat
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>UK nationals</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>21,104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>13,565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>10,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>8,195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>8,223</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Eurostat
Overview of Irish naturalisation framework

- **Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956 (as amended)**

- Naturalisation conditions:
  - Age 18+ or a child born in Ireland
  - Of good character
  - 5 years residence
  - Intend to continue to reside in Ireland
  - Declare fidelity and loyalty to the State & undertake to observe laws and respect democratic values

- Minister for Justice has **discretion** to grant naturalisation

- Minister may waive conditions if: refugee, stateless person, child of naturalised parents, person of ‘Irish descent or associations’
Residence

• 5 years residence (3 years for spouses/civil partners)

• Residence must be ‘reckonable’; some residence not included:
  – Residence without legal residence permission
  – Residence as a student
  – Residence as asylum-seeker, unless recognised as a refugee

• Final year must be ‘continuous’
  – Interpretation of ‘continuous’ was focus of recent case Jones v Minister for Justice and Equality [2019]
  – Absences of up to six weeks permitted
  – Criticised by NGOs and legal practitioners as too restrictive
Good character

- Good character is not defined

- Information is obtained from the Irish police to assess the applicant’s criminal record (if any)

- Applicants must supply details in their application form relating to their character, such as: convictions in the State or other countries; if they have been the subject of a police investigation

- Failure to satisfy the good character requirement is among the top reasons for refusals in Ireland
Other requirements?

- Economic considerations
  - No requirement in law
  - However, applicants are required to submit proof of their sources of income / social welfare
- No requirement to renounce other citizenship
- No integration-related requirements:
  - Applicants are not required to demonstrate language proficiency or knowledge of Irish society
  - However, considered as part of Migrant Integration Strategy 2017-2020
Processing of naturalisation applications

- Paper-based application to Department of Justice

- Fees:
  - €175 application fee
  - €950 fee for certificate of naturalisation
    - €200 for child and widow/widower
    - Waived for refugees and stateless persons

- No maximum processing time set out in law
- 6 months up to 2019 → 12 months in 2020
- Significant delays in some cases reported by NGOs
Citizenship ceremonies

• Introduced in 2011 to give recognition to the importance of citizenship

• Welcomed as a positive development in Ireland

• Mandatory final step in naturalisation process

• Applicants must make declaration of fidelity to the nation and loyalty to the State

• Information booklet provided to applicants on right to vote, applying for passport, etc.
Conclusions

• Overall decrease in people acquiring Irish citizenship, though EU nationals increasing in recent years

• Comparatively favourable conditions for naturalisation in Ireland than in other EU Member States

• Nevertheless, applicants face a number of challenges in applying for naturalisation, including:
  – Lack of guidance on permitted absences from State
  – Lack of guidance on ‘good character’ requirement
  – Processing times frequently raised as a concern
Thanks for listening!

Further information:

[Website Link] www.emn.ie

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