



Press statement: 20 November 2014

Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Kevin Sheahan, condemns Ireland's treatment of asylum seekers at signing of Intercultural Cities agreement

Cathaoirleach of Limerick City and County Council, Cllr. Kevin Sheahan, highlighted the positive examples of cultural diversity in Limerick but condemned the negative impact of the system of Direct Provision in his speech, which marked the occasion of the signing of the Intercultural Cities agreement with the Council of Europe.

“I would not treat my cat in the fashion in which this country is treating asylum seekers. Men, women and children: some of whom who have been waiting a decade as applicants. So we can clap ourselves on the back here this evening but we are not lily white.”
(Cathaoirleach Cllr. Kevin Sheahan)

According to Integration Policy Officer, Dr. Matt Cannon, “Doras Luimni initiated Limerick's participation in the Intercultural Cities network in 2012, and it is great to see Limerick City and County Council and Limerick Integration Working Group taking on the challenge of intercultural integration and policy-making. It is very encouraging to hear the words of support from the Cathaoirleach in regard to the plight of asylum seekers. This illustrates the usefulness of these networks, shared experience and learning on the issues relating to immigration and integration”.

Karen McHugh, CEO Doras Luimni, “We are delighted with the progress Limerick has made in its intercultural efforts and the signing of the Intercultural Cities agreement formalises the Council's firm commitment to continue this work in the years ahead”.

McHugh added “We very much welcome the Cathaoirleach's statement, particularly given President Michael D. Higgins statement this week in which he also questioned its suitability. It is great that such prominent and public representatives publicly state their dismay at this failed system, the negative impact that Direct Provision makes and how this relates to migrant integration in the long-term. We now call on the Limerick City and County Council to take this opportunity to support our call for an end to this failed system of DP [Direct Provision].”

The signing of the agreement is preceded by a two day conference, which is hosted by the Limerick City and County Council in partnership with the Council of Europe, and features presentations and discussions including local and Irish champions in sport, arts heritage and culture, as well as representatives of other cities from around the globe participating in Intercultural Cities network.

It is now on us, the people of Limerick, to prosper the idea of an intercultural city and as Des Tomlinson, FAI, put it: “We have to learn from each other and use this learning for progress!”

ENDS

Editor Notes

Doras Luimní is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation based in Limerick. Our mission is to promote and uphold the human rights and wellbeing of migrants through personal advocacy, integration development and collaborative advocacy campaigns at the local and national level.

Intercultural Cities is a Council of Europe and European commission initiative, which aims to build upon a network of cities worldwide by sharing examples of best practice on integration and intercultural collaboration.

Limerick signed the Intercultural Cities agreement on Wednesday 19th November in Limerick City Hall at a reception hosted by Limerick City and County Council.

The two day conference, “Sport, Arts and Culture in the Intercultural City” is being held on 20th and 21st November in the Strand Hotel, as part of the Intercultural Cities initiative.

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