

FOR RELEASE SUNDAY 26 MAY AT 13.00

**MEDIA RELEASE: REFUGEE ORGANISATIONS HIGHLIGHT ABSENCE OF
VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT IN IRISH ASYLUM
PROCEDURE**

Eight organisations supporting people seeking asylum in Ireland have today expressed alarm at the absence of a vulnerability assessment for identifying special reception needs at the beginning of the asylum procedure. Ireland has been legally required to conduct this assessment since transposing the Reception Conditions Directive in to Irish law in June 2018. The assessment identifies the special reception needs of vulnerable asylum seekers.

Nick Henderson, CEO of the Irish Refugee Council, said:

“We call on the Irish Government and in particular the Department of Justice and Equality, the Department of Health and the Health Service Executive to develop this assessment, in consultation with people affected and supporting organisations, as soon as possible. Around 1,700 people have claimed asylum since July 2018, many of whom have been in very difficult conditions in emergency centres, with around another 5,000 already in the process. Each person, under law, should have had this assessment within 30 days of making their asylum application, to identify if they are vulnerable and what additional supports they need. This has not happened.”

Tanya Ward, CEO of the Children’s Rights Alliance said:

“Refugee children are often extremely vulnerable. They may have lost parents and siblings, experienced significant trauma or witnessed severe acts of violence. A vulnerability assessment is crucial to ensuring their needs are assessed, identified and addressed as quickly as possible through the appropriate supports and services so that they can enjoy a happy, safe and secure childhood.”

Sean McSweeney, CEO of Doras Luimní said:

"Our clients who are vulnerable, such as those who have survived human trafficking and others who identify as LGBTI+ have felt particularly at risk due to the shared living conditions. By failing to identify individual needs from the outset, the State continues to put vulnerable people at risk. These risks would be greatly mitigated by the implementation of the early vulnerability assessment and we urge the Government to take swift action".

Reuben Hambakachere, Community development Worker with Cultúr Migrants Centre said:

"Cultúr calls on the Department of Justice to act swiftly in developing and implementing the vulnerability assessment for people seeking asylum. Some of the international protection applicants we come across are clearly in need of such and we fear the longer it takes to assess their needs might lead to a deterioration of their physical & mental health. An early vulnerability assessment will identify the appropriate supports and reduce the sufferings of many who arrive at our shores in need of all the support they could get".

Brian Killoran, CEO of the Immigrant Council of Ireland said:

"The absence of vulnerability assessments is particularly relevant for victims of trafficking, who have very specific needs, requiring gender-sensitive responses and specialised supports."

Bulelani Mfaco of Movement of Asylum Seekers Ireland said:

"The Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland has always maintained that hotel and BnB managers are not suitable for providing supports for people who have survived and escaped deeply traumatic experiences such as torture and sexual violence. Yet the State, which committed to carrying out a vulnerability assessment when a person applies for international protection, and for those who were already in the system when the reception conditions directive was transposed into law, continues to hand vulnerable people to hotel managers who haven't a clue what to do about the many vulnerabilities that people come with. The warehousing of people without taking their needs into consideration has to stop. If dogs need more than food and shelter to live a meaningful life, then so do people in the asylum process."

Fiona Finn, CEO of Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre said:

“Nasc are deeply concerned by the States continued systematic failure to implement the vulnerability assessment. This assessment is a legal obligation not an optional extra. It is essential to ensure that the specialised needs of vulnerable applicants such as victims of trafficking, those who have been subjected to rape, torture, or other serious forms of psychological physical or sexual abuse are identified at the earliest possible stage so that the requisite supports can be put in place. The absence of this assessment may risk further harm and ongoing distress to this vulnerable group.”

Rory Halpin, Executive Director of Spirasi said:

“Currently many victims of torture are not identified until they are months - even years - into the process of seeking protection in Ireland prolonging the painful rehabilitation process. A vulnerability assessment would identify victims of torture at the earliest stage with the possibility then of timely access to medical, psychological/therapeutic, legal and social services and the avoidance of further unnecessary suffering.”

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INFORMATION FOR EDITORS

- The ‘Reception Conditions Directive’ is [Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection \(recast\)](#).
- Statutory Instrument No. 230/2018 - European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 transposes the Reception Conditions Directive in to Irish law.

- The [Asylum Procedures Directive \(recast\)](#) which Ireland has not opted in to, requires member states to conduct an assessment to identify if an applicant is need of special procedural guarantees.
- As of the beginning of May, there were more than 500 people living in emergency accommodation centres.