



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt  
Department of Justice

# An End-to-End Review of the International Protection Process

Final Report on Findings & Recommendations

May 2021



## Context

In October 2020, the Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process (otherwise known as the Catherine Day Report) was published. The Advisory Group made a series of recommendations and recommendation 3.18 of this report stated *“All IPO, MDU and IPAT processes should be reviewed by the end of the first quarter of 2021. The review should include the recommended changes/improvements of the international protection process set out in this report and which can be facilitated or enabled by IT.”*

This report focuses on the review arising from recommendation 3.18 and makes a series of recommendations which, if implemented, will help to improve the efficiency of the end-to-end international protection process. The aim of this report is to:

1. Provide an overview of the current situation regarding demand for international protection services and processing times within the IPO and IPAT.
2. Clearly identify key findings and points of constraints in the current situation ('as is') process review.
3. Identify key findings and insights from the perspective of applicants and appellants going through the process.
4. Present the conclusions and recommendations of the overall end-to-end review.

# Table of Contents

<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Glossary of Terms</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2. The Review</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 Background	12
2.2 Review Methodology	12
2.3 Approach to End-to-End Review	13
2.4 Scope of Review	15
2.5 Governance	15
<b>3. Current State/ 'As Is' Analysis</b>	<b>17</b>
3.1 Overview of Organisations involved in International Protection in Ireland	17
3.2 The Protection Process Overview of Current State Analysis and Deliverables	28
3.3 Trends in Organisation Throughput and Workload	29
3.4 Applicant and Appellant Experiences	38
<b>4. Key Findings of Review</b>	<b>40</b>
4.1 Introduction	40
4.2 Opportunities for Improvement	41
4.3 Critical areas of Constraints	43
4.4 Applicant and Appellant Experiences	48
<b>5. Recommendations</b>	<b>51</b>
5.1 Introduction	51
5.2 Theory of Constraint	51
5.3 Key Recommendation - Point of Constraint	51
5.4 Recommendations by Theme	54
<b>6. Improvements that can be facilitated by IM&amp;T</b>	<b>68</b>
6.1 Background	68
6.2 Perspectives of International Protection Customers	69
6.3 Broader context of an IM&T Solution	70
6.4 IM&T Recommendations	71
<b>7. Implementation, Governance &amp; Change Management Approach</b>	<b>74</b>

## Appendices

75

Appendix 1: Accelerated Processes for Asylum	75
Appendix 2: Digitalisation of Service Delivery Processes	82
Appendix 3: International Protection Staff Profiles, Procedures & Training	85
Appendix 4: UNHCR Recommendations for Caseworkers	90
Appendix 5: Processing Times for Asylum Applications	94
Appendix 6: Overview of IPO enabling and supporting Business Units	97
Appendix 7: User Personas and Journeys	99
Appendix 8: Additional Reports on Staff and User Perspectives	100

---

## List of Figures

<b>Figure 1. International Protection countries reviewed as part of bench marking exercise.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Figure 2. Key Steps in carrying out the review.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Figure 3. Business Analysis POPIT™ model.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Figure 4. Service Design Approach .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Figure 5. High Level overview of the International Protection Process .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Figure 6. IPO Business Units, as of December 2020.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Figure 7. IPO Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) actual Staffing Compliment as of December 2020.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Figure 8. IPO Percentage FTE Staffing Compliment by Grade type, December 2020.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Figure 9. IPO Number FTE Staffing Compliment – Actual (December 2020) v Approved Staffing Compliment (April 2021).....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Figure 10. IPAT Business Units, as of December 2020.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Figure 11. IPAT Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Staffing Compliment, December 2020.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Figure 12. IPAT Percentage Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Staffing Compliment by Grade type, December 2020 .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Figure 13. Negative decision at all stages of the protection process.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Figure 14. Positive recommendation at IPO 1<sup>st</sup> instance stage.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Figure 15. Number of Applications for International Protection 2017 – 2020 .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Figure 16. Trend in Applications on Hand/Pending .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Figure 17. Current international protection applications on hand/pending as of December 2020, by months pending.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Figure 18. Total 1<sup>st</sup> instance Recommendations/ 2<sup>nd</sup> instance PTR Review Decisions issued by the IPO, 2017- 2020 .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Figure 19. Availability of Legal Panel members, 2018 and 2019.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Figure 20. Number of IPAT Appeals Received in 2019 by Appeal Type .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Figure 21. Number of IPAT Appeals Received in 2019 by Appeal Type .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Figure 22. Weekly number of notice of appeals received by IPAT in 2019.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Figure 23. Number of working days that the IPAT are awaiting the appellants file from the IPO following notification of the appeal, 2019 files received by month.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Figure 24. Number of Decisions Completed by Tribunal Members, 2019 .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Figure 25. Key Themes that emerged from End-to-End Review, IPO .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Figure 26. Key Themes that emerged from End-to-End Review, IPAT .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Figure 27. Key critical areas of constraints identified in the End-to-End Process.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Figure 28. Case processing high level process workflow.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Figure 29. Average time it took for an applicant to go from IPO 1 to IPO 5 in 2020.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Figure 30. High level overview of the provision of information and documentation in context of an appeal to the IPAT process.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Figure 31. Extract from interview with applicant carried out by Connect the Dots.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Figure 32. IPO Case Processing Structure Options.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Figure 33. Key Themes that emerged from End-to-End Review, IPO .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Figure 34. Key Themes that emerged from End-to-End Review, IPAT .....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Figure 35. IPO Case Processing Unit, files ready Legal Panel member to conduct S35 interview</b>	<b>68</b>

<b>Figure 36. An excerpt from the International Protection applicant perspectives report .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Figure 37. Broader context of an IM&amp;T Solution .....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Figure 38. Recommendation: Phased Approach to Implementation .....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Figure 39. Evolution of staff in selected determining authorities: 2015-2019.....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Figure 40. Overview of the total number of staff in determining authorities compared to the number of asylum applications in selected EU Member States as of 30 June 2019:.....</b>	<b>87</b>

---

## List of Tables

<b>Table 1: Glossary of Terms</b> .....	8
<b>Table 2: Catherine Day Programme Board membership</b> .....	16
<b>Table 3: Main Duties &amp; Responsibilities of IPO business areas involved in applicant journey through the end-to-end process</b> .....	20
<b>Table 4: Main Duties &amp; Functions of IPAT business areas involved in applicant journey through the end-to-end process</b> .....	25
<b>Table 5: Breakdown of S35 interviews/S39 draft reports completed per week, month, and year over a 48 week working year by the IPO Legal Panel members</b> .....	34
<b>Table 6: IPO Current backlog in international protection 1<sup>st</sup> instance recommendations</b> .....	35
<b>Table 7: Key Recommendations – IPO Key Performance Indicators (KPI) / metric Recommendations</b> .....	55
<b>Table 8: Key Recommendations – IPO Communication Recommendations</b> .....	55
<b>Table 9: Key Recommendations – IPO Process Recommendations</b> .....	57
<b>Table 10: Key Recommendations – IPO Resourcing/Staffing Recommendations</b> .....	59
<b>Table 11: Key Recommendations – IPO Infrastructure Recommendations</b> .....	61
<b>Table 12: Key Recommendations – IPAT Communication Recommendations</b> .....	62
<b>Table 13: Key Recommendations – IPAT Process Recommendations</b> .....	63
<b>Table 14: Key Recommendations – IPAT Resourcing Recommendations</b> .....	64
<b>Table 15: Key Recommendations – IPAT Infrastructure Recommendations</b> .....	65
<b>Table 16: Key Recommendations on user experience</b> .....	66
<b>Table 17: User personas and journeys</b> .....	99
<b>Table 18: Additional reports on staff and user perspectives</b> .....	100

---

# Glossary of Terms

**Table 1: Glossary of Terms**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Description</b>
AGS	An Garda Síochána
AISIP	Asylum and Immigration Strategic Integration Programme
AO	Administrative Officer
AP	Assistant Principal
AV	Audio Visual
CDR	Catherine Day Report
CIPO	Chief International Protection Officer
CO	Clerical Officer
COI	Country of Origin Information
COVID	Corona Virus Disease
CP	Case Processing Unit
CS	Customer Service
CSC	Customer Service Centre
D III	Dublin III Regulation
DO	Deportation Order
DOJ	Department of Justice
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
EO	Executive Officer
EU	European Union
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GNIB	Garda National Immigration Bureau
HEO	Higher Executive Officer
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ID	Identification Document
IM&T	Information Management & Technology
IP	International Protection
IPA	International Protection Act
RIA	Reception and Integration Agency
IPAT	International Protection Appeals Tribunal
IPDN	International Protection Decision Number
IPO	International Protection Office
IPOD	International Protection Office Database
IPSA	International Protection Subsequent Application
ISD	Immigration Service Delivery
IT	Information Technology
JR	Judicial Review
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LMA	Labour Market Access
MDU	Ministerial Decisions Unit
MOT	Member of Tribunal
PDF	Portable Document Format
PM	Panel Member
PO	Principal Officer



PTR	Permission to Remain
PULSE	Police Using Leading Systems Effectively
QA	Quality Assurance
QC	Quality Checks
RAT	Resource Allocation Tool
RLS	Refugee Legal Service
RS	Refugee Status
SP	Subsidiary Protection
SPIRASI	Spiritans Asylum Services Initiative
SQDN	SQ Decision Number
TOC	Theory of Constraints
TRC	Temporary Residence Card
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	United States
WFH	Working from Home

---

# 1.Introduction

The main organisations who manage applications for international protection in Ireland are the International Protection Office and the International Protection Appeals Tribunal.

**The International Protection Office (IPO)** is an office within the Immigration Service Delivery (ISD) Division of the Department of Justice and is responsible for processing applications for international protection under the International Protection Act 2015<sup>1</sup>. It also considers, as part of a single procedure process, whether applicants should be given permission to remain in Ireland.

**The International Protections Appeals Tribunal (IPAT)** is a statutorily independent body and agency of the Department of Justice who exercises a quasi-judicial function under the International Protection Act 2015. The IPAT examine appeals of persons who have been refused international protection at the IPO stage.

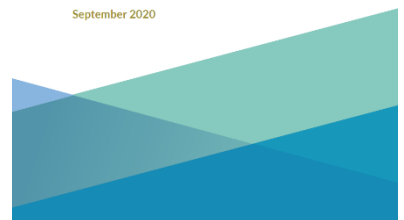
The legislations governing the assessment of international protection applications in Ireland is the International Protection Act 2015<sup>2</sup>. A person can apply for international protection in Ireland for two separate reasons:

- If they have a ‘well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion’, and cannot seek the protection of their country. This is called refugee status.
- They cannot return to their own country because they are at risk of serious harm, but they do not qualify as a refugee. This is called subsidiary protection.

In October 2020, the *Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process* (otherwise known as the Catherine Day Report) was published. The Advisory Group made a series of recommendations and recommendation 3.18 of this report stated “*All IPO, MDU and IPAT processes should be reviewed by the end of the first quarter of 2021. The review should include the recommended changes/improvements of the international protection process set out in this report and which can be facilitated or enabled by IT.*”



**Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process**  
September 2020



---

<sup>1</sup> Full details of the International Protection Act 2015 can be found on Irish Statute Book website. [Link](#)

<sup>2</sup> Full details of the Act can be found on Irish Statute Book website. [Link](#)

This report focuses on the review arising from recommendation 3.18 and makes a series of recommendations which, if implemented, will help to improve the efficiency of the end-to-end international protection process. The aim of this report is to:

1. Provide an overview of the current situation regarding demand for international protection services and processing times within the IPO and IPAT.
2. Clearly identify key findings and points of constraints in the current situation ('as is') process review.
3. Identify key findings and insights from the perspective of applicants and appellants going through the process.
4. Present the conclusions and recommendations of the overall end-to-end review.

In addition, to provide some additional context into how the performance of the Irish international protection process relates to that of its international peers, a number of key benchmarks have been identified to enable comparisons to be drawn between Ireland and other developed countries.

In this regard, the team analysed accelerated procedures in asylum, the digitisation of the international protection processes, staff profiles and training procedures, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recommendations for international protection caseworkers, and the overall processing times for asylum in other countries. This research and analysis can be used to help identify opportunities for improvement to Ireland's international protection process. A copy of the benchmarking research can be found in the following Appendices:

**Appendix 1:** Accelerated Processes for Asylum

**Appendix 2:** Digitalisation of Service Delivery Processes

**Appendix 3:** International Protection Staff Profiles, Procedures and Training

**Appendix 4:** UNHCR Recommendations for Caseworkers

**Appendix 5:** Processing Times for Asylum Applications

**Figure 1. International Protection countries reviewed as part of bench marking exercise**



# 2. The Review

## 2.1 Background

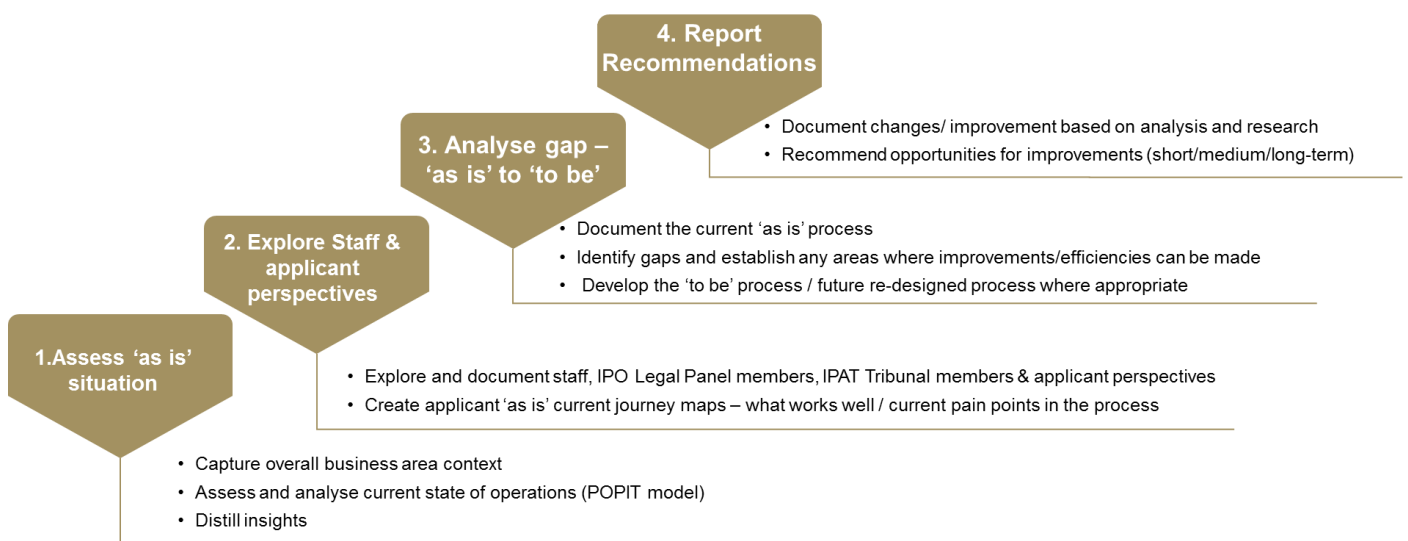
The review group was established in November 2020. The remit of the review was to review all IPO, MDU and IPAT current processes and recommend changes and improvements that can be made to the international protection process. The objectives of this review are to:

- Complete a current ‘as is’ assessment of how the IPO/MDU/IPAT currently operate, taking a holistic view of the current state (people, organisation, process, information & technology).
- Gain the perspectives and insights of those within the international protection process (protection applicants, staff, Legal Panel members and members of the Appeals Tribunal) to assist in identifying what is working well and what is not working well.
- Recommend opportunities for improvements in the short (‘quick wins’), medium and long-term where applicable (pre-and post the new IM&T system) that will enable or facilitate improvements to the overall decision-making process.

## 2.2 Review Methodology

An approach adopted from the International Institute of Business Analysis framework methodology was used to carry out the end-to-end review. This involved four key steps; assess the ‘as is’ situation, explore staff and applicant perspectives, analyse gaps to move from the ‘as is’ situation to the ‘to be’ situation, and report on recommendations. Gathering staff and user perspectives ensures a human centred service design approach is taken throughout. These steps are outlined in more detail in *Figure 2*:

**Figure 2. Key Steps in carrying out the review**

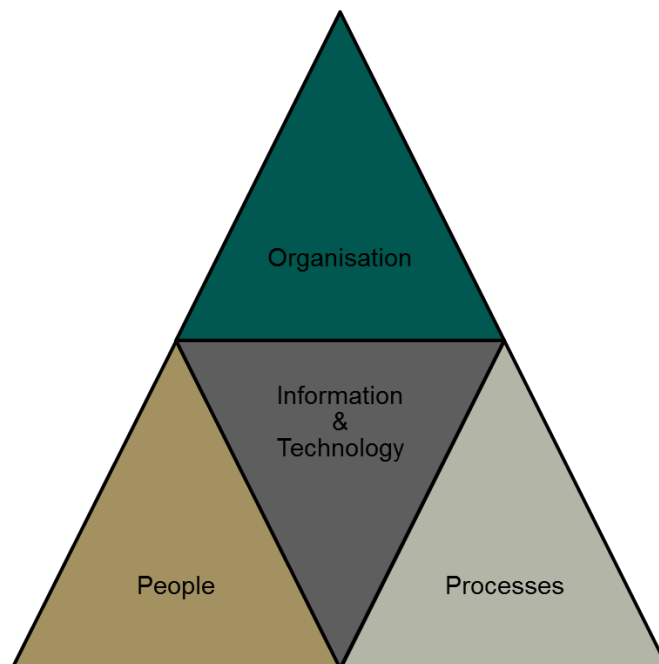


## 2.3 Approach to End-to-End Review

The following approach was used to complete the review and communicate to all stakeholders from the initiation of the review:

- Buy in from all business areas/sub business areas in the IPO and the IPAT was sought as early as possible to progress the key activities in the review and ultimately meet the deadline for completion.
- Assigned dates for key tasks and deliverables were identified, understood and adhered to as best as reasonably possible in order to meet the deadline.
- The review was completed in the spirit of collaboration and team work with all business areas as teams engagement and expertise was essential in order to accurately carry out the review.
- All meetings and workshops were conducted over Zoom due to COVID-19 Level 5 restrictions. Collaboration tools were used to work with the business units and to communicate effectively.
- One site visit took place in December 2020 with the end-to-end review team visiting both the IPO on Mount Street and the IPAT on Hanover Street to walk through the international protection process.
- A holistic approach was taken when carrying out the review in order to objectively analyse all aspects of the business of the international protection decision making process using the Business Analysis POPIT™ (People, Organisation, Processes, and Information & Technology) Model methodology as per *Figure 3*.

**Figure 3. Business Analysis POPIT™ model**

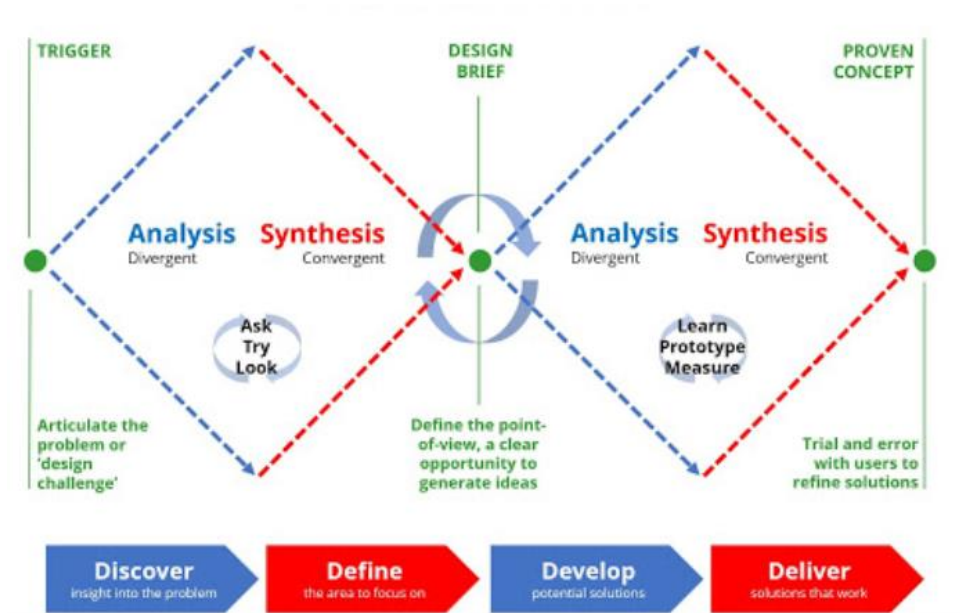


- **Organisation:** DOJ strategy, business area organisational structure, legal basis of operation, business area current strategy/service plan, governance framework, and statistics/trends in business unit key performance indicators (KPI's).
- **People:** Roles and job descriptions, current staffing (full time equivalent), skills and competencies, staff development, staff motivation, types of applicants e.g. subsidiary, asylum, unaccompanied minor, prioritised, and applicants from a designated safe country of origin.
- **Processes:** Core processes, procedures and work structures i.e. schedule of IPO interviews, schedule of the IPAT hearings etc.
- **Information and Technology:** Business information e.g. content, data, policies, data, information flows. Technology used e.g. applications, equipment, hardware, software.

A service design approach was incorporated throughout, particularly in relation to gathering and analysing staff and user perspectives. For the purposes of this review, only the first two phases of the design process were used, see *Figure 4* for an overview of the full process. The first 2 phases are:

1. Discover – Analyse the process; gather information on people’s experiences through surveys, workshops and interviews; desk research to gather insights on people’s experiences from material already available.
2. Define – Interpret findings; synthesise data; identify themes; define insights and frame opportunities.

**Figure 4. Service Design Approach**



## 2.4 Scope of Review

The scope of the review has been defined by the review project team and approved by the Catherine Day Programme Board. The 'in scope' areas and 'not in scope' areas are outlined below:

### In Scope

- The Protection application processes within IPO (incl. MDU) and the appeal processes within IPAT, with due regard provided to the independence of IPAT.
- **For the purposes of this review**, the 'end to end' process is defined as: *'from the time an International Protection applicant applies to complete an interview under section 13\* (preliminary interview) of the International Protection Act, 2015, at the IPO to the Minister's Decision under Section 49 (permission to remain) of the International Protection Act, 2015.'*

### Not in Scope

- Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) process.
- The processes and procedures of any other Department, Agency or Business Area outside of IPO (incl. MDU) and IPAT.
- Processes that take place after a Decision under Section 49 of the International Protection Act, 2015 has issued.

*\* Note: It should be noted that the International Protection 2015 legislation only considers an applicant an international protection applicant when they have completed their section 15 interview (application for international protection). The section 13 interview is a preliminary interview which can be carried out either at a port of entry or at the reception in the IPO. In a lot of cases, where a person presents in the IPO, the Section 13 and Section 15 interviews will be completed one after another. However, where an interpreter is required and is not available, the person will be called back to complete the section 15 interview on a different day. Some of these people do not return to the IPO to complete their application and are therefore not applicants.*

## 2.5 Governance

The review was recommended by the Catherine Day Advisory Group report and subsequently commissioned by the cross-departmental Catherine Day Programme Board established in November 2020. The review was overseen and guided by the following governance mechanisms and engagement activities.

### 2.5.1 Catherine Day Programme Board

A Programme Board Group met periodically (usually once per month) to oversee the development of all the Catherine Day report recommendations, including this review. The group includes senior officials from the Department of Justice, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, and the Department of Social Protection. The board comprised of the following members in *Table 2* below:

**Table 2: Catherine Day Programme Board membership**

<b>Oonagh Buckley (OB)</b>	Chair & Deputy Secretary, Civil Justice (DOJ)
<b>Yvonne White (YW)</b>	Head of Governance, Civil Justice (DOJ)
<b>Martina Colville (MC)</b>	Head of Corporate (DOJ)
<b>John Conlon (JC)</b>	Assistant Secretary (D/SP)
<b>Juan Perez-Camacho (JPC)</b>	Operations PPM, Programme Manager (DOJ)
<b>Neil Ward (NW)</b>	Head of Transparency (DOJ)
<b>David Delaney (DD)</b>	Deputy Head of ISD (DOJ)
<b>Louise Jevens (LJ)</b>	Head of Operations & IMT, CIO (DOJ)
<b>Carol Baxter (CB)</b>	Assistant Secretary (D/CDEIY)

### **2.5.2 Catherine Day End-to-end Project Team**

A multi-disciplinary review project team was established and appointed by the Catherine Day Programme Board in early November 2020. The project team consisted of members of the Department of Justice Operations Business Change team with support from the Operations Service Design and Customer Insights team. The Operations team is responsible for collating and analysing the information and insights and recommending opportunities to improve the overall end-to-end process.

The project review team was also comprised of a subgroup. The aim of the subgroup was to monitor progress, provide feedback, provide subject matter expert advice and input into recommendations for improvements to the international protection process. The membership of this sub-group includes senior management from the IPO, the IPAT, the DOJ Quality Office and the IM&T division.





A person first applies for international protection by attending<sup>3</sup> the International Protection Office, completing preliminary interviews<sup>4</sup> (Section 13 & Section 15 interview) and providing their biographical details (fingerprinting) (IPO 1). The protection applicant is given a copy of an international protection questionnaire (also referred to as an IPO2 questionnaire) to complete and then asked to return the questionnaire within three weeks from the date of issue. The questionnaire will be translated if required. Following translation, the applicant is called for a substantive interview (Section 35 interview) where the applicant will detail their reasons for seeking protection in Ireland. The application is assessed for refugee status, subsidiary protection status (IPO 3) and permission to remain (PTR) (IPO 4) if applicable and subsequently a first instance recommendation issues (IPO 5) from the IPO.

If an applicant receives a negative recommendation from the IPO regarding refugee status or subsidiary protection, the applicant can appeal this recommendation to the IPAT. Post the IPAT decision, if the IPAT overturn a negative recommendation from the IPO, the Minister will issue the applicant with the relevant protection declaration i.e. refugee status or subsidiary protection via the Ministerial Decision Unit (MDU) (IPO 7).

Should an applicant's appeal to the IPAT be unsuccessful, the Minister will again review the decision not to grant Permission to Remain (PTR), taking into consideration any new information since the original first instance PTR decision took place. The Permission to Remain Review team conducts this assessment on behalf of the Minister in the IPO (IPO 6). Following all recommendations (both positive and negative recommendations), all applicant files are sent to the MDU. The MDU (IPO 7) issues the final decision on an international protection application.

In certain circumstances, an applicant's case will not follow the above process, as it has been deemed at the initial application point that another country may be responsible for examining the applicants request for international protection. This process is known as the Dublin III process and is established by European Union legislation known as the Dublin III Regulations. The process in Ireland is managed by the Dublin Unit in the IPO. **The Dublin III process is outside of the scope of the end-to-end review.**

---

<sup>3</sup> excluding port of entry applications

### 3.1.1.2 Structure of IPO

At the time of conducting the current state analysis, the IPO was organised into 15 business units. The review team engaged with all units in order to review and understand their core business operations. The 15 business units are illustrated in *Figure 6* below.

**Figure 6. IPO Business Units, as of December 2020**



Note: The Dublin Unit was out of scope for the purpose of this review, however the Dublin Unit is part of the IPO overall staff compliment.

*Table 3* below illustrates the main duties and functions that each business area in the IPO plays in the international protection process. It should be noted that the IPO have a number of supporting business functions which are key enablers and essential to their overall business operations. Further information on these enabling and supporting business areas<sup>5</sup> are described in **Appendix 6** 'Overview of IPO enabling and supporting business areas'.

<sup>5</sup> Information Access Unit, Judicial Review and Support Unit, Procedures and Training Unit, Co-Ordination Unit, Customer Service Centre , Presenting Unit, Non- Cooperation Unit, Section 22 (Subsequent Application) Unit

**Table 3: Main Duties & Responsibilities of IPO business areas involved in applicant journey through the end-to-end process**

Business Area	Main duties/ responsibilities of Business Area
<b>IPO 1: Registration &amp; Fingerprinting Unit</b>	<p>The Registration and Fingerprinting Unit is responsible for processing all new applications for international protection. Officers in this Unit conduct an applicant’s preliminary interview (Section 13.2 interview) and examine if an application is admissible<sup>6</sup>. In addition, the unit is responsible for taking applicants fingerprints and a photograph which are taken for the purpose of establishing a person’s identity, whether the Dublin III Regulations are applicable and the photo ID is taken to issue the applicant with a temporary residence card<sup>7</sup> (TRC). If the applicant is admissible, a Section 15<sup>8</sup> interview is carried out by an officer and the applicant is provided with an information booklet on the single procedure and a questionnaire (IPO2 questionnaire) to complete and return to the IPO for use in the next stage in the process.</p>
<b>IPO 2: Scheduling &amp; Arrangements Unit</b>	<p>The Scheduling and Arrangements Unit function is responsible for the administration of the return of the questionnaire, making sure that the applicant has completed all sections and co-ordinates the process of translating the questionnaire with the translation provider where applicable. This Unit is also responsible for scheduling all substantive (Section 35<sup>9</sup>) interviews, issuing letters of appointments to applicants and their legal representatives and liaising with Legal Panel Members regarding their availability for the interview schedule. This Unit is also responsible for booking interpreters for interviews when required.</p>
<b>IPO 3: Case Processing Unit</b>	<p>The Case Processing Unit is responsible for conducting the substantive interview which is usually conducted by an IPO Legal Panel member and used to assess if an international protection applicant satisfies the criteria for refugee status or subsidiary protection. The Panel member (or in some occasions the Executive Officer (EO)) is responsible for drafting a Section 39<sup>10</sup> report outlining their recommendations as to whether the individual protection</p>

<sup>6</sup> Admissible means that the IPO will decide here if the applicant is able to apply for international protection in Ireland. If an applicant is deemed to be inadmissible, the applicant will be transferred to the Dublin Unit where their application will be assessed under the EU Dublin III regulations. This process is outside the scope of the end-to-end review.  
<sup>7</sup> TRC card indicates that an applicant has permission to be in Ireland for their international protection application.  
<sup>8</sup> Section 15 interview is an interview for an applicants ‘application for international protection’ as per the International Protection Act 2015  
<sup>9</sup> Section 35 interview is also referred to the personal interview as per the International Protection Act 2015  
<sup>10</sup> Section 39 report is a report on the examination of the application as per the International Protection Act 2015

Business Area	Main duties/ responsibilities of Business Area
	<p>applicant meet the required criteria for protection status. EOs and Higher Executive Officers (HEOs) are responsible for reviewing and providing feedback on the draft Section 39 report. The HEO is responsible for the final sign off of the final Section 39 report.</p>
<p><b>IPO 4: Permission to Remain Unit</b></p>	<p>If the Case Processing Unit have recommended not to grant an applicant either refugee status or subsidiary protection status, then the file is passed to the PTR Unit for an applicant’s eligibility for permission to remain in Ireland status to be assessed. A report under Section 49 (permission to remain) of the International Protection Act 2015 will issue, outlining the reason why a protection applicant may or may not meet the criteria for permission to remain.</p>
<p><b>IPO 5: Recommendations and Decisions Unit</b></p>	<p>The Recommendations and Decisions Unit is an administrative unit responsible for the issuing of all first instance recommendation letters and issuing associated paperwork to applicants and their legal representatives where appropriate. In the event of a negative recommendation, the unit will make copies of an applicant’s file for the applicant, their legal representative and for the IPO Presenting Unit for the purposes of an IPAT appeal. This Unit is also responsible for sending the applicant’s original file to the IPAT when an applicant appeals a first instance recommendation.</p>
<p><b>IPO 6: Permission to Remain Review Unit</b></p>	<p>If the Minister did not grant an applicant permission to remain, and if the applicant’s appeal to the IPAT was not successful, then this Unit (on behalf of the Minister) will then review the decision not to grant permission to remain where an applicant has submitted any new information since the original decision was made.</p>
<p><b>IPO 7: Ministerial Decision Unit</b></p>	<p>This Unit is responsible for issuing all international protection decisions on behalf of the Minister for Justice. As part of this process, staff in this Unit must complete a series of quality control checks on the applicant’s file to confirm applicant identity. This Unit is also responsible for dealing with all applicant queries post a decision letter</p>

## Business Area

## Main duties/ responsibilities of Business Area

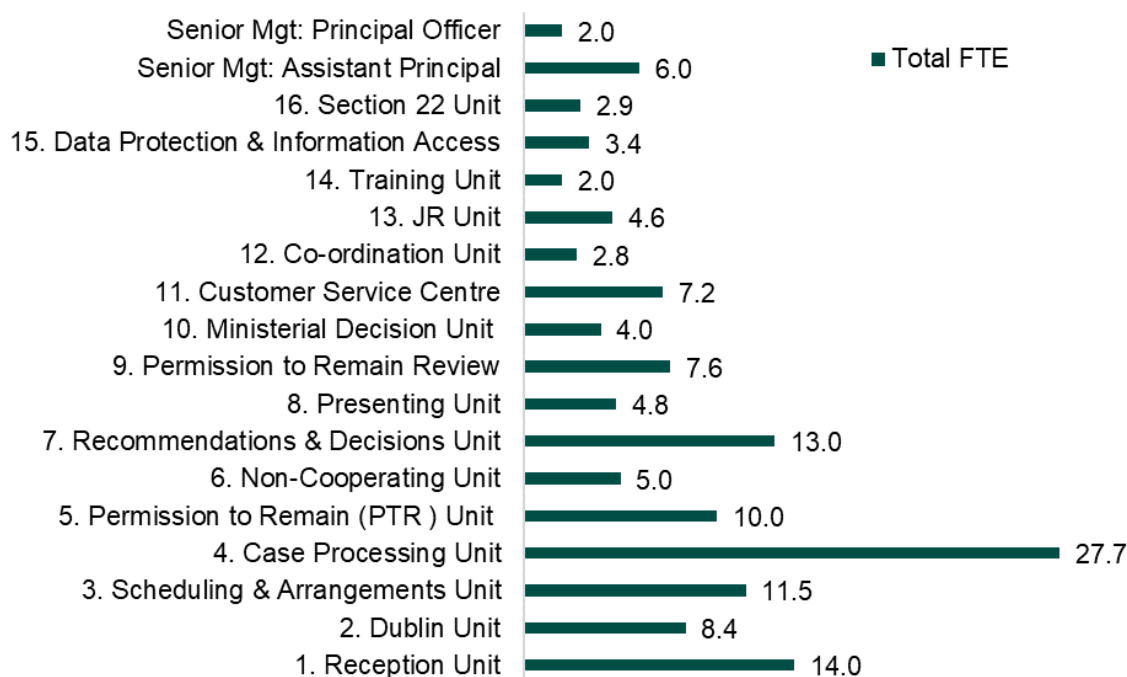
issued to the applicant. This Unit also processes revocation<sup>11</sup> files and updates any changes to an applicant's identity.

### 3.1.1.3 Current Staffing in the IPO

Current staffing profiles (by staff grade and business unit) and full-time equivalent (FTE) and headcount figures were collected and analysed as part of the current state analysis.

Figure 7 below illustrates the IPO FTE staffing compliment by Business Unit as of December 2020. As of December 2020, the organisation had **an actual staffing compliment of 137 FTE's** who were actively working in the IPO. This does not account for current open vacancies, staff on long term sick leave, any IPO Case Processing or Presenting Office Panel Members or the approved staffing compliment.

**Figure 7. IPO Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) actual Staffing Compliment as of December 2020**

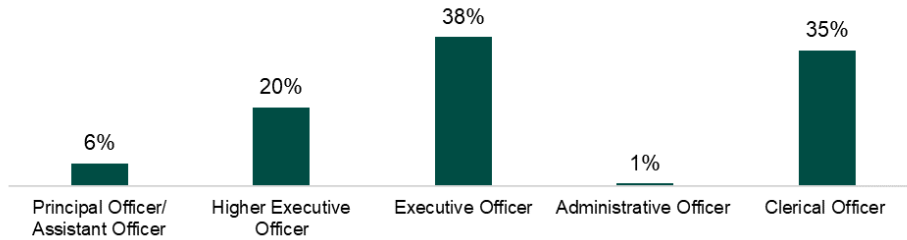


Data source: HR FTE figures sourced Dec 2020-Jan 2021 during 'as is' process meetings with IPO Business Units.

<sup>11</sup> Revocation files: These are cases where the international protection status has been granted but the applicant may not have told the truth, travelled to home country, obtained a national passport (RS holders), committed an offence, trafficking etc. MDU issue the revocation letters. The applicant has to be given the option to respond. Copy is sent to UNHCR and GNIB. MDU can get information that could lead to revocation from BMU, Gardaí, emails from public (these have to be checked), and other areas of ISD. These people are not actually in the process at the time – they have already been granted international protection status. The appeal of revocation is through the courts.

Figure 8 below illustrates the percentage of the FTE staffing compliment by Civil Service staff grade. The IPO is comprised of 38% EOs, 35% COs, 20% HEOs, 6% PP/AP's and 1% AO grades.

**Figure 8. IPO Percentage FTE Staffing Compliment by Grade type, December 2020**

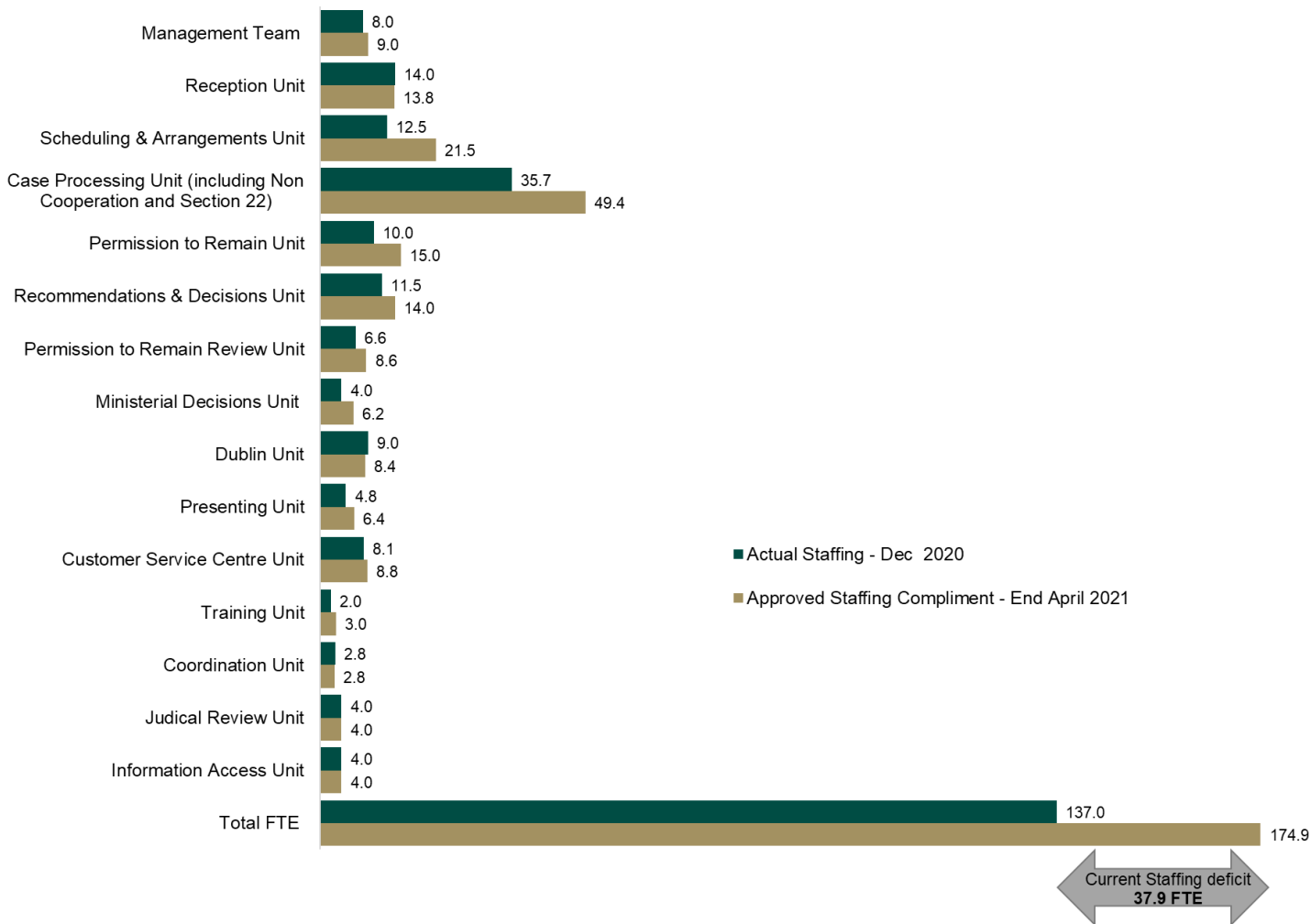


Source: HR FTE figures sourced Dec 2020-Jan 2021 during 'as is' process meetings with IPO Business Units

An analysis was also conducted to understand the difference in the actual staff compliment and the Department of Justice approved staffing compliment for the IPO. The review team were provided with the approved staffing compliment as of the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Figure 9 demonstrates that there is a significant staffing shortage in resources assigned to the IPO currently. As of April 2021, the IPO has a staffing deficit of 37.9% FTE staffing resources. This represents a **shortfall of 22% on the 174.9 FTE approved staffing compliment for the IPO.**

In quarter 4 2019, the IPO submitted a business case to the DOJ Management Board for additional staff to support the demand for their service and to assist with addressing applicant backlogs. This business case was subsequently approved and an additional budgetary allocation of €1million in 2020 was made available to the IPO to assist in clearing backlogs. 21 FTE resources should have been assigned by DOJ Human Resources division during 2020, however no staff were allocated throughout 2020 and only one staff member was allocated from the approved budgetary allocation thus far in 2021.

**Figure 9. IPO Number FTE Staffing Compliment – Actual (December 2020) v Approved Staffing Compliment (April 2021)**



Source: HR FTE figures sourced Dec 2020-Jan 2021 & April 2021 FTE figures supplied by IPO Management team; formal approval of IPO staffing compliment (with business case) approved by the Department of Justice Management Board meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020

### 3.1.1.4 IPO staff and Legal Panel member perspectives

Alongside the above work, surveys and workshops were carried out with IPO staff and the Legal Panel members. The findings from those work streams are fully documented in 4 individual reports (**Appendix 8: Additional Reports on Staff and User Perspectives**). Those findings and perspectives have been combined with the above analyses in order to develop the recommendations in **Section 5** of this report.



### 3.1.2 International Protection Appeals Tribunal

#### 3.1.2.1 Introduction

The International Protections Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) is a statutorily independent body and agency of the Department of Justice who exercises a quasi-judicial function under the International Protection Act 2015. The IPAT examine appeals of persons who have been refused International Protection at the IPO stage.

#### 3.1.2.2 Structure of the IPAT

At the time of conducting the current state analysis, the IPAT was organised into 5 business units. The review team engaged with all units within order to review and understand their core business operations. The 5 business units are illustrated in *Figure 10* below.

**Figure 10. IPAT Business Units, as of December 2020**



*Table 4* below illustrates the main duties and functions that each business area in the IPAT plays in the international protection process. It should be noted that the IPAT have a supporting business function which is a key enabler and essential to their overall business operations. A description of this Unit is described in *Table 4* also.

**Table 4: Main Duties & Functions of IPAT business areas involved in applicant journey through the end-to-end process**

Business Area	Main duties/ functions of Business Area
<b>IPAT 1: Appeals Registration Unit (Business Unit 1 A), Tribunal Registry Unit (Business Unit 1 C),</b>	The main functions of the Appeals Registration Unit are dealing with all new notice of appeals against negative recommendations by the IPO. This area involves a significant degree of communication with legal representatives and the appellants and to establish the proper grounds of appeal and ensure that all required documentation is received. This Unit is also responsible

Business Area	Main duties/ functions of Business Area
	<p>for creating, copying, tabbing and checking the Tribunal members file (original file received from the IPO).</p> <p>The main functions of the Registry Unit is to manage the movement of all files into and out of the IPAT; respond to internal and external (within DJE/IPO/MDU etc.) requests for files and update AISIP with all file movement activities.</p>
<p><b>IPAT 2/ IPAT 3: Appeals Scheduling, Reception and Hearing Management Unit (Business Unit 1 B),</b></p>	<p>The main functions of this unit are to schedule all hearings for the IPAT involves co-ordinating Tribunal members availability, appellant, legal representation, witnesses, Minister's representative and interpreters are all required to be notified. This unit is also responsible for follow up and issuing hearing notification letters, managing the hearings and co-ordinating Tribunal members and IPO Presenting Officers.</p> <p>The reception staff provide secretariat support to the hearings, staff the IPAT reception front desk to administer all hearings, setting up hearing rooms, update files (pre-hearing) with new submissions, update files (post-hearing), deal with all post, and email and fax correspondence into the IPAT.</p>
<p><b>IPAT 4: Appeals Processing Unit (Business Unit 2)</b></p>	<p>The main functions of this unit is to: assist the Registrar in the fair and equitable assignment of appeals to Tribunal members in accordance with the International Protection Act and Chairperson's Guidelines; manage and support all direct reporting staff in accordance with Performance Management and Development System (PMDS); supervise and monitor all processing work undertaken by the teams; monitor and report on the performance of each Tribunal member in accordance with guidelines issued by the Registrar; manage payment of fees for Tribunal members; verify all final decisions have been properly issued and recorded including database checks and that all required parties have been informed in accordance with legislations and established practices.</p>
<p><b>Tribunal Secretariat and Corporate Affairs (Business Unit 3)</b></p>	<p>This unit has been developed to provide statistics and full appeal tracking facilities for the IPAT. This unit is also responsible for answering parliamentary questions, dealing with request from the</p>

**Business Area**

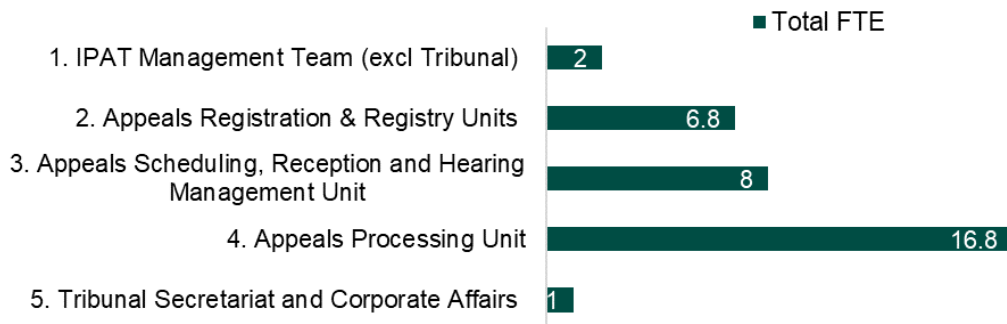
**Main duties/ functions of Business Area**

Department of Justice, preparing annual reports, producing all statistical and performance reports for internal and external use, website management, providing judicial review support and co-ordination and supporting remote hearing ICT issues.

**3.1.2.3 Current Staffing in IPAT**

Current staffing profiles (by staff grade and business unit) and full-time equivalent (FTE) and headcount figures were also collected and analysed as part of the current state analysis for IPAT. *Figure 11* below illustrates the IPAT FTE staffing compliment by Business Unit as of December 2020. As of December 2020, the organisation had a **staffing compliment of 33.6 FTE's who were activity working in IPAT**. This does not account for current open vacancies, staff on long term sick leave or IPAT Tribunal members.

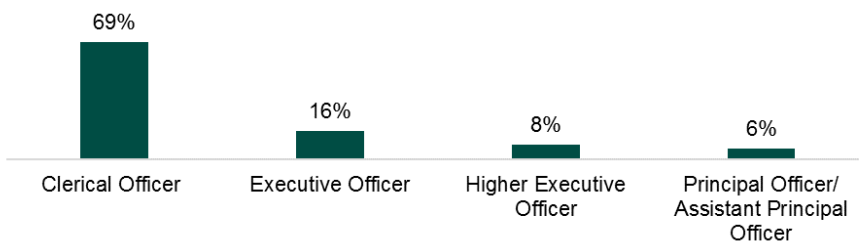
**Figure 11. IPAT Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Staffing Compliment, December 2020**



Source: HR FTE figures sourced Dec 2020-Jan 2021 during 'as is' process meetings with the IPAT Business Units

Figure 12 below illustrates the percentage of the 33.6 FTE staffing compliment by Civil Service staff grade. IPAT is comprised of 69% COs, 16% EOs, 8% HEOs and 6% PP/AP's.

**Figure 12. IPAT Percentage Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Staffing Compliment by Grade type, December 2020**



Source: HR FTE figures sourced Dec 2020-Jan 2021 during 'as is' process meetings with IPO Business Units.

#### 3.1.2.4 IPAT staff and Tribunal member perspectives

Alongside the above work, surveys and workshops were carried out with IPAT staff and the Tribunal members. The findings from those work streams are fully documented in 4 individual reports (**Appendix 8: Additional Reports on Staff and User Perspectives**) and attached to this report. Those findings and perspectives have been combined with the above analyses in order to develop the recommendations in **Section 5** of this report.

### 3.2 The Protection Process Overview of Current State Analysis and Deliverables

As part of the first stage in carrying out this review, the end-to-end review team met with each business unit in the IPO and the IPAT during a series of stakeholder workshops conducted via Zoom from mid-November 2020 to mid-January 2021. These workshops enabled the review team to identify, document and analyse the IPO and the IPAT current state processes and procedures, document the staffing, roles and responsibilities of each business unit, gather information on the technology applications, and equipment used to enable the units to operate and conduct their core business.

The outputs of this stage of the review included:

- **Current state/‘As Is’ detailed process tables** for all business areas in the IPO and the IPAT where an international protection applicant has interactions with. Separate ‘as-is’ detailed process tables were completed and signed off by each business area.
- **Current state/‘As Is’ business process maps** have also been documented and visualised using Microsoft Visio application.
- **Detailed overview of the international protection process by business area.** This overview provides details on responsible unit, the average processing times, key inputs to the process, current challenges/pain points in the process and/or business area, current backlog, current staffing.

### 3.3. Trends in Organisation Throughput and Workload

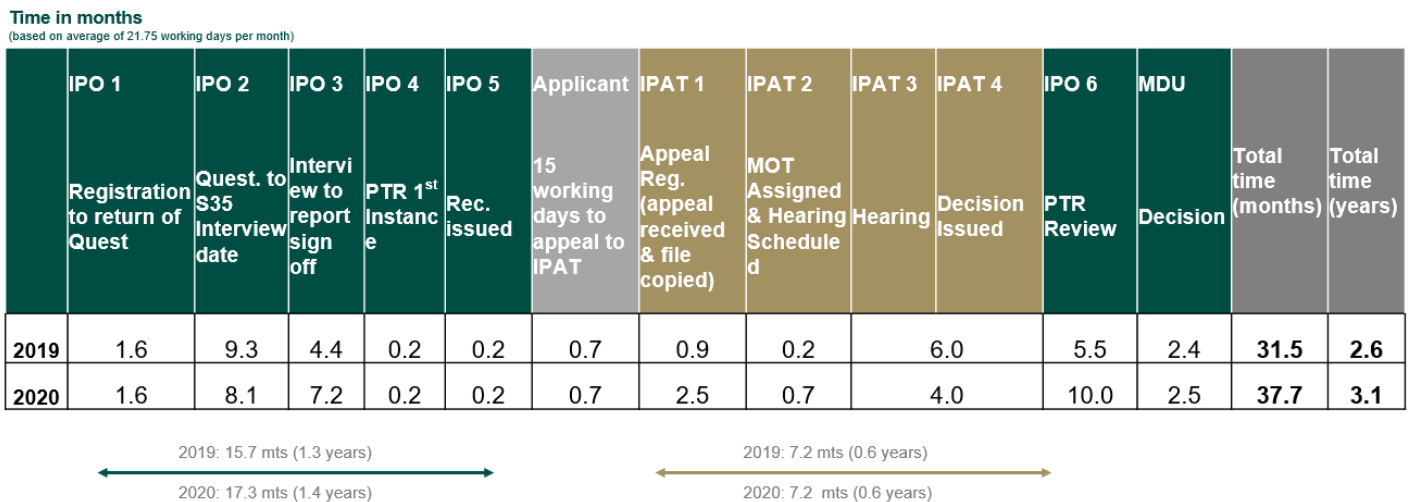
This section will document recent end-to-end average processing timeframes and annual trends in the throughput and workload associated with the IPO and the IPAT.

#### 3.3.1 Analysis of End-to-end Processing Times (from initial application to MDU decision)

As part of the current state/ 'as is' analysis, the review team analysed the average end-to-end processing times for two types of applicants who have gone through the international protection process using data points provided by the IPO and the IPAT for 2019 (pre-Covid) and 2020.

##### 3.3.1.1 Timeline 1 - Negative decision at all stages of the protection process

**Figure 13. Negative decision at all stages of the protection process**



Source: See footnote below<sup>12</sup>

Figure 13 above illustrates the average timeline that the end-to-end process takes for an applicant\* with a refusal of refugee status, subsidiary protection, permission to remain at first instance, refugee status, subsidiary protection decision affirmed by the IPAT, permission to remain review following IPAT, and final decision subsequently issued by the MDU. This timeline is in months and is based on average of 21.75 working days per month.

In 2019, it took 15.7 months (1.3 years) for an application to be processed in the IPO, and 7.2 months (0.6 years) in the IPAT. When PTR Review and MDU times are added a total of **31.5 months, or 2.6 years**, can be seen for an application to be processed for international protection in 2019, based on the applicant\* description described above.

<sup>12</sup> **Note on Data Sources used to compile this timeline:**

IPO 1 – IPO 3: IPO Co-ordination Unit, IPO average of Quarterly median case processing times- **all case's**, from receipt of application to S39 report finalised, 2019/2020, report produced by RAU, Feb 2021

IPO 4: Times provided by IPO PTR unit, Dec 2020

IPO 5: Times provided by IPO Recommendations & Decisions Unit, Jan 2021

Applicant: has up to 15 working days (0.7 months) to appeal the RS and/or SP IPO recommendation

IPAT 1-4: Average Appeal timeline provided by IPAT Corporate Affairs Unit, 2019 & 2020 key processing times (appeal received, file copied, file copied & assigned to Tribunal member, appeal assigned to decision issued)

IPO 6: Average times provided by PTR Review Unit, 2019 & 2020, Jan 2021

MDU: Average times provided by IPO Co-ordination Unit, Feb 2021

**Note on process:** \*Typical example of refusal at all stages of process

In 2020, it took 17.3 months (1.4 years) for an application to be processed in the IPO, and 7.2 months (0.6 years) in the IPAT. When PTR Review and MDU times are added a total of **37.7 months, or 3.1 years**, can be seen for an application to be processed for international protection in 2020, based on the applicant\* definition described above.

From 2018-2020, the average **percentage grant rate** at IPO international protection **first instance recommendation was 26%**<sup>13</sup>. In 2019, 76% of IPAT appeals received were IPO refuse refugee status, subsidiary protection or both. 71% (1,133/1,585 decisions) of international protection single procedure appeals were affirmed in 2019 (average of 74% affirmed decisions 2017-19)<sup>14</sup>.

### 3.3.1.2 Timeline 2 – Positive recommendation at IPO 1st instance stage

**Figure 14. Positive recommendation<sup>15</sup> at IPO 1<sup>st</sup> instance stage**

**Time in months**  
(based on average of 21.75 working days per month)

	IPO 1	IPO 2	IPO 3	IPO 3*	IPO 5	MDU	Total time (months)	Total time (years)
	Registrati on to return of Quest	Quest. to Interview date	Interview to report sign off	Garda checks & security checks initiated	Recommendation issued	Decision		
<b>2019</b>	1.6	9.3	4.4	2.1	0.2	2.4	<b>20.0</b>	<b>1.7</b>
<b>2020</b>	1.6	8.1	7.2	1.1	0.2	2.5	<b>20.7</b>	<b>1.7</b>

Source: See footnote below<sup>16</sup>

Figure 14 above illustrates the **average timeline that the end-to-end process takes for an applicant with a grant<sup>17</sup>** of refugee status and/or subsidiary protection at first instance recommendation, the applicant has made no appeal to the IPAT and the final decision (declaration of refugee status) was issued by the MDU. Similar to Figure 13, this timeline is in months and is based on average of 21.75 working days per month. **In 2019 and 2020, it took on average 20 months (1.7 years)** for an application to be processed in the IPO at first instance recommendation stage to the final decision (declaration of refugee status) issued by the MDU.

<sup>13</sup> Data source: IPO Coordination Unit

<sup>14</sup> Data source: IPAT Annual Reports, 2017-2019

<sup>15</sup> Grant of Refugee Status and/or SP at first instance recommendation, no appeal to IPA & final decision issued by MDU

<sup>16</sup> Note on Data Sources used to compile this timeline:

IPO 1 – IPO 3: IPO Co-ordination Unit, IPO average of Quarterly median case processing times- all case's, from receipt of application to S39 report finalised, 2019/2020, report produced by RAU, Feb 2021

IPO 3\*: All grants at first instance are subject to ASG Pulse checks. ASG checks are completed on 'non-security check countries' however security checks are completed by Northern Ireland Security Service (NISS). A Recommendation letter is not issued until these security checks are provided by NISS. Average processing times are provided by IPO Section 22 Unit, Feb 2021

IPO 5: Times provided by IPO Recommendations & Decisions Unit, Jan 2021

Applicant: has up to 15 working days (0.7 months) to appeal the RS and/or SP IPO recommendation

MDU: Average times provided by IPO Co-ordination Unit, Feb 2021

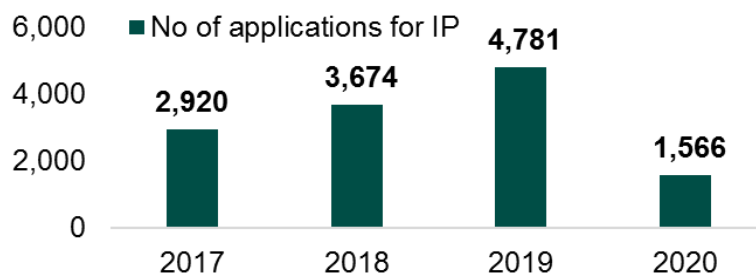
<sup>17</sup> Applicant is from a security risk country in this scenario

### 3.3.2 IPO

#### 3.3.2.1 Applications per year

In 2018, 3,674 international protection applications were received in the IPO. This represented a **26% increase** on 2017 figures. In 2019, there was a **further 30% increase** in international protection applications received (n=4,781). In 2020, there was a 67% reduction in the number of international protection applications received by the IPO (1,566 v 4,781 in 2019), primarily due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Figure 15* shows the number of international protection applications received each year from 2017 to 2020.

**Figure 15. Number of Applications for International Protection 2017 – 2020**



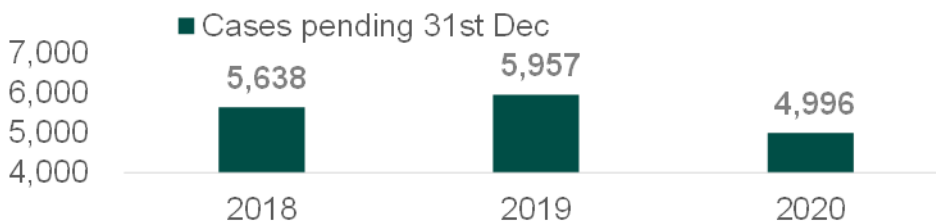
Source: IPO Coordination Unit

On average, over the last 3 years (2018-2020), the IPO has received 3,340 international protection applications per year. Pre-Covid trends indicate a potential year on year increase in international protection applications.

#### 3.3.2.2 Applications on hand

In 2020, there was a 16% reduction in the number of international protection cases pending/on hand (4,996 in 2020 compared to 5,957 in 2019) as illustrated in *Figure 16* below.

**Figure 16. Trend in Applications on Hand/Pending**

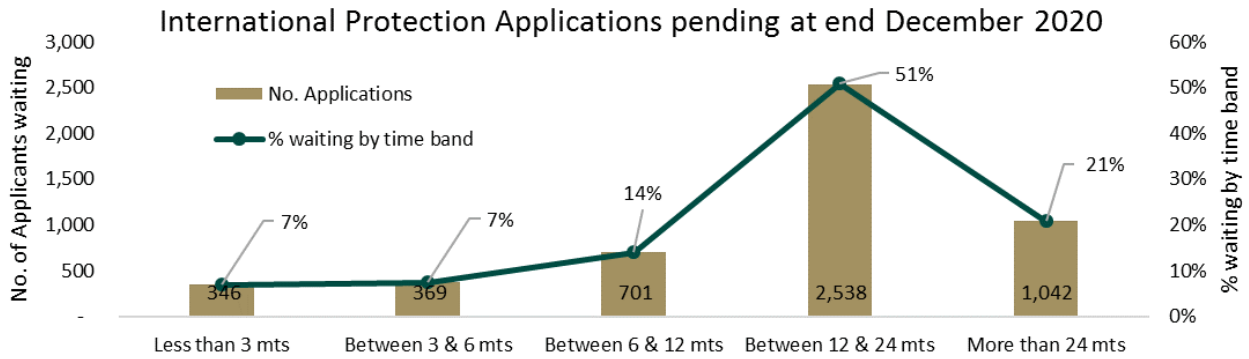


Source: IPO Coordination Unit. Note x-axis truncated

### 3.3.2.3 Open cases- year end 2020

In total, there were 4,996 applications pending within the IPO at the end of 2020 and over half of applicants (51%) were waiting between 1 and 2 years for a decision on their application. One in five applicants (21%) were waiting more than 2 years for a decision on their application. (Figure 17 below)

**Figure 17. Current international protection applications on hand/pending as of December 2020, by months pending**

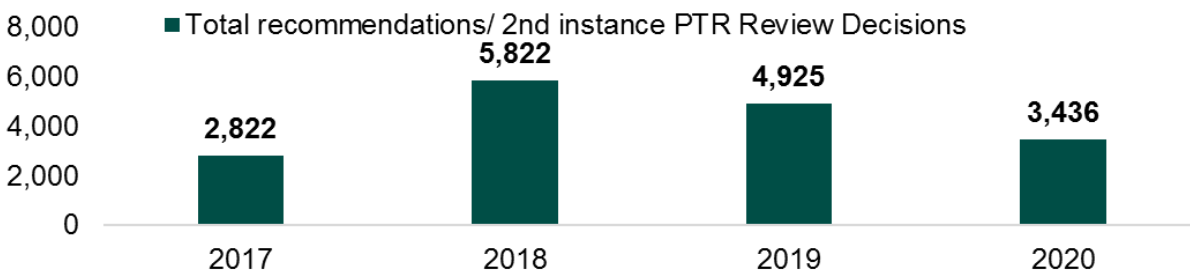


Source: IPO Coordination Unit. Note: the IPO were unable to break this information down by Business Unit at the time of request

### 3.3.2.4 Recommendations issued

From 2018-2020, on average there were 4,728 1st instance recommendations & PTR review decisions made. In 2020, there was a 30% reduction in the number of recommendations/PTR review decision made. (Figure 18)

**Figure 18. Total 1<sup>st</sup> instance Recommendations/ 2<sup>nd</sup> instance PTR Review Decisions issued by the IPO, 2017- 2020**



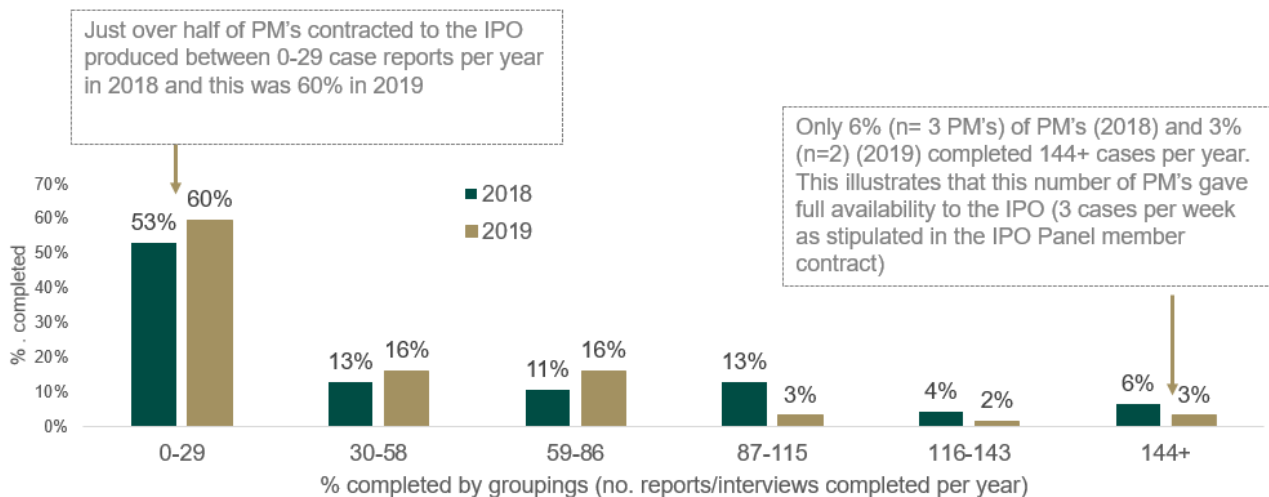
Source: IPO Coordination Unit. Note: these figures do not include decisions issued by the Ministerial Decision Unit which only transferred to the IPO in Oct 2020.



### 3.3.2.5 Availability of IPO Legal Panel Members

The end-to-end review team conducted a point in time analysis to quantify the availability and output of the IPO Legal Panel members in 2018 and 2019<sup>18</sup>. **In 2018, the IPO had 47 Legal Panel members available to them and this increased to 62 in 2019.** The analysis focused on the number and percentage of Section 35<sup>19</sup> interviews completed that were associated with a draft Section 39 report<sup>20</sup> completed by a Legal Panel member. Overall, in 2018, 11 Legal Panel members gave reasonable\* availability to the IPO case processing schedule, however this was 5 in 2019 (\*8 or more per month).

**Figure 19. Availability of Legal Panel members, 2018 and 2019**



Source: Data sourced via IPO Coordination Unit with input from IPO Case Processing. Statistical analysis on dataset completed by end-to-end review team

Figure 19 also shows that just **over half (53%)** of Legal Panel members contracted to the IPO produced between **0-29 case reports per year** in 2018 and this was **60% in 2019** which demonstrates the lack of availability that Legal Panel members have given to the case processing schedule in recent years.

Furthermore, only 6% (n= 3 Panel members) of Panel members (2018) and 3% (n=2) (2019) completed 144+ cases per year. **This illustrates that this number of Panel members gave full availability to the IPO (3 cases per week as stipulated in the IPO Legal Panel member contract) in 2018 and 2019.**

A further breakdown of the analysis in 2019, illustrates the maximum output of S35 interviews/S39 draft reports per week, month, year over a 48 week working year by the Legal Panel members (see Table 5 below). **Overall, in 2019, 5 Legal Panel members gave reasonable availability to the IPO case processing schedule & completed on average 2.4 or more interviews/ draft reports per week.**

<sup>18</sup> 2020 data was not assessed as the IPO was not fully operational during the pandemic (March 2020 to Dec 2020)

<sup>19</sup> Referred to as Personal Interview under the International Protection Act 2015

<sup>20</sup> Referred to as Report of examination of application under the International Protection Act 2015

**Table 5: Breakdown of S35 interviews/S39 draft reports completed per week, month, and year over a 48 week working year by the IPO Legal Panel members**

Legal Panel Member Availability (2019 Average)	Per month	Per year	No. Legal Panel Members
3+ interviews PW	12	144+	2
3 interviews PW	11.9	143	1
2.4 interviews PW	9.6	115	2
1.8 interviews PW	7.2	86	10
1.2 interviews PW	4.8	58	10
<0.5 interview PW	2.4	29	37
<b>Total</b>			<b>62</b>

Overall, in 2019, 5 Panel members gave reasonable availability to the IPO case processing schedule & completed on average 2.4 or more interviews/ draft reports per week

Source: Data sourced via IPO Coordination Unit with input from IPO Case Processing. Statistical analysis on dataset completed by end-to-end review team

### 3.3.2.6 Impact of COVID 19 Pandemic on IPO Current Backlog

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a serious impact to business operations for the IPO and its customers. Since March 2020, IPO operations have been severely impacted. Fingerprinting, Section 15 ‘application for international protection interviews’ and Section 39 (international protection substantive interviews) ceased during Level 5 restrictions announced by Government. On Monday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021, IPO operations re-commenced with the easing of Level 5 restrictions. Fingerprinting, Section 15 interview and Section 39 interviews have all resumed. All these services have re-commenced however with reduced capacity to adequately manage the flow of people in the building at any one time. *Table 6* illustrates the current backlog in the number of applicant cases that are pending an international protection 1<sup>st</sup> instance recommendation as of 30th April 2021. Currently there are **5,110 cases pending an international protection recommendation as of 30th April 2021** and applicants are at various stages of the process as shown in *Table 6*. The current backlog does not include new applications who will apply for international protection once the borders open towards the second half of 2021.



**Table 6: IPO Current backlog in international protection 1<sup>st</sup> instance recommendations**

No. Applicants	IPO Unit (where available)
588*	Reception Unit : call back applicants waiting for fingerprints/ section 15 interview, having completed S13(2) interview
643*	S&A Unit: 2020 applicants who completed S15 interview & need to return IPO2 Questionnaire
1,585*	S&A Unit: Applicants who ready for interview (IPO2 Questionnaire returned)
454*	S&A Unit: Applicant interview scheduled
1,840	Other areas <sup>21</sup>
<b>5,110<sup>22</sup></b>	<b>cases pending an international protection recommendation, 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021</b>

Source: IPO Coordination Unit via IP Live, figures accurate as of 11<sup>th</sup> May 2021

In addition to **5,110 cases pending an international protection recommendation as of 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021**, there are also 7 legacy subsidiary protection cases pending a recommendation as of 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Post 1<sup>st</sup> instance and IPAT stage of the end-to-end international protection process, there are also **546 cases on hand in the PTR Review Unit** and **596 cases on hand in the MDU** as of 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

### 3.3.3. IPAT

#### 3.3.3.1 Applications per year

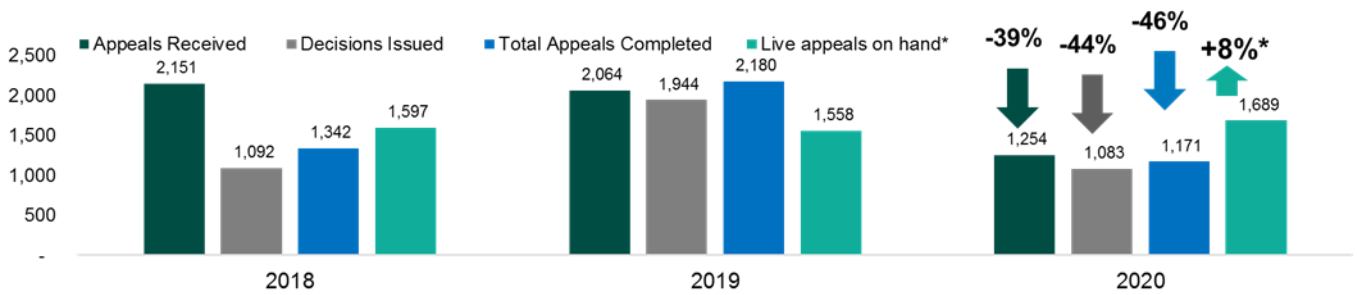
This section provides an overview of trends in the IPAT workload, decision issued and appeals completed year on year for the period 2018 to 2020 (see *Figure 20* below). Total appeals received in 2020 have decreased by 39%, the number of decisions issued have decreased by 44% from 2019 levels and similarly the number of appeals completed has decreased by 46% on 2019 output levels. The number of live appeals on hand have increased by 8% in 2020 compared to 2019 levels.

<sup>21</sup> This figure includes applications at Case Processing and Permission to Remain Units but may also include applicants in IPO units above marked with an \* as the application status may not be as up to date as possible.

<sup>22</sup> Note from IPO: Included in the figure of 5,110 cases pending at 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021 are 936 dependent minors whose status is showing as IPF1 completed (application for international protection). Their parent(s) are in the process but it is not possible to establish at what stage their parent(s) are at in the process. The IPO also have 84 applications marked as 'case transitioned' which are not included in the case total. It is likely that these cases will return to be processed once review by non-cooperation and the Dublin Unit.

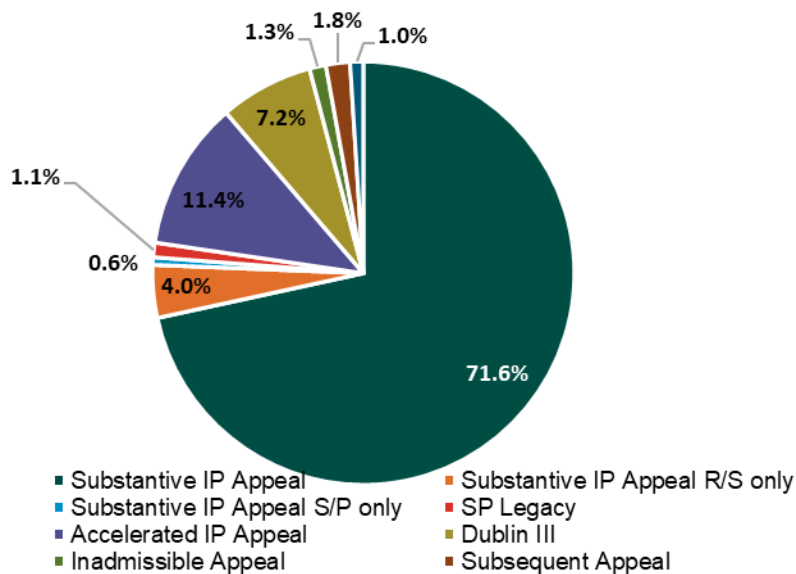
\*These figures do not include dependent minors.

**Figure 20. Number of IPAT Appeals Received in 2019 by Appeal Type**



Source: IPAT Annual Reports 2018, 2019 & 2020 IPAT Corporate Affairs Unit, \* Live appeals on hand as of 31<sup>st</sup> Jan 2021

**Figure 21. Number of IPAT Appeals Received in 2019 by Appeal Type**



Source: IPAT Annual Report, 2019

In 2019, the IPAT received 2,064 appeals.

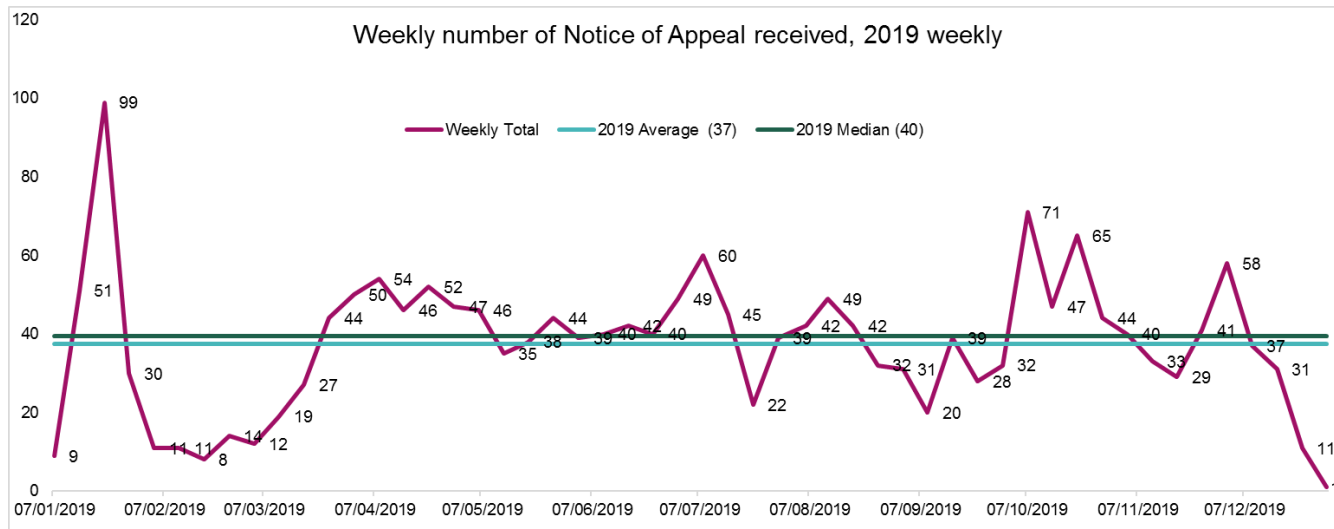
Figure 21 illustrates the percentage of appeals that IPAT received by the type of appeal. 76% of total appeals received related to substantive international protection appeals (international protection and subsidiary protection only appeals) followed by accelerated international protection appeals (11.4%) and Dublin III appeals at 7.2%.

### 3.3.3.2 Trends in appeals received

The appeals process in the IPAT starts when an international protection applicant receives a negative recommendation from the IPO and subsequently the applicant or their legal representative issues an appeal of the IPO negative recommendation to IPAT.

Figure 22 illustrates that in 2019, on average the IPAT received 37 notices of appeals per week, ranging from 1 to 99 notices of appeals by week. The median weekly number of appeals received by the IPAT was 40 appeals but variation in the number of appeals is apparent from week to week.

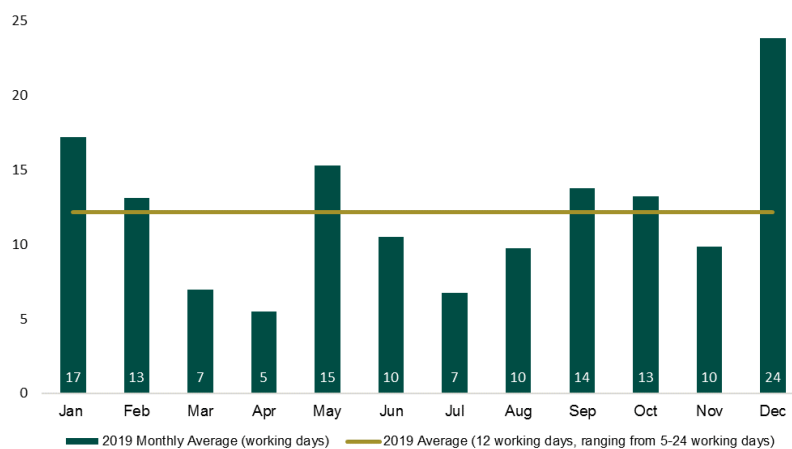
**Figure 22. Weekly number of notice of appeals received by IPAT in 2019**



Source: IPAT Registration Unit, Dec 2020

Once the IPAT receive the notice of appeal from the appellant or their legal representative, the IPAT registration team must contact the IPO to receive the appellants documents required for the appeals process to proceed further and schedule an appeal hearing. Figure 23 below illustrates the number of working days that the IPAT are awaiting the appellants file to be issued from the IPO following notification of the appeal. In 2019, the IPAT were waiting 12 working days for an appellants file documents to be received from the IPO and this ranged from 5-24 working days depending on the month.

**Figure 23. Number of working days that the IPAT are awaiting the appellants file from the IPO following notification of the appeal, 2019 files received by month**

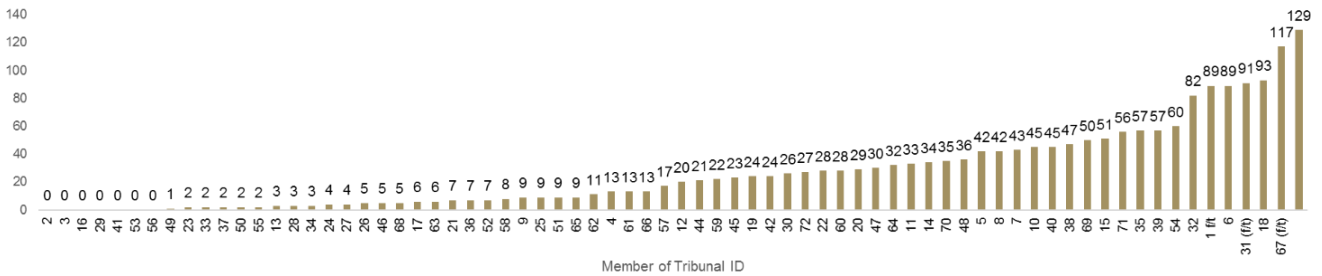


Source: IPAT Registration Unit, Dec 2020

### 3.3.3.3 Availability of Tribunal Members

In 2019, there were 72 IPAT Tribunal members, of which 3 members were contracted to work full-time for the Tribunal. *Figure 24* below illustrates that in 2019, 7 (10%) Tribunal members issued no decisions, 24 (33%) Tribunal members issued 9 or less decisions and 7 (10%) Tribunal members issued 80+ decisions of which 3 were full-time members. In total, full-time members issued 15% of total decisions.

**Figure 24. Number of Decisions Completed by Tribunal Members, 2019**



Source: IPAT Annual Report, 2019

### 3.3.3.4 Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on IPAT Operations

Similarly, to the IPO, the IPAT operations and its tribunal customers have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020. During Level 5 restrictions, all face to face hearings are suspended, however since November 2020 the Tribunal have started to hold audio-visual (A/V) hearings during this period for English speaking appellants<sup>23</sup> and for those customers who are comfortable with this technology. During Level 4 restrictions, face to face hearings can proceed with reduced capacity due to limited numbers allowed in the building.

## 3.4. Applicant and Appellant Experiences

The creation of customer personas and as-is customer journey maps were carried out to identify service improvement opportunities in the international protection process that are aligned to real user needs. A customer persona is defined as a fictional, yet realistic, description of a typical user of the service. A persona clarifies who the service users are, their current behaviour patterns, their needs and goals and identifies any issues and pain-points that they are currently facing. Personas help us ask the right questions and answer those questions in line with the users we are designing the service for. A persona is not based on an actual living person but it is based on information about real people via research. While we can't create personas for every user, the creation of multiple personas assists in developing empathy for specific users and user groups, which assists in developing empathy for all.

<sup>23</sup> Interpreters are not contractually obliged to carry out AV Hearings

User journey maps are intended to show a person's journey through the international protection process. On this journey people will have touch points with many units in the International Protection Office (IPO), the Ministerial Decision Unit (MDU) and some will pass through International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT). As with the personas, these journeys have been built through primary and secondary research. Of the customer journeys that were mapped, none are an exact replica of any real person's journey but together they cover a majority of journeys taken; the aim is to show the range of experiences that a person may face - not every possible experience.

The journey maps create a holistic view of the people who go through the international protection process; they tell a story. At each step of a journey, all actions, touchpoints, thoughts, emotions and pain points have been identified. These allow us to uncover gaps in the journey and related service provision and to highlight all issues related to each specific journey. From this, we have been able to identify opportunities that may help to simplify and shorten the international protection process for our users.

In order to carry out primary research with applicants/appellants in an objective and fair manner, an external company, Connect the Dots, were engaged through a competitive process. Connect the Dots (CTD) engaged directly with current and recent international protection applicants to better understand key aspects of their experiences and understanding of the process. CTD worked with the end-to-end review team to define the scope and key areas to be explored with people. At each stage they reviewed their findings with the review team, ensuring that maximum value and understanding was gained. A detailed report on their work is available in an accompanying report entitled '*Applicant Insights: User Journey Review of the International Protection Process*'<sup>24</sup>. This report was then used as a primary information source in developing the journeys and personas, along with a range of other data sources. Additionally, drafts of the personas and journeys were shared with CTD in order for them to validate them based on their engagement with applicants and appellants.

Four personas and journeys were ultimately developed, covering a range of experiences of applicants and appellants. These can be seen in a supplementary report detailing User and Personas journeys (**Appendix 7: User Personas and Journeys**). It is recommended that the personas and journey maps are read in conjunction with that report.

---

<sup>24</sup> Report saved as 'CDR\_CR1\_CustomerPerspectivesReport'

---

## 4. Key Findings of Review

### 4.1 Introduction

An evidence-based approach was taken to gather a detailed overview of the international protection process. In addition to completing a review of the current state end-to-end process (as documented in **section 3** above), the end-to-end process was explored from a staff and applicant perspective. An evidence-based approach was also taken to gather both internal and external customer's perspectives on the international protection process. A summary of this work can be found in the separate perspective's reports associated with the review (see **Appendix 8: Additional Reports on Staff and User Perspectives**).

As part of the current state analysis, the review team documented all parts of the business areas involved in the international protection process following aspects of Business Analysis POPIT™ Model methodology (outlined in **Section 2.3** above). For example, each process was documented in detail, i.e. what is done, steps followed, roles and responsibilities of process owners documented, handover points and potential reasons for delays in the process identified, the IT infrastructure supporting the process was also analysed to capture if there is appropriate IT support or are there work-arounds in existence. Timeframes for each process were identified where possible (including the current backlog).

A questionnaire was developed and sent to all staff working in the end-to-end international protection process to gain insights on the current process and to get staff views on what works well, what does not work well, what the opportunities are for improvement, whether there is a supportive management style in the organisation, and whether there is collaborative cross-functional working.

Information within both organisations was also analysed to assess whether staff have the right information to conduct their work effectively and whether management are able to make decisions based on accurate and timely information.



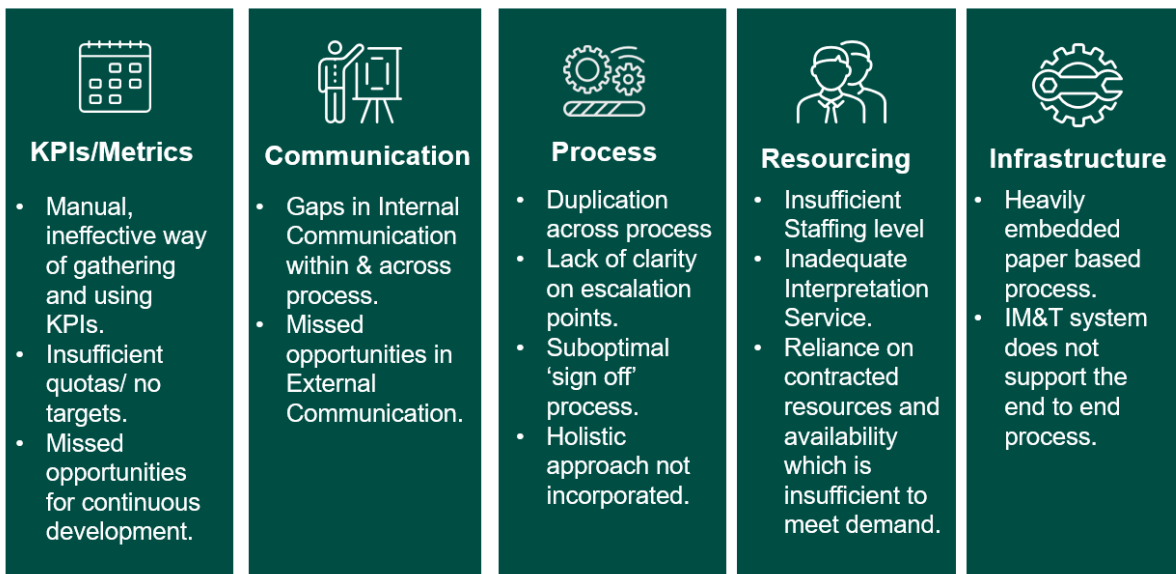
## 4.2 Opportunities for Improvement

The following key themes emerged in identifying opportunities for improvements across the process and business units within the IPO and the IPAT.

### 4.2.1 International Protection Office

Within the IPO, the key themes that emerged from the end-to-end review were focused on KPI/metrics, communications, process, resourcing and infrastructure. *Figure 25* provides an overview of these key themes. The review team's recommendations for each theme are outlined in tables 7 to 11 in **Section 5.4.1**.

**Figure 25. Key Themes that emerged from End-to-End Review, IPO**



### 4.2.2 International Protection Appeals Tribunal

Within the IPAT, the key themes that emerged from the end-to-end review were focused on communications, process, resourcing and infrastructure. *Figure 26* provides an overview of these key themes. The review team's recommendations for each theme are outlined in tables 12 to 15 in **Section 5.4.2**.

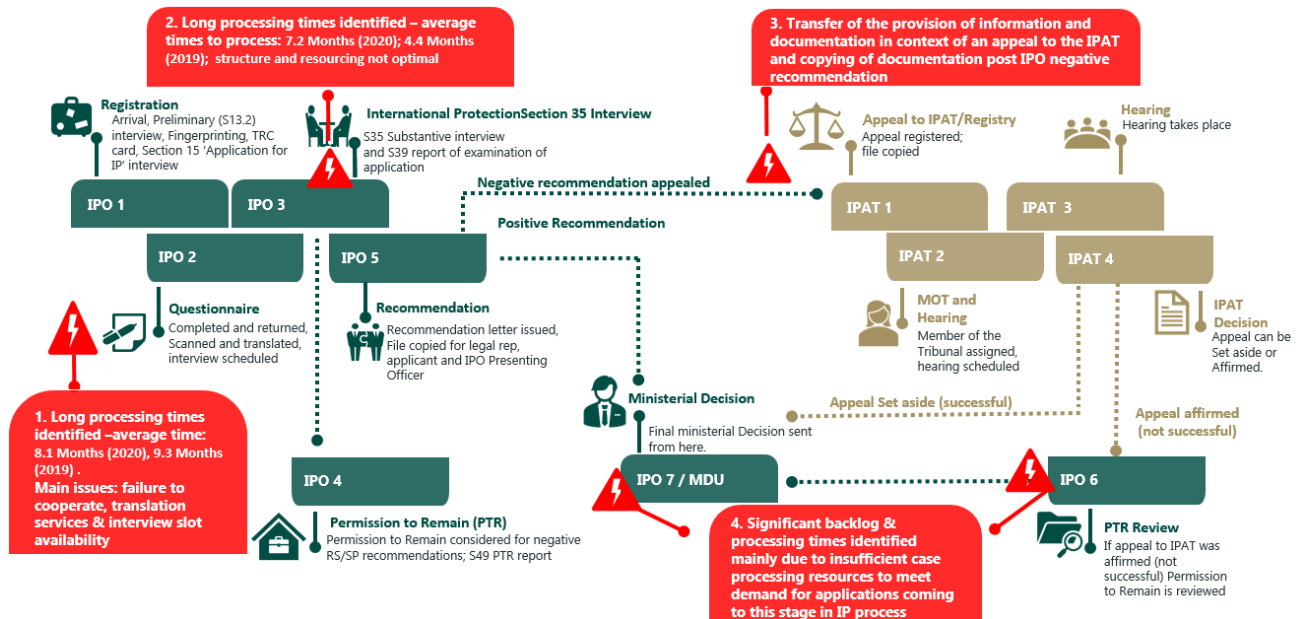
**Figure 26. Key Themes that emerged from End-to-End Review, IPAT**



### 4.3 Critical areas of Constraints

Several areas within the end-to-end international protection process were identified as ‘critical areas of constraints’. These are areas where inefficiencies or delays impact not just that particular part of the process, but the processing points up to or downstream to the constraint itself. By focusing improvement opportunities on these areas, the greatest impact can be made to the overall end-to-end process. *Figure 27* illustrates the key critical areas of constraints identified and these will be explained in the following **Section 4.2.1** to **Section 4.2.4**.

**Figure 27. Key critical areas of constraints identified in the End-to-End Process**



#### 4.3.1 Constraint Point 1 (Pre-Interview, scheduling of interview IPO 2)

The Scheduling & Arrangements Unit is responsible for the administration of the return of the questionnaire, making sure that the applicant has completed all sections and co-ordinates the process of translating the questionnaire with the translation provider where applicable. This Unit is also responsible for scheduling all substantive (Section 35) interviews, issuing letters of appointments to applicants and their legal representatives and liaising with IPO Legal Panel members regarding their availability for the interview schedule.

The primary issue causing delay in constraint point 1 (*Figure 27*) is **the lack of available interview slots**. As an interview can only be scheduled once an applicants questionnaire is returned, fully complete and translated, further delays within this process emerge due to

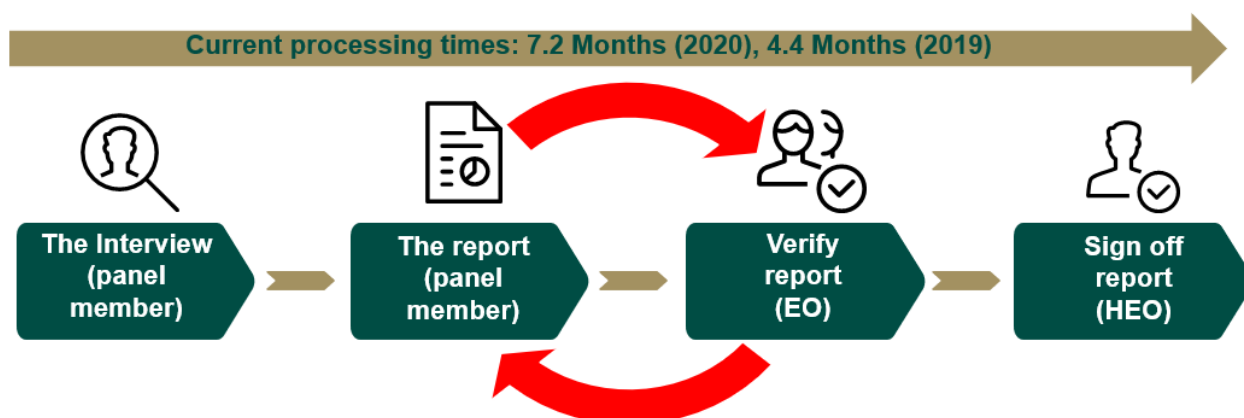
- Late or incomplete return of the IPO2 questionnaire by the applicant.
- Failure of the applicant to return the IPO2 questionnaire or engage with the process, thereby preventing movement through the process.
- Inordinate delays with translation of questionnaire by the translation provider. The IPO give the translation service provider 30 calendar days (4 weeks) to translate each applicants questionnaire. In 2019 and 2020, only 38% of translated questionnaires were received back by

the IPO on time during the period. 23% were returned with 21 days and before the deadline. Overall, 62% of questionnaires took between 31 and 90+ days to be translated and returned to the IPO<sup>25</sup>. Significant delays in scheduling interviews can result here as approximately 70% of questionnaires need to be translated.

#### 4.3.2 Constraint Point 2 (Case Processing – IPO 3)

International protection applicants are interviewed by a contracted resource, a Legal Panel member. Training is provided to the Legal Panel member by civil servants. The IPO civil servants have worked with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) to develop a comprehensive and legally robust case worker training programme. The civil servant will also provide support and direction to the Legal Panel members in preparing for complex cases should they arise. *Figure 28* illustrates the case processing high level workflow.

**Figure 28. Case processing high level process workflow**



The Legal Panel member interviews the international protection applicant, and completes a report detailing if the applicant has or has not satisfied the criteria to be granted international protection. This report is then reviewed by an Executive Officer (EO) who provide feedback and direction if required. When both the Legal Panel member and EO are satisfied all criteria is fully assessed and adequately documented, the report is provided to a Higher Executive Officer (HEO). The HEO reviews the report and signs and issues the final Section 39<sup>26</sup> report\*. \*Note: Single sign off cases may occur in certain instances.

Delays within this process point emerge due to:

- Inadequate availability of Legal Panel members (*Figure 28* above and also described in **Section 3.3.2.5**)
- Intermittent availability provided by Legal Panel members impacting opportunities for such Panel members to develop skill, expertise and standardised approach. As previously referenced in

<sup>25</sup> Data received from the IPO Scheduling and Arrangement Unit, January 2021.

<sup>26</sup> Section 39 final report is also referred to as the '[report of examination of application](#)' under the International Protection Act 2015.

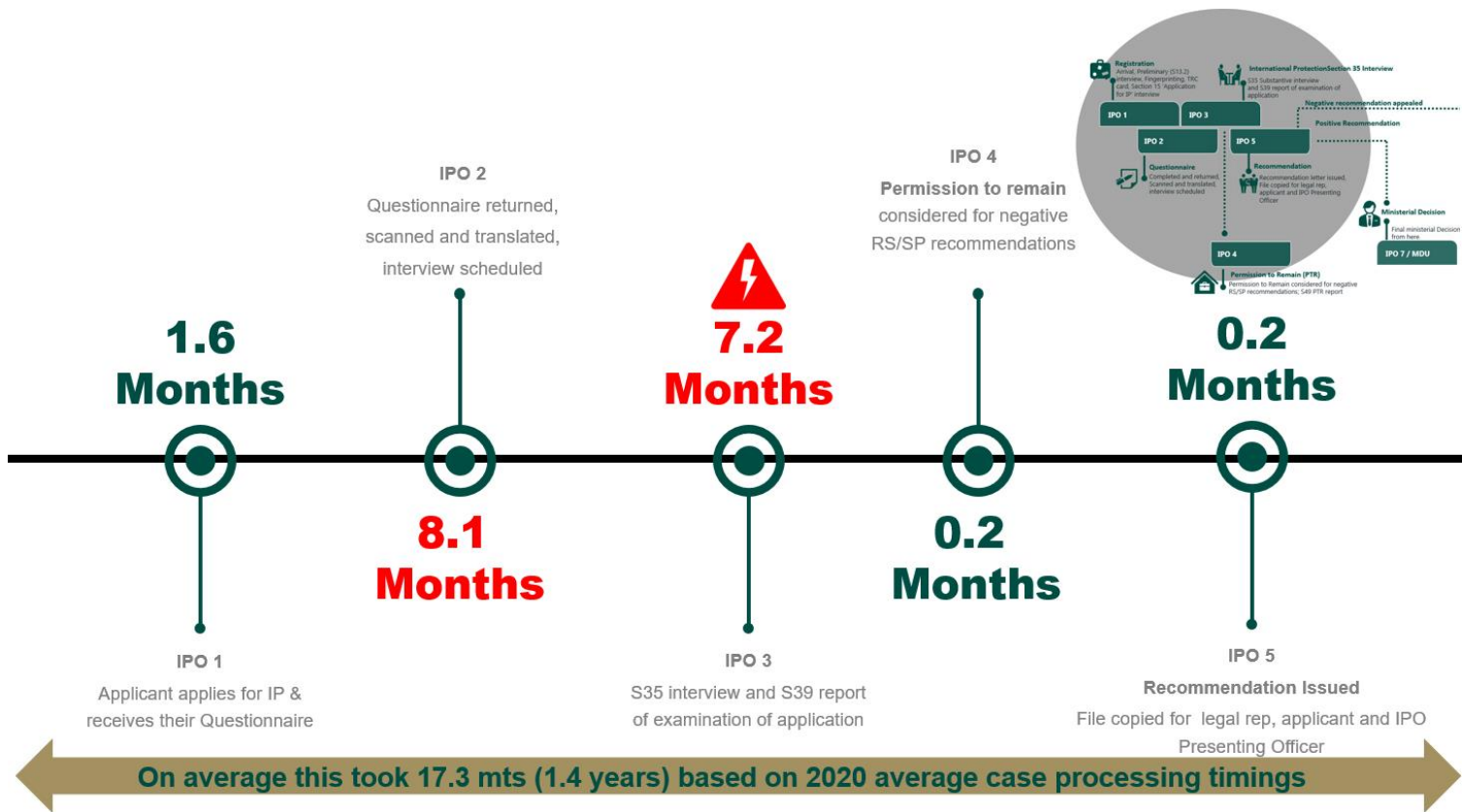
**Section 3.3.2.5**, the analysis completed by the end-to-end team highlighted the lack of availability of the majority of Legal Panel members who are technically available to provide their legal services to the IPO Case Processing Unit. For example, only 6% (n= 3 Panel members out of 47 available) of Panel members (2018) and 3% (n=2 out of 62 available) (2019) completed 144+ cases per year. This number equates to approximately 3 cases per week as stipulated in the IPO Legal Panel member contract.

- Case types are not grouped to ensure assignment of similar cases to case workers / Panel members (where possible). As such, significant research is required for each case so the case worker can familiarise themselves with country of origin background information. Opportunities to build subject matter expertise is limited by this current assignment practice.
- Exceptional training is provided to Panel members by the Case Processing Unit civil servants. The Panel members were complimentary on the degree of expertise and knowledge demonstrated by the IPO civil servants (insights derived from staff perspectives work completed). However, Panel members also found there can be a lack of consistency and clarity on feedback provided post report review.
- While there are quotas and time frames in place to ensure the timely processing of cases, quotas are not always enforced or actively managed. The limited availability of Panel members results in assignment of further cases, when work on hand has not been completed. (\*Please note that the IPO has recently introduced processes to tackle this practice.)

Constraint Point 1 and 2 account for **15.3 months** of the time an international protection applicant is in the protection process. This is **approximately 40%** of the 'wait time' for a refusal at all stages and **approximately 75 %** of the 'wait time' for grant at first instance. (2020 average processing times)

(See Figure 29 below, times in red). Note: Based on 2019 average processing times- this was 13.7 months in 2019 (pre-Covid) which was approximately 43% of the 'wait time' for a refusal at all stages and approximately 77% of the 'wait time' for a grant at first instance).

Figure 29. Average time it took for an applicant to go from IPO 1 to IPO 5 in 2020



Source: IPO current state analysis, 2020 average case processing timelines

### 4.3.3 Constraint Point 3 (The provision of information and documentation in context of an appeal to the IPAT process)

Should a negative recommendation issue from the IPO, a copy of the applicants full file<sup>27</sup> (international protection & PTR) is made with the exception of Garda reports and internal memo's/emails, should it be required for the IPO Presenting Unit in advance of an appeal being lodged by an applicant and in case the applicant appeals the international protection negative recommendation by the IPO. In addition to this file copying process, two copies of documents<sup>28</sup> are made for the applicant and their legal representative (where applicable).

The IPAT appeal process starts when an appeal for refugee status and/or subsidiary protection is lodged by the appellant or their legal representative. **The IPAT decision clock starts when the appeal is then accepted.** Once accepted, the IPAT notify the IPO, and the IPO will send the applicants full file to the

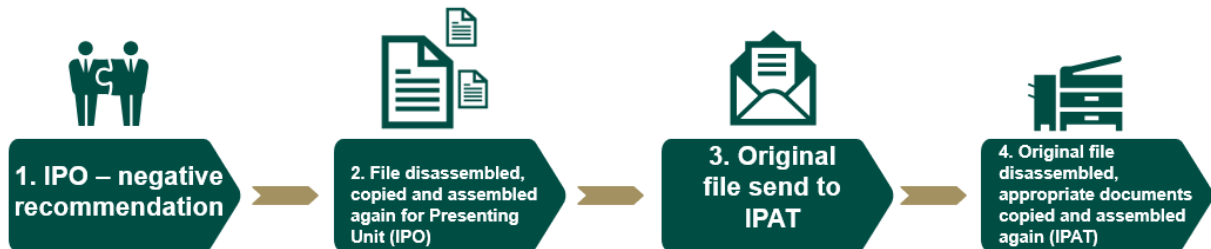
<sup>27</sup> The S49 'Permission to Remain' report (which is not part of the appeal process) is included in the Presenting Officers file copy.

<sup>28</sup> Copies of the following documents are made by the IPO:

1. S39 Report (plus any appendix attached to the report e.g. an extract relating to a specific finding in a section 39 report, another example might be a credibility/finding of fact, e.g. a visa hit report, this type of information would not be accessible via the public domain)
2. S49 Report plus appendix where appropriate
3. S35 interview notes
4. IPO2 questionnaire
5. In some cases, there are also draft S39 and to a lesser extent draft S49 reports which would also need to be copied
6. ID documents and reference documents from various bodies are also copied if they are readily available on file

IPAT<sup>29</sup>. Only documentation<sup>30</sup> relevant to the appeal is photocopied by the IPAT clerical officers (COs) and subsequently then the team provide the Tribunal member with a copy of the copied documentation. (See *Figure 30* below)

**Figure 30. High level overview of the provision of information and documentation in context of an appeal to the IPAT process**



The IPAT have estimated that it takes approximately 2 hours to disassemble, copy and re-assemble the original file and copy file for each appeal received. Since Covid (2020), the timeframe for the provision of information and documentation in context of an appeal to the IPAT from the IPO takes on **average 35 working days to complete**. Pre-Covid (2019), the timeframe was **12 working days on average** (approx. 2.5 weeks). **(Note: the decision clock has started when the notice of appeal was accepted)**

- The process as is (2020) accounts for **approximately 20%**<sup>31</sup> of the time an appellant's cases is with the IPAT.
- The efficiency of the IPAT copying process is impacted by irregular file movement from the IPO. The stream of files transferred is not steady, ranging from 1 file a week to 99 a week during 2019. This makes demand and capacity planning difficult for the Appeals Registration & Registry Units and the workflow is consistently reactive.
- A duplication of effort arises by having the same activity repeated at different stages within the international protection process as a whole. The file is copied for multiple parties, and then sent to another location to again, be copied (step 2 in *Figure 30* above).
- The IPO and the IPAT disagree on the provision of information and documentation in context of an appeal to the IPAT process. The IPAT contend that only a scanned copy of the appeal documentation is required for the appeal process as outlined in Section 44 (Appeal to Tribunal:

<sup>29</sup> As per section 44. Appeal to Tribunal: provision of information: 44. (1) The Minister shall, for the purposes of an appeal under section 41, furnish the Tribunal with copies of the documents provided to the applicant under section 40.

<sup>30</sup> The IPO provide the original file in its entirety to IPAT, however IPAT only require a copy of the following applicant documents on the applicants file:

1. Section 13.2 interview,
2. IPO2 Questionnaire,
3. Draft Section 39 report,
4. Final Section 39 report,
5. All submission by applicant/ legal rep,
6. Copy of recommendation letter,
7. Section 35 report,
8. Section 15 application for IP interview report.

<sup>31</sup> In 2019 and 2020, the average time that an appeal took to process in IPAT was 7.2 months.



provision of information)<sup>32</sup> of the International Protection Act 2015. The IPO contend this is not possible to separate the file in its entirety, and legal advice was sought from the Attorney General's Officer on the matter in 2017, when the Act was enacted. With due consideration to legal advice, the process is currently under review by senior management in ISD.

#### **4.3.4 Constraint Point 4 (PTR Review and MDU)**

Significant delays in case processing times have been identified in the IPO Permission to Remain (PTR) Review Unit and in the Ministerial Decision Unit (MDU). In the PTR Review Unit, it took on average 5.5 months in 2019 and 10 months in 2020<sup>33</sup> to process an applicant's review of their permission to remain status following an unsuccessful appeal from the IPAT. In the MDU, it took on average 2.4 months in 2019 and 2.5 months in 2020 to issue a final international protection decision<sup>34</sup>. This is also illustrated in the end-to-end negative decision timeline outlined in **Section 3.3.1.1**.

The delays in processing times in these two IPO Units are **primarily due to an insufficient number of staffing resources** to manage the demand for applications arriving to the PTR Review Unit and the MDU. Until these two areas are staffed with appropriate resources to meet the demand and significant backlog in applications waiting to be processed, then there will always be significant delays in processing times. As evidenced in **Section 3.1.2.3** (current Staffing in the IPO and *Figure 8*), these units are not resourced with the appropriate and approved number of FTE staff to meet their demand. The actual number of staff working in the PTR Review Unit in Dec 2020 was 6.6 FTE, however the approved staffing compliment for this Unit is 8.6 FTE, **a shortfall of 2 FTE resources**. Similarly in the MDU, the actual number of staff working in this Unit is 4 FTE, however the approved staffing compliment is 6.2 FTE, **a shortfall of 2.2 FTE resources**.

The period of time a case remains in MDU impacts potential for rework in the PTR Review Unit. Should an applicant submit documentation following the PTR review, but pre the MDU decision, the case must revert to the PTR Review Unit for re-consideration. As no negative decisions issued during level 5 Covid, a growing backlog is emerging<sup>35</sup>. The longer this backlog is present, the greater the risk for re-work, and legal challenges.

## **4.4 Applicant and Appellant Experiences**

The work on gathering and analysing user perspectives and the associated personas and journey maps have generated the following insights and findings:

---

<sup>32</sup> As per section 44. Appeal to Tribunal: provision of information: 44. (1) The Minister shall, for the purposes of an appeal under section 41, furnish the Tribunal with copies of the documents provided to the applicant under section 40.

<sup>33</sup> IPO 6: Average times provided by PTR Review Unit, 2019 & 2020, Jan 2021

<sup>34</sup> MDU: Average times provided by IPO Co-ordination Unit, Feb 2021

<sup>35</sup> As referred to in Section 3, there are **546 cases on hand in the PTR Review Unit** and **596 cases on hand in the MDU** as of 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021.



People in the application and appeals processes are not just living with uncertainty on the decision of their case but uncertainty on what to expect of the process, how long it will take and how to get help and supports. The uncertainty experienced is a constant and negatively impacts a person's wellbeing.

The process can put a lot of mental strain on a person and can be re-traumatising. This is compounded by the length of the processing time for some applications.

There is an inconsistency or lack of clarity on what support or options are available to people in the application process and how to access them. Due to this lack of clarity, people heavily rely on NGOs, friends, centre managers and legal representatives to inform them of supports. This results in different information being relayed to applicants which is not always accurate.

Some people struggle with completing what is required of them in the specified time frames and are not aware of what they can or should do. For example, knowing to request an extension of time to return the questionnaire or supports in travel to and from hearings and interviews; some people have transport provided for them, while others are having to pay upfront for travel.

The Dublin-centric set up causes difficulty for some people in engaging with the process, particularly for interviews and hearings. In some cases a person has to pay for travel upfront which can be difficult on a small allowance. In addition, for some people, there is a lot of travel involved in getting to interviews/hearings due to the location of their centre.

Overall, the biggest issues from the perspective of applicants and appellants are the length of time in the process, and the uncertainty around the process and timelines. **Speeding up the process and improving the standards and frequency of communications would significantly improve people's experiences overall.**

**Figure 31. Extract from interview with applicant carried out by Connect the Dots**

*"To arrive as an asylum seeker, it's not an easy feeling...they give us one month to fill the application and in one month you need to settle, you need to know where to go, what to do... without any knowledge about that I need to talk to my lawyer about what to write here, what to write there... my handwriting is not clear and the story is upside down and nothing is clear... I'm fluent in Arabic but I cannot understand really what they want... I filled it out only the last night of submission, nobody told me that you had the right to extend it."*

- Extract from interview with applicant carried out by Connect The Dots

#### ***4.4.1 Experiences of applicants in the IPO***

People in the application process wait for extended periods of time with no communication from the IPO. They also experience difficulties in receiving application status updates and requested information.

The language of questionnaire, information booklets, letters and website content, is legalistic and often confusing. People in the application process frequently have to depend on other actors in the application process, or people who have experienced the process, for key information and guidance.

While the IPO try to be cognisant of people's locations when scheduling interviews, challenges remain for applicants, particularly when having to make their return journeys to remote locations.

If a person misses key correspondence, doesn't understand it or if their interview is cancelled, it can rapidly escalate the length of time that they spend in the application process. While the onus is of course on the applicant to engage with the process, there is scope to more proactively keep them informed of their obligations and of the next steps.

If a person has a child while their application is being processed, the person must wait on a decision to be made on this child's application. This delays the person leaving the international protections process despite having received a Ministerial decision letter.

#### ***4.4.2 Experiences of appellants in the IPAT***

People in the appeals process can wait for extended periods of time with no communication from IPAT. While the timelines at this stage are usually shorter than in the IPO, this must be taken in consideration with the overall length of time since the person originally applied for international protection and the ongoing extended period of uncertainty in their lives.

The language of information booklets, letters and website content, is legalistic and often confusing. While appellants will usually have a legal representative to assist, the experience would be improved if material were more accessible to the appellant themselves.

If a person misses key correspondence, doesn't understand it or if they need to reschedule their hearing, it can rapidly escalate the length of time that they spend in the appeals process. While the onus is of course on the appellant to engage with the process, there is scope to more proactively keep them informed of their obligations and of the next steps.

---

## 5. Recommendations

### 5.1 Introduction

This section documents and synthesises the findings of the end-to-end review into a concise set of conclusions and recommendations. It is proposed that key recommendations should be implemented as a matter of priority in order for the efficiency of the end-to-end process to be improved for both applicants going through the process and for all staff working in the process.

### 5.2 Theory of Constraint

**The Theory of Constraint - Focus improvements on where they can have the most impact.**

The Theory of Constraints (TOC) has been applied to support and identify any gaps and areas where improvements can be made in the end-to-end process. The core concept of the Theory of Constraints is a management approach that considers that at any given time, an organisation is limited from achieving its highest goal by **a single constraint (bottleneck)** and that total process throughput can only be improved when the constraint is improved.

It is recommended to initially focus efforts on targeting the points of constraints. If implemented, these improvements will have the most impact on the end-to-end process. **It will not be possible to implement improvements to these recommendations until the appropriate resourcing is allocated to the business areas impacted.**

#### Benefits of Approach

The benefits of incorporating this management approach into this review include the following benefits<sup>36</sup>:

1. Makes it easier to find what is slowing the advancement of the whole process.
2. Focus improvements on where they can have the most impact.
3. TOC provides a structure for continuing improvements.
4. The holistic view of the process and the continuous search for constraints gives you better control over your process, so that you can anticipate backups.
5. TOC helps identify additional capacity across the process, where it is available.

### 5.3 Key Recommendation - Point of Constraint

Considering the international protection process in its entirety, a single segment of the process has been identified as accounting for approximately 40% of the 'wait time' for a refusal at all stages and approximately 75% of the 'wait time' for grant at first instance. This delay emerges in case processing in the IPO and is due to the lack of sufficient resourcing to complete interviews, and an inefficient process for managing and enforcing quotas and throughput.

---

<sup>36</sup> Reference: <https://www.leanproduction.com/theory-of-constraints.html>

It is recommended that priority is provided to resolving the constraint found in case processing, specific recommended actions include:

- Re-consideration of the organisation structure and resourcing levels within case processing with overall output in mind.
- Implementation of a system approach to measure and manage operational performance and drive a structure of continuous improvement and development.

### Re-assess IPO Case Processing Organisation

A significant delay emerges at the first instance segment of the international protection process due to insufficient interview availability (Point of Constraint 1 & 2). Following a review of the structure of case processing, it was found that the sole reliance on contracted resources limits processing throughput, and leads to the formation of backlogs. It also limits the potential to build internal expertise within this specific areas and to manage a greater number of cases using internal resources. This recommendation would also support the recommendation outlined in the Catherine Day Report. Recommendation 3.2 states that *'The IPO should be strengthened and given sufficient, appropriately qualified resources to handle a greater share of cases in-house. The IPO should also retain a smaller legal panel (to reflect the change in workload following the staff increase for the IPO), working almost full-time with the IPO'<sup>37</sup>.*

Interviewing protection applicants requires specific skillsets, expertise and competencies that can only be attained with training and experience. (Refer to benchmarking report **Appendix 4: UNHCR Recommendations for Caseworkers**)

Any potential structure reviewed should provide due regard to the bespoke nature of the work involved. A series of options were explored to determine a pathway to:

- Maximise application throughput.
- Address the current backlog in 1<sup>st</sup> instance international protection recommendations – discussed in **Section 3.3.2.6**.
- Provide the greatest potential for the development of internal expertise and skillset and in turn will provide greater applicant throughput due to dedicated availability of internal resources.

These options are detailed in *Figure 32* below

The structure of the IPO Case Processing Unit should be reviewed to maximise application throughput and contribute to addressing the current backlog in applications. The following options have been explored:

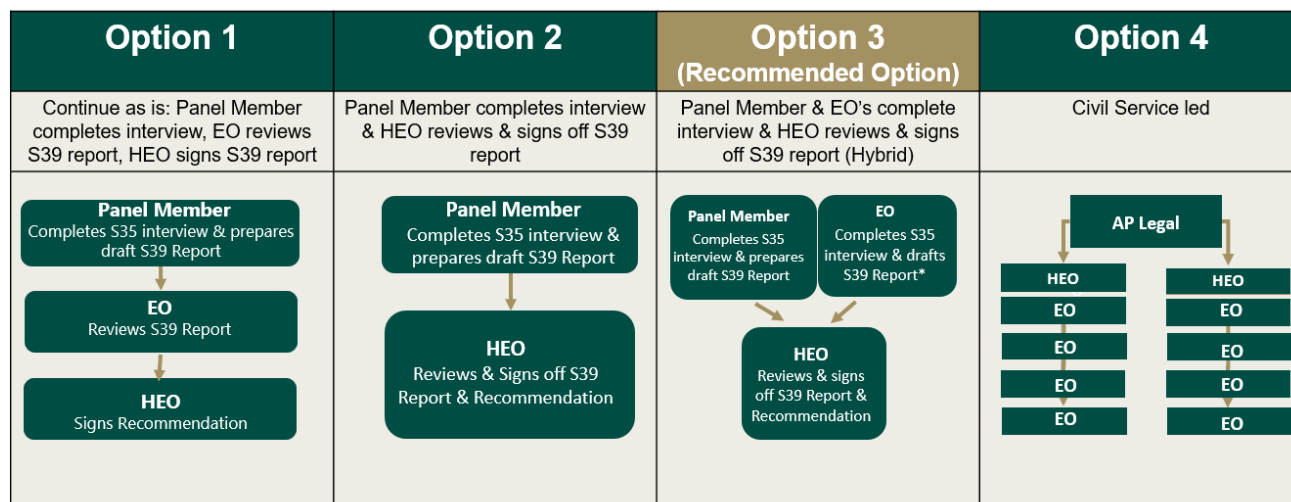
- Option 1 – current model structure
- Option 2 – removal of EO civil servant service from current structure

---

<sup>37</sup> Department of Justice. (2020). *Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process*. [Link](#) page 57.

- Option 3 - hybrid approach, both Legal Panel members and EOs complete interviews
- Option 4 – Civil service only structure (removal of external contracted resources)

**Figure 32. IPO Case Processing Structure Options**



\*explore single sign off potential for EOs to complete

Option 3 outlined above, demonstrates the greatest potential for scalability, increased throughput of protection cases, and development of internal expertise within the IPO. The model can be scaled up, leveraging a core set of skilled civil servants that provide surety of availability. The blended structure of civil servants and Legal Panel members has the potential to create the efficiencies required to manage the current backlog in applications and significantly reduce 1st instance recommendation processing times to below 9 months (future target of 6 months<sup>38</sup>), if target quotas were achieved.

For **Option 3** to be effectively implemented (assuming a trend of 50/50 Civil Servants and Legal Panel members), this ratio should be adjusted depending on business needs of the organisation and the allocation of the required compliment of internal staffing resources:

- Additional Executive Officers (EOs) and Higher Executive Officers (HEOs) must be **assigned immediately to ensure training time is incorporated into operational requirements**. The number of additional officers assigned should be based on a system approach taking into account the current backlog in applications, and application trends. For example, based on an Executive Officer completing two interviews and reports a week it is possible to extrapolate how many EOs are required to deal with the current backlog.
- Legal Panel member availability must be actively managed to ensure regular availability (Legal Panel members completing three interviews and reports per week) on the interview schedule is provided, and case return timeframes abided by. Panel members must be provided standardised and succinct feedback to ensure clarity on quality expectations thereby reducing the potential risk of rework.

<sup>38</sup> As per 3.1 in Catherine Day Report recommendations, page 57: 'The IPO should have an obligation to complete all first instance recommendations within a fixed timeframe that ensures decisions can be taken within 6 months of an application for international protection being lodged'.

- Cases should be grouped by commonality and assigned as such, for example by country of origin and/or key areas of specialisation for example political standing, domestic violence, LGBT+ matters.
- A system approach to measure and manage operational performance and drive a structure for continuous improvement and development must be incorporated, for example quotas and deliverables must be measured and managed with the overall output in mind across all business units.

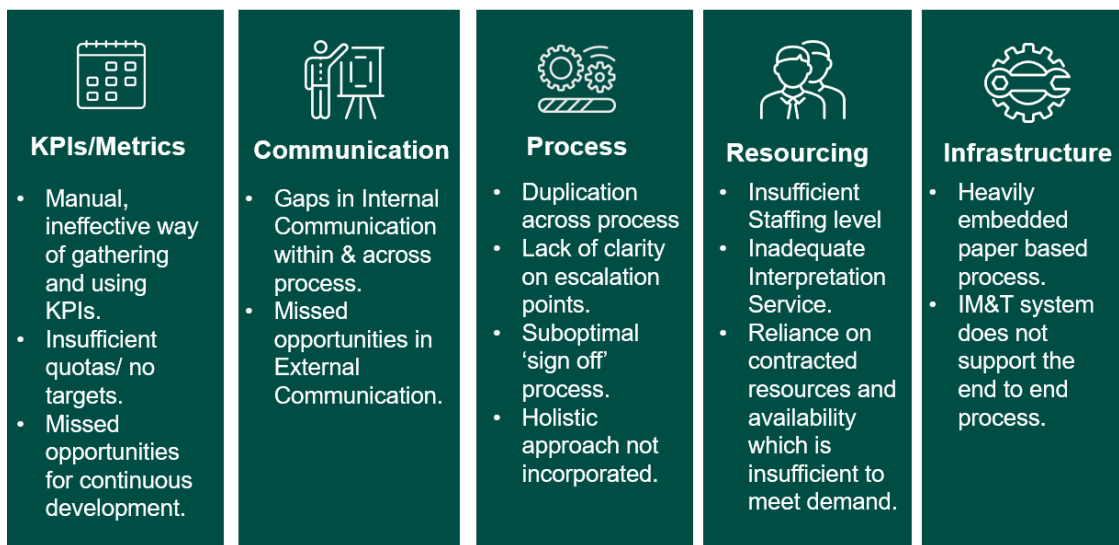
## 5.4 Recommendations by Theme

In addition to the critical point of constraints, the following themes emerged in identifying opportunities for improvement in both the IPO and the IPAT.

### 5.4.1 International Protection Office


Within the IPO, the key themes that emerged from the end-to-end review were focused on KPI/metrics, communications, process, resourcing and infrastructure. *Figure 33* provides an overview of these key themes. The review team’s recommendations for each theme are outlined in tables 7 to 11 below.

**Figure 33. Key Themes that emerged from End-to-End Review, IPO**




A series of recommendations has been developed to implement improvements based on these key themes:

**Table 7: Key Recommendations – IPO Key Performance Indicators (KPI) / metric Recommendations**

<p><b>KPI's/ Metrics</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue work to review KPIs/metrics for each business area within the IPO with overall output in mind. Introduce system approach to KPI/operational performance metrics. This will assist in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assessing &amp; monitoring trends in caseload/processing times.</li> <li>○ Creating baseline metrics to monitor &amp; support a system approach and associated improvement opportunities.</li> <li>○ Targeting areas of inefficiencies.</li> <li>○ Embedding a data driven change management approach.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Communicate KPIs/metrics to all business areas to embed a holistic overview of trends and progress towards continuous improvement.</li> </ul>
--	--

**Table 8: Key Recommendations – IPO Communication Recommendations**

<p><b>Communication</b></p> 	<p><b>Internal Communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inter-team communications is an area that needs work. Teams have poor understanding of what other teams do, which cause particular issues when there are interfaces/process handoffs between teams. All teams involved in process handoffs should work together to clearly define expectations and standards required.</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Update internal communication guidelines to ensure consistent and structured approach to communication (within units / across teams / Legal Panel members), for example consider opportunities for sharing of information across the organisation e.g. lunch and learn; hold cross-grade, cross-team workshops/meetings where issues can be identified, prioritised and potential solutions put forward; host regular, structured meetings where information sharing is facilitated and engagement welcomed at all levels.</li> <li>2. Externally facilitated workshops to gather staff inputs and ideas should be held at least annually. For team meetings, engage with staff to develop mechanisms to ensure communication is two-way, and not solely a means for sharing updates from management.</li> </ol>
---	---

### **Internal (to the process) Communications**

- Formalise a 'cross organisational' group comprised of IPO and the IPAT staff, and other units involved in international protection to foster understanding and improve processes, in particular at the interfaces between organisations. This group should also work to develop agreed and shared understanding of roles and responsibilities of all the different stakeholders. Opportunities to be explored includes the facilitation of external roundtable working groups or an international protection annual conference to gain the perspectives and input of a variety of stakeholders (legal representatives / law society / NGOs).




### **International Protection Applicants/Customers Communications**

- Appropriate resources should be assigned to review the IPO website from a customer perspective, to identify and enact opportunities to improve the accessibility and customer understanding of the international protection process. The website should focus on the applicant as the primary user, and legal representatives as the secondary users.
- All correspondences issued to applicants should be consistently designed and a plain English approach taken. The service design/customer insights team within the Operations Division of DOJ should be leveraged to support this recommendation.
- Update the customer service and communication policy to ensure a consistent, proactive approach for communicating with people in the application process. Starting small, encouraging engagement on the development of the policy and establishing a review cycle will enable positive change that is meaningful to staff and users, and build in opportunity for incremental growth from the outset. Existing channels for communication should be fully utilised, including the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) newsletter. The IPO should aim to include at least one piece per newsletter which provides updates or advice to applicants, such as timelines or common pitfalls in filling in applications.
- Review and update guidelines for submission of documents by applicants and their legal representatives. The updated guidelines should be communicated frequently and clearly to legal representatives and to applicants. Clear guidance, in plain English, should also be provided on filling in forms to ensure there is no room for errors. While it is acknowledged that there is difficulty in enforcing timelines for submission




<p>of documents, it should be explored with applicants and their legal representatives to identify the root cause of this. It is recommended to work with the Quality Office to define a legally robust and fair process for document submission following identification of the root cause.</p>	<p>of documents, it should be explored with applicants and their legal representatives to identify the root cause of this. It is recommended to work with the Quality Office to define a legally robust and fair process for document submission following identification of the root cause.</p>
<p><b>IPAT Communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assign a dedicated communication point to the IPO to manage all communication requests between the IPAT and the IPO. This resource will have accountability for managing and actioning communications between both organisations. They will proactively work with the IPAT to ensure all handovers/information requests are dealt with in an efficient manner.</li> </ul>	<p><b>IPAT Communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assign a dedicated communication point to the IPO to manage all communication requests between the IPAT and the IPO. This resource will have accountability for managing and actioning communications between both organisations. They will proactively work with the IPAT to ensure all handovers/information requests are dealt with in an efficient manner.</li> </ul>

**Table 9: Key Recommendations – IPO Process Recommendations**

<p><b>Process</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With full regard to fairness, due diligence and legislative requirements, the IPO should put relevant mechanisms and procedures in place to ensure a process is implemented in a timely manner where a protection applicant is no longer engaging with the protection process (failure to co-operate).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Process</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At each phase in the process, an administrative quality assurance (QA) checklist is completed to ensure relevant papers are on file and in order. The current administrative QA process duplicates work and does not assign clear accountabilities between business units when an error is encountered or when documentation is incomplete for example. A holistic approach should be taken to administering the QA where quality is assessed on a phased basis with clear accountabilities for each business unit provided.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Process</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The IPO should implement a strict procedure for staff to update IPO Live / AISIP for file tracking and training should be provided to all staff on the importance of keeping IT systems and databases updated with accurate applicant information at all times. Training in best practices around database updates, administration and filing are essential. A shared SOP in relation to updating and use of addresses, covering IPO and IPAT, should be drawn up. This recommendation should be supported by the introduction of a quarterly file audit.</li> </ul>


	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The assignment of protection cases should be managed to maximise potential for building expertise e.g. introduce allocation of cases according to different thematic or geographical units, which enables caseworkers to gain in-depth knowledge of situations or countries of origin, as per international best practice.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each business area within the IPO should have an up to date Policies &amp; Procedures manual specific to their functions and associated template material routinely reviewed to ensure it is up to date and in line with current requirements.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current process supporting the international protection first instance decision making is inefficient. The structure of case processing should be reviewed to maximise application throughput and contribute to addressing the current backlog in applications. (Refer to <b>Section 5.2.3</b> and options put forward for further context).</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speed up rollout of remote and AV hearings for Legal Panel members. Explore ways to use interpreters for AV hearings in order to maximise AV hearing capabilities in the IPO.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of permission to remain (PTR) is a key part of the process, and in assessing it, the team must utilise information already provided by the applicant. However, at the questionnaire stage sometimes information which would be useful to know at the PTR stage is not gathered. The IPO should work with the PTR team to identify specific opportunities in the questionnaire which would speed up assessments of PTR later in the process.</li> </ul>

**Table 10: Key Recommendations – IPO Resourcing/Staffing Recommendations**

<p><b>Resourcing</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate mechanisms to expedite the translation process for an applicants' questionnaire ensuring services are of the highest standards and quality. This may include specific service level agreements on quality and timeliness, and measures on how issues with same are to be addressed. A feedback mechanism to staff on issue resolution should be incorporated so that they can be confident issues are addressed. A quality control mechanism should also be established, whereby a percentage of translations are checked by another service provider for accuracy. Clear guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of interpreters should be included and shared with all relevant stakeholders, including giving clarity on acceptable provision of remote services, and whether people in the international protection process can act as interpreters.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The current Legal Panel member contract is insufficient to meet the demand for the IPO case processing requirements. It is recommended that a new panel be put in place to draw upon as required and appropriate robust terms and conditions of contract services should be applied. The role of contract management should be assigned to an appropriate HEO or AP within the IPO and training in contract management sourced to support them. (Refer to <b>Section 5.2.3</b> and options put forward for further context).</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear and transparent output quotas should be assigned at an individual and business area level. Outputs should be monitored to ensure quantity, quality and mapped to projected trends in applications to allow for proactive scaling of resourcing to meet demand for services. (future workforce model provided to assist the IPO with future resourcing requirements)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is recommended that the required complement of resources are assigned immediately to the IPO (particularly in PTR Review and MDU) to manage the significant backlog in cases to be processed and address the lengthy processing times emerging in these areas.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where there is a clear demand for the scaling of resources identified and required, the department should allocate the budget and resources required to fill such positions in a timely manner. Where vacancies arise, it is recommended that these vacancies are filled immediately to minimise disruption to service delivery.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A training and assessment process should be provided for staff at all grades as required. This training and assessment process should ensure that those who do not meet the required standards are released from this area.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional resourcing should be allocated to assist in the implementation of IPO remote interviews.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An appropriate mechanism should be put in place to facilitate clear and consistent feedback to Legal Panel members in relation to their work. This should be aligned with a clear set of expectations and standards for the written reports.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timelines for return of cases and reports from caseworkers should be actively managed.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review business units in the IPO to de-centralise functions to the ISD where appropriate. The IPO customer service centre should align with the emerging customer service function of ISD, and share their knowledge and best practices with them. They should work with the ISD team and the Customer Insights team in developing shared standards of customer service for ISD as a whole.</li> </ul>

**Table 11: Key Recommendations – IPO Infrastructure Recommendations**

<p><b>Infrastructure</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase and improve quantity and standard of printing facilities in the IPO, in the Recommendations &amp; Decisions Unit.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review options for digitalisation of the IPO2 Questionnaire. (Refer to <b>Section 6.4.4</b>)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a phased approach to the person-centric IT case management system which is aligned to broader ISD strategy. (Refer to <b>Section 6.4</b>)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement an e-signature facility in the IPO to assist in flexible working and improve the efficiency of recommendations being issued.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the new ISD appointment system to schedule IPO interviews &amp; enable Legal Panel members to submit availability in an efficient manner as per the Department of Justice 2021 Action Plan<sup>39</sup>.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The IPO should review their Lotus Notes mailboxes and transition to either Outlook mailboxes, or where appropriate, to the ticket based helpdesk tool available on the Build to Share platform. In particular customer facing mailboxes should move to the ticketing helpdesk, in line with overall DOJ and ISD plans to standardise customer service provision.</li> </ul>

<sup>39</sup> Department of Justice. (2021). Justice Plan 2021. [Link](#)


**5.4.2 International Protection Appeals Tribunal**

Within the IPAT, the key themes that emerged from the end-to-end review were focused on communications, process, resourcing and infrastructure. *Figure 34* provides an overview of these key themes. The review team’s recommendations for each theme are outlined in tables 12 to 15 below.

**Figure 34. Key Themes that emerged from End-to-End Review, IPAT**




**Table 12: Key Recommendations – IPAT Communication Recommendations**

<p><b>Communication</b></p> 	<p><b>Internal Communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue communication actions to ensure consistent and structured approach to communication (within units / across teams).</li> </ul>
	<p><b>IPO Communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assign a dedicated communication point to the IPAT to manage all communication requests between the IPAT and the IPO. This resource will have accountability for managing and actioning communications between both organisations. They will proactively work with the IPO to ensure that all handovers/information requests are dealt with in an efficient manner.</li> </ul>


	<p><b>Tribunal Member Communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve communication with Tribunal Members regarding hearing scheduling, allocation availability, and assignment of files, ensuring more transparency in how the work is assigned.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>IP Applicants/Customers Communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With full regard given to the independence of IPAT, the Department of Justice should assign resources to review and appropriately redesign the IPAT website around the appellant's needs.</li> <li>• All correspondences issued to applicants should be consistently designed and a plain English approach taken. The service design/customer insights team within the Operations Division of DOJ should be leveraged to support this recommendation.</li> </ul>

**Table 13: Key Recommendations – IPAT Process Recommendations**

<p><b>Processes</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With full regard to legislative requirements, the provision of information and documentation in the context of the appeal should be reviewed and a more efficient process put in place. This may include copying / scanning appeal information at a single point in the process, with sufficient resources allocated to complete the activity. Alternatively, a bilateral agreement between the IPO and the IPAT on timeframe for the transfer and sequence of file movement should be agreed. (Refer to <b>Section 4.3.3</b>).</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process improvements and efficiencies would be gained via the IPAT's proposed legislative provision to make it not mandatory for oral hearings to take place for all appeals. The review team support this this proposed legislative provision change currently with the DOJ Policy unit.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is recommended that the IPAT consider reviewing the hearing schedule to maximise the availability of Tribunal members. For example, increase hearings to 5 days and/or change the hearings to Tuesday – Friday. The potential downstream impact of implementing this recommendation should also be considered and the relevant stakeholder engaged (for example - impact on the IPO Presenting Unit)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is recommended the IPAT consider the assignment of cases to Tribunal members to maximise the potential for building case specific expertise and also minimise requirement for rework in case preparation e.g. grouping by commonality of country or case type as per international best practice.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While it is acknowledged that there is difficulty in enforcing timelines for submission of documents, the issue should be explored to identify the root cause of this. It is recommended to work with the Quality Office to define a legally robust and fair process for document submission following identification of the root cause. It is further recommended that the Governance unit (or appropriate entity) engage with the Legal Aid Board around enhancing the training given to legal representatives on the filing of protection appeals.</li> </ul>

**Table 14: Key Recommendations – IPAT Resourcing Recommendations**


<p><b>Resourcing</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The review team support the CDR recommendation to extend the period of office of Tribunal members from 3 to 5 year's<sup>40</sup>.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In assessing the recommendation to change the number of full-time Tribunal members to 10 be considered, allocation of full-time members should be tied to specific deliverables to ensure value for money. The benefits of surety of availability, and capacity to input into the development of a robust appeal organisation should be factored into the decision process.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The IPAT are responsible for Reception Condition Appeals. Submission trends for reception condition appeals should be monitored to ensure proactive assignment of resourcing should this appeal category increase.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate mechanisms to ensure that standards and quality of interpretation services are of highest quality. For example, specific service level agreements on quality and timeliness, and measures on how issues</li> </ul>

<sup>40</sup> Department of Justice. (2020). *Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process*. [Link](#) page 57. Recommendation 3.9: The period of office of Members of the IPAT should be increased from 3 to 5 years, renewable once without having to reapply.



	<p>with same are to be addressed. A feedback mechanism to staff on issue resolution should be incorporated so that they can be confident issues are addressed. A quality control mechanism should also be established, whereby a percentage of interpretations are checked by another service provider for accuracy. Clear guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of interpreters should be included and shared with all relevant stakeholders, including giving clarity on acceptable provision of remote services, and whether people in the international protection process can act as interpreters.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is recommended that the IPAT continue with remote hearings, and sufficient resourcing &amp; IM&amp;T support should be provided to facilitate this.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A DOJ point of contact should be communicated with Tribunal members to discuss issues raised pertaining to terms of service - such as remuneration rates.</li> </ul>

**Table 15: Key Recommendations – IPAT Infrastructure Recommendations**

<p><b>Infrastructure</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The IPAT process as-is provides an opportunity to rapidly remove the requirement for paper files. It is therefore recommended to implement a solution that allows the scanning and upload of appeal documentation from file.</li> <li>• Automate the appeal submission process, facilitating submissions by both appellants and their legal representatives (if applicable). There is opportunity to build upon the process and investigate potential to utilise design for documentation submission at the IPO stage.</li> <li>• A Tribunal member interface solution should be explored – allowing access scanned files, and appeals submissions, and a mechanism for providing hearing availability.</li> <li>• Increase and improve quantity and standard of printing facilities in the IPAT.</li> <li>• The IPAT should review their Lotus Notes mailboxes and transition to either Outlook mailboxes, or where appropriate, to the ticket based helpdesk tool available on the Build to Share platform. In particular</li> </ul>
--	---

customer facing mailboxes should move to the ticketing helpdesk, in line with overall DOJ and ISD plans to standardise customer service provision.

### 5.4.3 Considerations on user experience in general

**Table 16: Considerations on user experience**

#### User Experience



- It is well documented across a range of fields, that improving people's experiences of a process, and improving the transparency to ensure people feel it is fair and efficient, improves their satisfaction with the outcomes they receive. While the body of research may not be directly applicable to international protection, there are still lessons to take from it in terms of improving the experience of going through the process. In particular, improved clarity on timelines can dramatically improve people's satisfaction with wait times. It also gives people some much needed certainty during a very uncertain period in their lives.
- People with complex multi-dimensional immigration cases can often find their cases take a lot longer to process. Where a person has multiple applications across a range of immigration areas, there can be particular challenges for staff in understanding exactly what the policies and procedures are. The IPO should work with staff to compile a list of these complex scenarios and work with policy, the quality office and if necessary legislation in order to determine as far as is possible procedures for handling such cases. It is acknowledged that work on this has already begun.
- Scheduling of interviews: It is acknowledged that consideration is given to the distances that people need to travel when scheduling interviews. However there are ongoing challenges around this for people. People may have to leave before an interview finishes to make their last bus for example, or people have issues around arranging childcare. People have very different experiences of the supports available to them in relation to attending interviews - taxis, overnight accommodation etc. The interview day is a key touchpoint for people, and there is significant scope to improve how it works, benefitting staff, interviewers and applicants. It is

recommended when designing the future state that IPO works with the Service Design team to redesign this interaction.

- Questionnaire: From a user experience, there are a number of issues around the questionnaire. In particular, people feel that 3 weeks is not sufficient time to complete it. This needs to be considered in light of everything that happens in those 3 weeks - potentially arriving into a new country, trying to connect with family and friends, potentially moving accommodation centres more than once, receiving 12 documents from the IPO, trying to find a legal representative. Given the ongoing importance that is placed on the information provided in the questionnaire, some people feel they need a legal representative to help them fill it out. This can be very difficult for some to achieve within the 3 week period. From a purely process and efficiency perspective it would be recommended not to increase the timelines. However from the perspective of improving the experience for the applicant, giving them confidence in the process and potentially reducing instances of documents or information coming to light late in the process, a modest increase of 1 to 2 weeks in the timeline is recommended. It is important that the IPO consider both perspectives carefully and then decide which recommendation to take.
- "As-is" user journeys: 4 detailed current state user personas journeys have been developed (see **Appendix 7: User Personas and Journeys**). These should be used as the key design tool for any future state process and for any future IT system design, and be used as the source material for future state journey maps. They capture a broad range of the experiences of people who have gone through the process and outline a range of opportunities for future state design.

---

## 6. Improvements that can be facilitated by IM&T

### 6.1 Background

The day to day process management within the IPO and the IPAT is primarily managed via a series of Lotus Notes databases. These databases are not integrated with each other. The process is heavily paper based, with a growing paper file moving with the applicant as they go to each stage of the international protection process (see *Figure 35* as an example of the applicant paper files that move through the end-to-end-process). There is no front facing customer portal.

**Figure 35. IPO Case Processing Unit, files ready Legal Panel member to conduct S35 interview**



Source: Picture taken with permission from the IPO on end-to-end team site visit on 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec 2020

There is minimal integration with the primary Immigration Service Delivery (ISD) case management system AISIP (Asylum and Immigration Strategic Integration), an SQL-type database of applications. The AISIP database contains individual person records, to which unlimited immigration related application records are linked. The AISIP database does not automatically link to the Garda National Immigration Bureau Information System (GNIB-IS) or other major datasets<sup>41</sup>. Available data are therefore limited to applications and applicants and it is not possible to track an individual's migration pathway. A wide range of fields is available for completion by the processing officer, but not all are populated.

In line with the recommendations of the Catherine Day report<sup>42</sup>, the review team investigated what changes and/or improvements to the international protection process set out in the report could be facilitated or enabled by Information Management and Technology (IM &T).

---

<sup>41</sup> The Economic and Social Research Institute. (2019). *Data for Monitoring Integration: Gaps, Challenges and Opportunities*. [Link](#)

<sup>42</sup> Department of Justice. (2020). *Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process*. [Link](#)

## 6.2 Perspectives of International Protection Customers

In assessing courses of action for future improvements facilitated by IT, it is important to consider the perspectives of those who will be availing of this service. Issues to consider from an applicant’s (customer) perspective include:

- Access to IT Equipment
- Access to Wi-Fi
- Comfort, preferences and priorities of the customer.

A survey of international protection applicants in relation to the international protection process indicates that digitalisation of services is not a primary consideration. From the applicant’s perspective, the primary points of difficulty appear to emanate from the length of time in the process and a lack of communication on when next steps in the process are likely to occur. A full review of the perspective work completed by the Connect the Dots team on behalf of the Department of Justice can be found in an accompanying report (see **Appendix 8: Additional Reports on Staff and User Perspectives**). An excerpt of some insights derived is shown in *Figure 36* below.

**Figure 36. An excerpt from the International Protection applicant perspectives report**



Most respondents (62.7%) were not very comfortable using computers or smartphones to provide information and prefer paper forms. However, a sizable minority of respondents either described themselves as “very comfortable - I prefer submitting things online” (16.9%) or “somewhat comfortable - it depends on how much information I need to provide” (20.5%).

In order to consider future improvements facilitated by IT and implement such solutions, the Department of Justice should align with the strategic direction of the Public Service ICT Strategy, particularly the strategic objective 2: Digital First

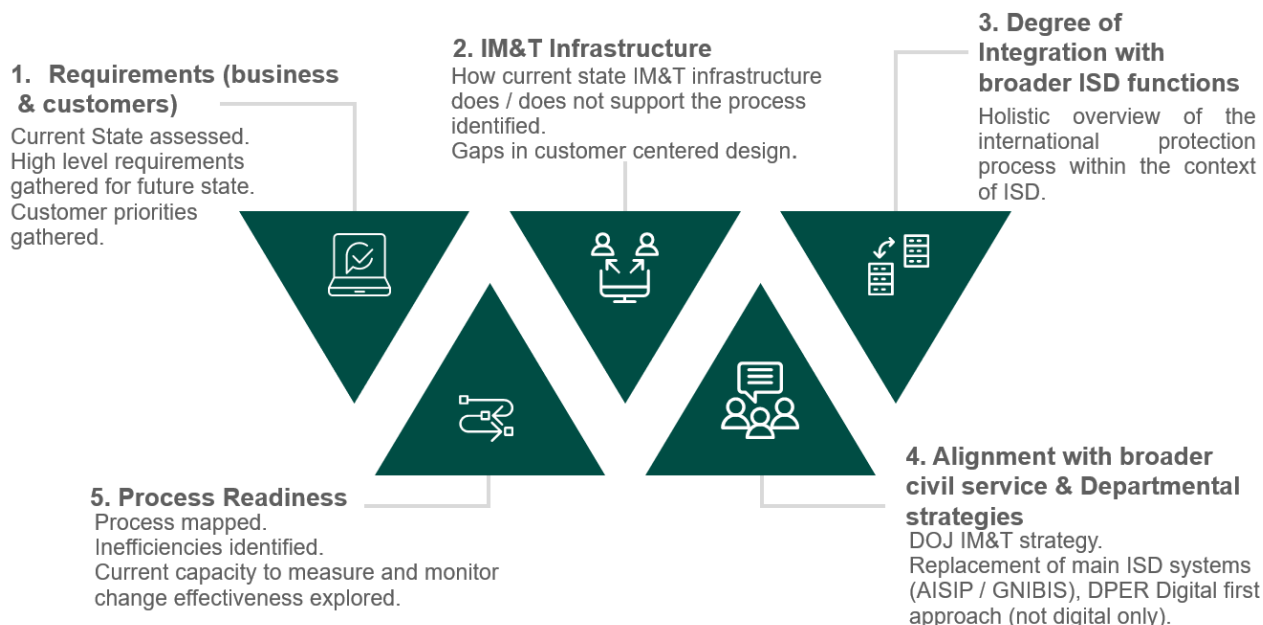
Essentially a key principle of this objective is design for digital. All new services being delivered by Public Bodies should be designed for ‘Digital First’ meaning they are **compelling and intuitive to use and those who can use digital services will voluntarily choose to do so.**

This will require a shift in the culture of Public Bodies so that they think digital first and design digital services around the needs of the end-user. The introduction of new channels, digital services or digital work practices will present challenges requiring an increase in digital skills across the wider Public Service.

### 6.3 Broader context of an IM&T Solution

A person’s journey through Immigration services is often not limited to a single immigration entity. A person may apply for international protection, but later move to another immigration scheme or process. In particular, the integration with broader ISD functions and systems is significantly relevant in consideration of any future state.

**Figure 37. Broader context of an IM&T Solution**



## 6.4 IM&T Recommendations

### 6.4.1 Concurrent process improvements

Technology supports the management of an efficient process. A case management system implemented in the current state will have minimal impact to the end-to-end international protection case processing timeframes in the short to medium timeframe. **The implementation of IM&T improvements should operate concurrent to process improvement work.**

### 6.4.2 A phased approach

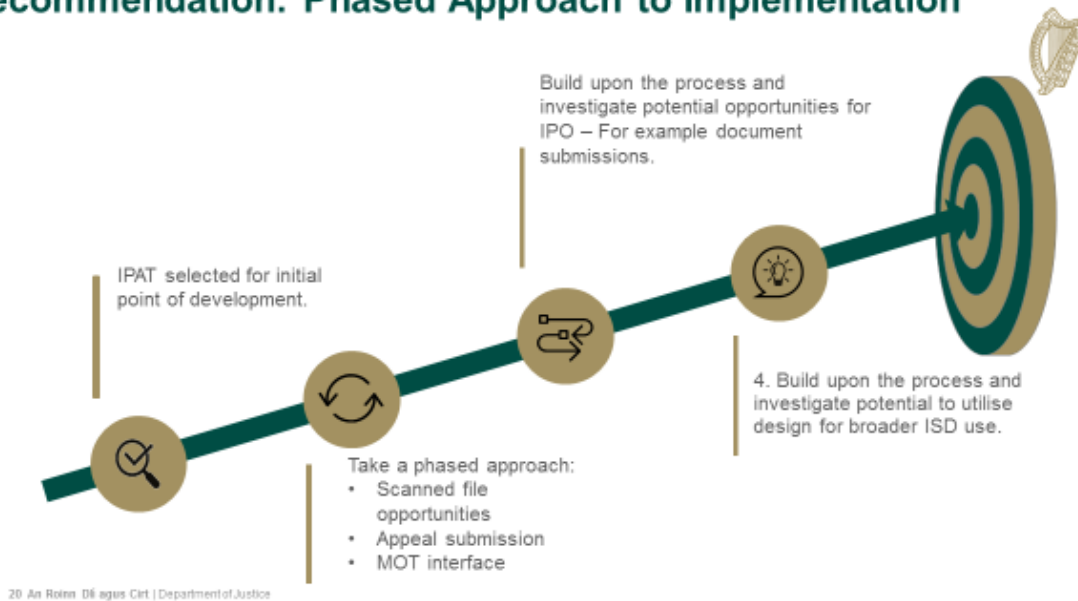
A phased approach to IM&T improvements is recommended. There are efficiencies to be gained by implementing short to medium term solutions for targeted areas of the process. IPAT, as an independent body, with minimal interactions with AISIP presents opportunities for immediate development and improvement. It is recommended that development commence in the IPAT with a focus on the following areas:

- **Scanned files** - The IPAT process as-is provides an opportunity to rapidly remove the requirement for paper files. It is therefore recommended to implement a solution that allows the scanning and upload of appeal information and documentation.
- **The IPAT Appeal submission process** - Automate the appeal submission process. The solution should be designed to meet the needs of the user and facilitating submissions by both appellants and their legal representatives (if applicable). There is an opportunity to build upon the process and investigate potential to utilise design for documentation submission at the IPO stage.
- **A Tribunal member interface** – allowing access scanned files, and appeals submissions, and a mechanism for providing hearing availability for the hearing schedule.



**Figure 38. Recommendation: Phased Approach to Implementation**

## Recommendation: Phased Approach to Implementation



### 6.4.3 Person Centric Case management system

In preparation for development of a person-centric case management system, it is recommended that work commence immediately on the service design of a future state model. Sufficient resources will be required to complete a service blue print, service flow analysis, user experience design (UX), user interface (UI) design approach, data model design and to define the work schedule. This is work required in advance of any IM & T development. The development of any person-centric case management system should also provide due consideration to required integration with broader ISD functions and systems.

### 6.4.4 IPO2 Questionnaire

The Catherine Day report recommended that the IPO2 Questionnaire is made available to applicants electronically<sup>43</sup>.

**In the short term**, it is recommended that the IPO provide the IPO2 questionnaire form in English and 20 other languages in an editable PDF format on the IPO website. Applicants can then download the IPO2 questionnaire form in their preferred language and return via a dedicated email address to the IPO. *During COVID, the IPO has progressed steps to implement email return of the IPO2 questionnaire.*

**In the medium term**, it is recommended to build upon the appeal submission solution to allow upload return of the IPO2 questionnaire, and 3<sup>rd</sup> party submissions from legal representatives (for example).

**In the longer term**, it is recommended requirements for a future state person centric IM&T system to include a front facing portal. The portal should allow international protection applicants to check their

<sup>43</sup> Department of Justice. (2020). *Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process*. [Link](#), Recommendation 3.5, page 57



status, submit documents including their questionnaire, make appointments for TRC renewal and change address. Any applicant interface should be designed to be usable, and accessible for people who use it

#### **6.4.5 Customer service innovative technologies**

The IPO and the IPAT should consider working with the service design/customer insights team within the Operations Division of DOJ to develop a website 'chatbot' virtual customer service agent feature on their website to assist applicants and their legal representatives with queries (similar to the Citizenship chatbot 'Tara'). Initially, development could begin with a proof of concept in the IPO and if this is successful it could be potentially rolled out to the IPAT.

---

## 7. Implementation, Governance & Change Management Approach

Recommendations associated with the end-to-end review, should they be approved by the Catherine Day Programme Board, be assigned a clear owner in both the IPO and the IPAT to ensure progression and the implementation of improvement opportunities identified in the end-to-end international protection process.

A data driven approach should be taken to manage the change associated with these recommendations. Each recommendation should have an assigned action owner, a timeline should be developed and clear deadlines and metrics should be set for tasks to monitor progress, and associated deliverable dates assigned at implementation stage.

Support should be provided by the Department of Justice Operations team, in terms of project management, to establish a clear delivery schedule and to co-ordinate resources as required.

It is recommended that the IPO and the IPAT provide the Catherine Day Board with a regular report on the progress of the recommendations and the completion of assigned action. The review team recommend a bi-annual progress implementation update.

---

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Accelerated Processes for Asylum

### 1.1 Introduction

A number of countries have developed different procedural channels for examining various types of asylum applications. Applications can be organised and processed based on the procedure in which the asylum seeker is facing e.g. normal (regular) procedure, admissibility procedures, border procedures, Dublin procedures, accelerated procedures, and/or prioritised procedures.

Applications can also be organised based on different thematic or geographical units, which enables caseworkers to gain in-depth knowledge of situations or country's of origin, which in turn helps to ensure an accurate and speedy assessment of the application. These various different legal and administrative procedures are explored in seven countries below, namely; Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland.

### 1.2 Finland

Procedure	Description
<b>Normal Procedure</b>	After the Police or Border Guard has established the identity, travel route and means of entry, the asylum application is examined by the Finnish Immigration Service who conduct an interview with the asylum-seeker, to determine whether there are protection or non-protection related grounds for granting a residence permit.
<b>Dublin Procedure</b>	An asylum application filed in Finland may transferred to be processed in another State under the Dublin III Regulation. Where another State party to the Dublin III Regulation is responsible, the Finnish Immigration Service will issue a decision to refuse the applicants entry into Finland and to transfer the applicant to another State party.
<b>Accelerated Procedure</b>	An asylum application may be examined under an accelerated procedure in one of the following circumstances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The applicant comes from a safe country of origin. A decision on the application must be made within seven days of the date when the minutes of the interview were completed and the information regarding their completion was entered into the Register of Aliens. A</li></ul>

	<p>list of safe countries does not exist. The assessment is always made individually for each applicant.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The application is considered to be manifestly unfounded. An application is manifestly unfounded if the application does not raise grounds for protection related to serious human rights violations or the application has been made with an obvious misuse of the asylum process. While manifestly unfounded cases are subject to an accelerated procedure, there is no time limit for the authorities to make a decision.</li> <li>• The applicant has filed a subsequent application that does not contain any new grounds for remaining in Finland that would influence the decision on the matter. In the case of subsequent applications, a decision may be issued without organising an asylum interview.<sup>44</sup></li> </ul>
--	---

### 1.3 France

In 2018, a new law was introduced which allows the French authorities to put an asylum application under accelerated procedure when lodged more than 90 days after the applicants entry. Following the 2018 reform, appeals in the accelerated procedure do not have automatic suspensive effect in the following cases:

- safe country of origin;
- subsequent application;
- threat to public order.<sup>45</sup>

Approximately 23,900 first applications were processed through the accelerated procedure in France in 2016, representing 38.8% of the total caseload. The main countries concerned were Albania, Sudan and Kosovo, two of which are designated as safe countries of origin and are automatically placed under accelerated procedures.<sup>46</sup>

In 2013, France set up five different thematic groups with 20-30 staff in each, covering: sexual orientation and gender identity; unaccompanied children; torture; trafficking in human beings; and violence against women. These groups follow internal guidelines which are revised every year. The French Equality Council has reported that France has demonstrated large improvements in sensitivity and professionalism with relation to claims made by women.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Inter-governmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC). (2012). *Asylum Procedures: Report on Policies and Practices in ICG Participating States*. [Link](#)

<sup>45</sup> European Asylum Support Office (EASO). (2018). *Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union*. [Link](#)

<sup>46</sup> AIDA (Asylum Information Database). (2017). *Accelerated, prioritised and fast-track asylum procedure, Legal frameworks and practice in Europe*. [Link](#)

<sup>47</sup> AIDA (Asylum Information Database). (2020). *Asylum authorities: An overview of internal structures and available resources*. [Link](#)

## 1.4 Germany

In 2015, the Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF) began operating a cluster procedure in arrival centres according to the geographical criteria of applicants. This procedure involves conducting all of the steps in the same location, such as a medical examination, registration of personal data, fingerprinting, Dublin interview, substantive interview, decision on the application and employment advice. This cluster procedure is as follows:

Cluster	Caseload
A	Countries of origin with a high protection rate from 50% upwards.
B	Countries of origin with a low protection rate up to 20%. The threshold of low protection rates was initially set at 3%, before being raised to 20% in the summer of 2016.
C	Complex cases.
D	Dublin cases. <sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> AIDA (Asylum Information Database). (2017). *Accelerated, prioritised and fast-track asylum procedure, Legal frameworks and practice in Europe*. [Link](#)

## 1.5 Netherlands

The Immigration & Nationalisation Service (IND) currently has 5 different asylum tracking procedures which were set up in 2016:

Track	Caseload
1	Dublin cases.
2	Applications from asylum seekers from “safe countries of origin” or asylum seekers who already receive international protection in another Member State.
3	Applications of asylum seekers which are in advance considered likely to be granted.
4	Standard asylum procedure.
5	Asylum applications that could not be assessed in Track 3, due to the fact that nationality/identity documents have not been submitted. <sup>49</sup>

Applications with little chance of success are processed first e.g. Track 1 or Track 2, as the IND tries to make decisions as quickly as possible. In this way, in processing those with little chance of success first, sufficient places remain available in the reception centres for asylum seekers with a higher chance of receiving a residence permit.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> AIDA (Asylum Information Database). (2017). *Accelerated, prioritised and fast-track asylum procedure, Legal frameworks and practice in Europe*. [Link](#)

<sup>50</sup> Netherlands Immigration and Naturalisation Service Website. *Processing times asylum: how long will my procedure take*. Last accessed: 05/05/2021. [Link](#)

## 1.6 Sweden

The Swedish Migration Agency developed a new way of organising its asylum applications caseload in 2016, which is as follows:

Track	Caseload
1	Claims presumed to be successful, where the identity of the person is established and no other major processing steps are needed.
2	Cases that require more processing steps or more extensive oral investigation than the cases handled in Track 1, where there is a presumption that the claim will be successful but the applicant has not submitted any identity documents or made his or her identity likely through the documents submitted, or the applicant on initial assessment has established his or her identity but there is no presumption of a successful claim.
3	<p>Cases in which the need for comprehensive investigation measures is identified. This track is reserved for cases where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) exclusion grounds are raised;</li> <li>(b) potential security risks may arise;</li> <li>(c) there is a suspicion of false identity;</li> <li>(d) where there is a need for language analysis;</li> <li>(f) concerning unaccompanied minors, the issue of orderly reception requires extensive investigative measures;</li> <li>(g) concerning unaccompanied minors, a medical age assessment is needed; (h) there are indications of human trafficking,</li> <li>(i) there are indications of honour-based violence and oppression;</li> <li>(j) LGBT competence is required;</li> <li>(k) DNA tests are required;</li> <li>(l) a torture investigation is to be carried out;</li> <li>(m) cases involve the revocation of a residence permit or status declaration.</li> </ul>
4A	Cases where an application for asylum is considered to be potentially manifestly unfounded. These cases are not forwarded to the distribution function of the Migration Agency.
4B	Cases involving foreigners seeking protection from countries with generally high rejection rates, where rapid enforcement is possible and the matter does not require extensive

	processing steps. The nationalities concerned include countries with a recognition rate below 20%: Ivory Coast, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Tunisia, Venezuela, Belarus, Vietnam, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, FYROM (North Macedonia), Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. The list is to be revised every three months.
5	Cases concerning the Dublin Regulation or applicants who have obtained protection from another Dublin State.
6	This is a new track that was elaborated within the context of the Act 2016:752, concerning temporary restrictions on the ability to obtain a residence permit in Sweden. This track is temporary and aims at expanding the protection process in Sweden. Here, cases where the extension of the previous permit is requested are dealt with in this track. This track also includes the extension of the temporary residence permit granted under the Aliens Act.
7	Relocation cases. <sup>51</sup>

As a result of a judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Union, there has been a decrease in the number of asylum applications which are assessed as clearly unfounded and thus processed in accelerated procedure. Since Sweden has not implemented parts of the EU's Asylum Procedures Directive relating to a list of safe countries of origin, the Swedish Migration Agency may not refer applicants to their home countries, and based on that, assess related asylum applications as clearly unfounded. As a result, many such cases are now processed in a normal or prioritised asylum procedure, instead of accelerated procedures.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> AIDA (Asylum Information Database). (2017). *Accelerated, prioritised and fast-track asylum procedure, Legal frameworks and practice in Europe*. [Link](#)

<sup>52</sup> European Asylum Support Office Website. *Special procedures: admissibility, border and accelerated procedures*. Last Accessed: 06/05/2021. [Link](#)



## 1.7 Switzerland

In August 2012, a “48-hour procedure” was set up to treat asylum requests from safe European countries within 48 hours if no further examination is required. In 2018, 2,790 cases were treated in the fast-track procedure and 1,659 in the 48-hour procedure.<sup>53</sup> Following the entry into force of the new asylum procedure in 2019, the previous accelerated procedures (i.e. fast-track and 48 hour procedures) are not used anymore.

In March 2019, the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) in Switzerland communicated its new strategy for processing asylum applications which takes several elements into account, namely:

No.	Processing Considerations
(i)	the situation in the country of origin
(ii)	the credibility of the asylum request
(iii)	the asylum seeker’s personal behavior
(iv)	Applications that can be processed under the Dublin procedure or under an accelerated procedure are given priority treatment, as well as those lodged by national's origination from countries with a low rate of recognition. <sup>54</sup>

Under the Asylum Act, inadmissibility decisions should be made within 5 working days or 3 working days from when the concerned Dublin state has accepted the transfer request. In an accelerated procedure, the decision should be notified within 8 days, however this extends to 2 months under the extended procedure. For the airport procedure, decisions must be issued within 20 days, otherwise the SEM allocates the applicant to a canton or a federal centre.

The reform also brings together all of the main actors of the asylum procedure to the same location in federal centres in six regions in Switzerland. The SEM foresees that 60% of all asylum procedures will lead to a decision within 140 days (4.6 months), as requests will be processed in these federal centres under an accelerated procedure or a Dublin procedure. If a decision cannot be reached within 140 days, then an extended procedure is required in which asylum seekers are assigned to a canton. The extended procedure should last one year at most.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> AIDA (Asylum Information Database). (2018). *Country Report: Switzerland*. [Link](#)

<sup>54</sup> AIDA (Asylum Information Database) Website. *Country Report: Regular Procedure: Switzerland*. Last Accessed: 06/05/2021. [Link](#)

<sup>55</sup> AIDA (Asylum Information Database). (2018). *Country Report: Switzerland*. [Link](#)

## Appendix 2: Digitalisation of Service Delivery Processes

### 2.1 Introduction

A number of countries are moving towards the digitalisation of certain aspects of the asylum process. This initiative fits with the general EU approach to encourage the modernisation and digitisation of public services. The Covid-19 pandemic has given an even greater push to speed up work on the digitalisation of public services. Digitalisation has the potential to make the asylum procedures faster, more efficient, and less cumbersome for both asylum applicants and those processing the claims.

Detailed below are three countries which have successfully implemented digitalisation into certain aspects of the asylum process: Canada, Finland and the Netherlands.

### 2.2 Canada

The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) have a Plan of Action for Efficient Refugee Determination which includes an initiative to have IT-Enabled Scheduling. They plan to implement a Scheduling Management Tool (SMT) within NOVA Footnote 2 to provide smart scheduling e.g. scheduling informed by member availability, preferences, caseload, specializations, etc. They also plan to Bridge the SMT to a Hearing Booking Tool so scheduling at intake is smart with a live link to NOVA.<sup>56</sup>

For external users, asylum applicants can use a secure online account to make their application and communicate with the Canadian Government. Canada Post's epost Connect™ service is used. It has a package of online forms available for the asylum process. These are completed and uploaded to the Canada Post epost Connect account by the applicant and is later checked for accuracy by one of the immigration officers. The following forms are available online:

- Document Checklist
- Generic Application Form for Canada
- Additional Dependents/Declaration
- Schedule A – Background/Declaration
- Schedule 12 - Additional Information – Refugee Claimants Inside Canada
- Basis of Claim
- Use of a Representative
- Appointment of a Designated Representative for Accompanied Minors.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada Website. *IRB Plan of Action for Efficient Refugee Determination*. Last Accessed: 06/05/2021. [Link](#)

<sup>57</sup> Government of Canada Website. *Claim refugee status from inside Canada: How to apply*. Last Accessed: 06/05/2021. [Link](#)

## 2.3 Finland

The Finnish Immigration Service has a number of digital facilities available on their website to support immigration customers. For example:

- There is an E-Service where Finnish or EU citizens can log in to their immigration account. Customers can book an appointment with the Finnish Immigration Service's online appointment system for citizenship, EU registration, Residence permits and travel documents services. An applicant can book an appointment electronically, with a list of times and dates available and they can track the process of their application.
- Specifically for asylum applicants in Finland, asylum applicants can access information on the website in a variety of user friendly formats. Plain language is used to guide an applicant through the asylum process in Finland through a variety of mediums available on the website.

Applicants can listen to an audio version of the webtext on the website. Applicants can also watch videos about applying for asylum on the YouTube channel of the Finnish Immigration Service. The videos are available in Finnish, English, Arabic, Dari, Persian, Somali, Turkish and Russian. In addition, applicants can also get assistance with asylum queries via interaction with 'Kamu' the chatbot facility who speaks English and Finnish.<sup>58</sup>

Asylum applicants can check the expected processing time of their asylum application or the duration of the Dublin procedure through the 'Processing Time Checker' which has the following options:

- check the expected processing time of an asylum application in Finland.
- check the expected duration of the Dublin procedure in Finland.
- After been granted asylum or subsidiary protection status in Finland - check the expected processing time of an extended permit application or permanent residence permit application.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> Finnish Immigration Service Website. *Services*. Last Accessed: 06/05/2021. [Link](#)

<sup>59</sup> Finnish Immigration Service Website. *Services: Processing Time Checker*. Last Accessed: 06/05/2021. [Link](#)

## 2.4 The Netherlands

In 2006, the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service (ISD), an agency of the Ministry of Security and Justice began a comprehensive modernisation programme aimed at digitalising their service delivery and improving timely decision-making, customer orientation, quality, collaboration, information provision and cost effectiveness for all their immigration service delivery functions including asylum. In this transformation and modernisation programme, approximately 350 legacy systems were replaced by a new database called the INDiGO system. INDiGO contains the following functional and technical components that support all ISD service delivery functions:

1. Business Intelligence Platform
2. Process monitoring functionality
3. Event manager
4. Planning functionality
5. Risk profiles
6. Integrated customer view
7. Case Management
8. Document Management
9. E-dossier
10. Intelligent decision support
11. Biographic and biometric matching
12. Resource Management
13. Intelligent Customer Support front end
14. Search engine
15. Monitoring

The implementation of this new INDiGO system took three years to implement. All IND processes are fully digitalised which means that IND employees can access their case-files anytime, anywhere. The digital nature of this service and the integrated customer view application allows ISD applicants to make appointments, download and upload application forms, and apply for an extension or permanent residency. The account itself allows applications to see the following details:

- Personal details: as known to the IND. Some details can be changed by the applicant themselves, while other changes will have to be changed at the municipality.
- Applications: details on the status of an application. One can see a submitted application up to 3 months after the application is finished.
- Residence permit: details on which residence permit an individual has, and the information that is on the residence document.
- Follow-up options: an overview of other applications that can be completed. For example, a follow up application or a card extension.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Netherlands Immigration and Naturalisation Service Website. *My IND*. Last Accessed: 06/05/2021. [Link](#)

## **Appendix 3: International Protection Staff Profiles, Procedures & Training**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The asylum authorities responsible for examining international protection applications are at the centre of the asylum process. They are responsible for correctly identifying those in need of protection and in ensuring asylum seekers gain access to fair and efficient procedures. Due to the complex nature of international protection, the asylum procedure may involve a variety of authorities, thus creating a complex system where the distribution of tasks is a challenge.

Given the complexity of the tasks carried out by asylum authorities, it is vital that such authorities are provided with the resources required to carry out their role efficiently. This includes having sufficient personnel with the appropriate knowledge and/or training in the field of international protection.

### **3.2 Staff Numbers in Other EU Countries**

Staff of the determining authority includes personnel in charge of interviewing asylum applicants; examining and making a decision on the asylum application; supervisors of decision-makers and management staff; providing country of origin information (COI); and legal representatives and advisers.

The following table (*Figure 39*) provides an overview of the number of staff in selected determining authorities across Europe, based on figures made available through the Asylum Information Database (AIDA) from 2015 – 2019:

**Figure 39. Evolution of staff in selected determining authorities: 2015-2019<sup>61</sup>**

Country Abbreviations		Evolution of staff in selected determining authorities: 2015-2019					
		*	End 2015	End 2016	End 2017	End 2018	End June 2019
DE	Germany	DE	1,760	6,891	7,800	6,680	6,574.1 FTEs
SE	Sweden	SE	7,000	8,432	8,562	6,676	6,109
AT	Austria	AT	750	1,284	1,383	1,355	1,121
FR	France	FR	497	800	800	795	813.9 FTEs
GR	Greece	GR	300	654	:	679	686
BG	Bulgaria	BG	303	357	303	402	382
ES	Spain	ES	:	141	140	205	197
HU	Hungary	HU	:	234	434	302	128
CY	Cyprus	CY	25	32	10	15	50
MT	Malta	MT	24	19	13	13	32

The table shows that the number of staff has significantly increased in most countries since 2015. The variation in staff is inevitably linked to the number of applications for international protection. In recent years, the EU has experienced substantial changes in the number of people seeking international protection, and in response, determining authorities have adopted their staffing levels to meet existing needs.

Determining authorities have therefore adapted their staffing levels to adapt to existing needs. The charts below (

*Figure 40*) provide an overview of the number of staff in determining authorities compared to the number of asylum applications in various EU Member States, as of 30 June 2019:

<sup>61</sup> AIDA (Asylum Information Database). (2020). *Asylum authorities: An overview of internal structures and available resources*. [Link](#), page 30

**Figure 40. Overview of the total number of staff in determining authorities compared to the number of asylum applications in selected EU Member States as of 30 June 2019<sup>62</sup>:**

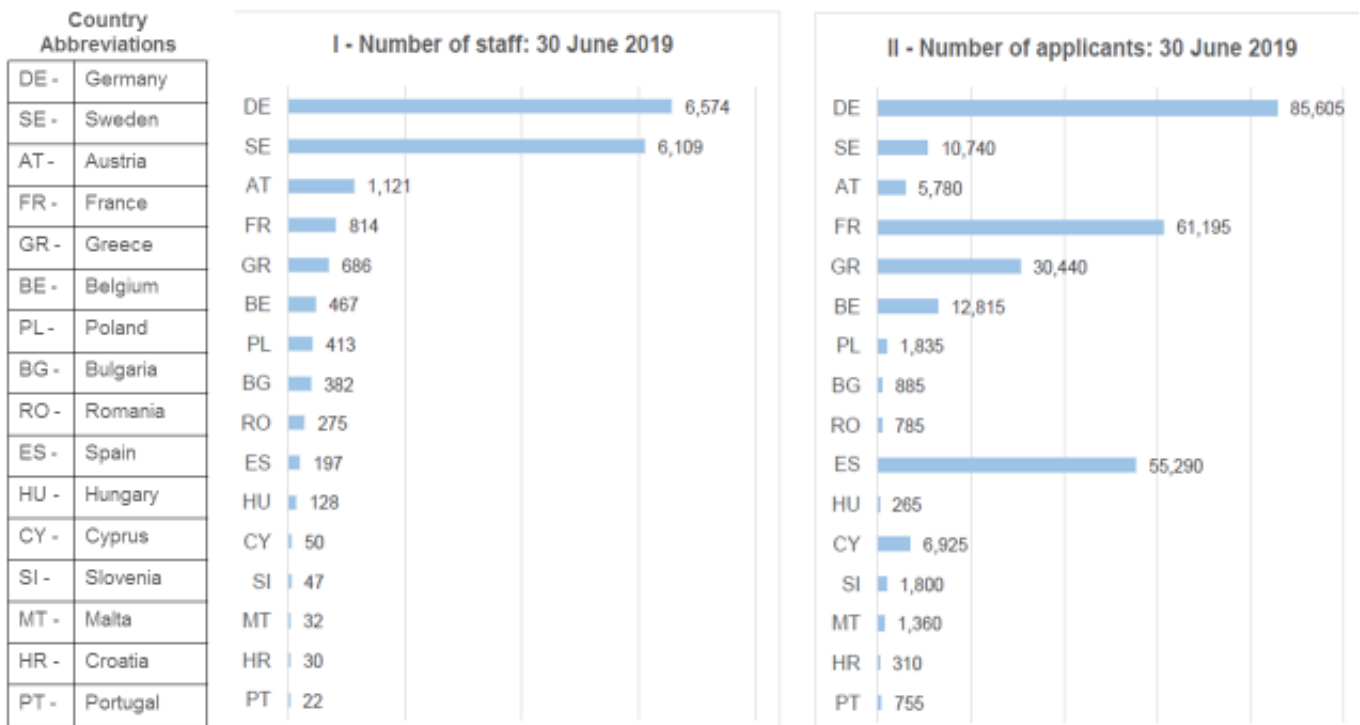


Figure 40 above display that determining authorities which have an important number of staff are, in theory, dealing with a higher number of asylum applications. However, they also nuance the fact that the number of staff in determining authorities is defined by the number of applications of international protection, as some determining authorities have registered a higher number of asylum applications but have a lower number of staff and vice-versa.

**Sweden**, for example, has more than seven times the number of staff than France (6,109 staff in Sweden compared to 813.9 in France), but France registered a number of asylum applications that is five times higher than in Sweden (55,290 applications in France compared to 10,740 in Sweden). This is due to the varying mandate of the respective determining authority.<sup>63</sup>

Despite this, a correlation between the number of staff in determining authorities and the number of applicants for international protection is visible when looking at the fluctuations in staffing levels throughout the years:

- **France** has had regular staff increases since 2015, reaching 813.9 in 2019. The number of applicants in France increased during that same period for four consecutive years, reaching 120,425 in 2018 compared to 76,165 in 2015.
- In **Greece**, the staff more than doubled from 300 in 2015 to 686 in June 2019. The number of asylum applications increased during this same period, with 66,965 applications in 2018.

<sup>62</sup> AIDA (Asylum Information Database). (2020). *Asylum authorities: An overview of internal structures and available resources*. , page 32

<sup>63</sup> AIDA (Asylum Information Database). (2020). *Asylum authorities. An overview of internal structures and available resources*.

- **Spain** also saw applications consistently rising from 15,755 in 2016 to 55,290 as of June 2019. Similarly, the number of staff increased from 141 staff in 2016 to 205 in 2018.
- In **Germany**, staff was multiplied by four within a single year; it increased from 1,760 staff in 2015 to 6,891 in 2016. This correlated with an increase in applicants which led to a rise of 476,510 applications in 2015 to 745,155 in 2016. It should be noted that the actual number of persons employed is likely to be higher, as one “full time equivalent” might cover two or more staff members who are part time.
- The reverse trend can also be seen, whereby the number of staff in the determining authority decreased following a drop in the number of applications. In **Sweden** for example, the number of asylum applicants decreased from 26,325 in 2017 to 21,560 in 2018, while the number staff decreased from 8,562 in 2017 to 6,676 in 2019. In Poland, the number of staff went down from 45 in 2016 to 36 in 2018 along with a decrease of the number of asylum applicants (12,305 in 2016 to 4,110 in 2018).<sup>64</sup>

### 3.3 Training of Staff

In **Sweden**, the Migration Agency is the central authority for processing asylum applications. It consists of a management team, a government agency and eight departments; the legal department, international department, digitisation and development department, planning department, national coordination department, communications department, human resources department and the business support department. There are also support functions such as the internal audit, supervisory unit and fund management.

There is also a Dublin procedures unit and a country of origin unit (LIFOS). The LIFOS produces reports and analyses on certain countries to assess their political situation.

Caseworkers in **Sweden** are required to stay up to date on relevant COI information and are generally required to hold a degree in law and/or political science. Some specialised trainings are offered for caseworkers who interview children, and this training is based on the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) Training Curriculum (ETC) module Interviewing Children.

Similar training has been carried out in relation to female asylum applicants and applicants with LGBTQI<sup>65</sup> grounds. This training is the Interviewing vulnerable persons and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) ETC training module. The Migration Agency conducts quality assurance on a regular basis to ensure all decisions are formally and materially correct, and to ensure the law is being applied correctly.<sup>66</sup>

In **Finland**, training of decision-makers takes place in relation to interview techniques and legal issues. Decision-makers have access to an electronic database called Legis, where all cases are stored. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Handbook and Guidelines on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status is given to decision-maker, while the UNHCR Refworld website is also used.

---

<sup>64</sup> AIDA (Asylum Information Database). (2020). *Asylum authorities. An overview of internal structures and available resources.*

<sup>65</sup> LGBTQI is an umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people.

<sup>66</sup> AIDA (Asylum Information Database). (2019). *Country Report: Sweden.* [Link](#)



The Finnish Immigration Service's Asylum Unit are trained according to the European Asylum Support Office module Interviewing Vulnerable Persons. The trainees practice through role-play. The Finnish Association for Sexual Equality has training in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity, while the Finnish League for Human Rights has lectures on female genital mutilation.<sup>67</sup>

In **Canada**, the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) is Canada's largest independent administrative tribunal.<sup>68</sup> The members of The Refugee Protection Division (RPD) of the IRB are employed as public servants. However, they are independent decision makers operating independently from the government.<sup>69</sup> All Members must go through extensive training before they can begin hearing cases. This training includes a strong emphasis on professional, fair and ethical conduct.<sup>70</sup>

As part of the IRB's Plan of Action for Efficient Refugee Determination, they plan to support members and provide tools for efficient adjudication. They intend to introduce a Knowledge and Information Management tool to provide members with "one stop" access to all information required. This will include developing frameworks of analysis for high volume claim types and countries to guide preparation, and developing decision frameworks to guide decision structure and decision writing.<sup>71</sup>

### 3.4 Country of Origin Information

In the **Netherlands**, there are two bodies that produce the country of origin information (COI): the COI Unit in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration & Nationalisation Service (IND). The COI Unit publishes approximately 20 reports a year and may undertake fact-finding missions.<sup>72</sup>

In **Norway**, The Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo, was established in 2005 and is an independent body within the Norwegian Immigration Authorities responsible for collecting country of origin information (COI) for the Immigration Authorities. Its core users use the information for making decisions on asylum cases. It is staffed by COI analysts who undertake fact-finding missions and provide COI training activities for immigration and asylum authorities.<sup>73</sup>

In **Finland**, the Country Information Service is a unit within the Legal Service and Country Information Unit of the Finnish Immigration Service. It produces reports and answers to individual country information requests which is used by caseworkers. The Country Information Service has experimented with other types of information gathering, such as fact-finding missions and cooperation with the offices of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in the field. A COI database named Tellus is maintained by

---

<sup>67</sup> Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC). (2015). *Asylum Procedures. Report on Policies and Practices in IGC Participating States*. [Link](#)

<sup>68</sup> Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada Website. *Decisions*. Last Accessed: 06/05/2021. [Link](#)

<sup>69</sup> Government of Canada Website. *Member, Refugee Protection Division - Inventory*. Last Accessed: 06/05/2021. [Link](#)

<sup>70</sup> Government of Canada Website. *IRB Members*. Last Accessed: 06/05/2021. [Link](#)

<sup>71</sup> Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada Website. *IRB Plan of Action for Efficient Refugee Determination*. Last Accessed: 06/05/2021. [Link](#)

<sup>72</sup> Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC). (2015). *Asylum Procedures. Report on Policies and Practices in IGC Participating States*. [Link](#)

<sup>73</sup> Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC). (2015). *Asylum Procedures. Report on Policies and Practices in IGC Participating States*. [Link](#)

the Country Information Service and is available to all decision-makers at the Finnish Immigration Service and to various external stakeholders. If there is a special need for a common policy on how to handle claims of certain refugee groups, the Legal Service within the Finnish Immigration Service can provide such guidance.<sup>74</sup>

## Appendix 4: UNHCR Recommendations for Caseworkers

### 4.1 Introduction

In 2003, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) expressed concern with the quality of first instance decision making in the UK's asylum procedures. To assist in the improvement of their asylum procedures, the UNHCR conducted a review of asylum decisions made by the UK Home Office. Following the review, the UNHCR made a number of key recommendations for caseworkers to improve the quality of first instance decision making in the international protection process. These key recommendations are outlined below.<sup>75</sup>

### 4.2 Skillset

The UNHCR urges that a basic minimum educational standard becomes official policy for all asylum caseworker recruitment. The desirable minimum qualification for an asylum caseworker should be a university degree or equivalent together with specific asylum competencies.

The UNHCR believes that accreditation is a key to the overall improvement in quality to ensure consistency in the quality of advice given. The UNHCR previously recommended for all existing and newly recruited/transferred caseworker staff in the UK to undergo the appropriate level of the asylum component of the Law Society/Legal Service Commissioner Accreditation scheme. Alternatively, an equivalent in house accreditation scheme can be considered.

The UNHCR believes that refugee determination procedures are composed of two essential elements: efficient fact finding on the individual concerned applied to accurate country of origin information (COI). The UNHCR therefore recommends that caseworkers are skilled and trained to do their own country research. Caseworkers should be encouraged to spend reasonable amounts of time interviewing asylum seekers and to consult a variety of COI sources and assess its relevance to the applicants claim. Wherever feasible, the same caseworker who conducted the interview should draft the asylum decision.

---

<sup>74</sup> Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC). (2015). *Asylum Procedures. Report on Policies and Practices in IGC Participating States*. [Link](#).

<sup>75</sup> UNHCR. (2004). *A UNHCR review of the UK Home Office Refugee Status Determination Procedures*. Not available online

### **4.3 Recruitment/Expression of Interest**

In UNHCRs recommends asylum specific job adverts, person specification and job specifications would lead to a more efficient job recruitment process. All advertisements for caseworkers should clearly stipulate that recruitment is for asylum casework. Specifically targeted recruitment policy would be more efficient and cost effective, as well as having a beneficial impact on the motivation and abilities of newly recruited caseworkers.

Female caseworkers should be assigned to interviews with female applicants and all applicants should be given the opportunity to communicate the gender they prefer. The UNHCR believes that gender-sensitive interviewing and interpreting should be automatic. Any preference can be readily identified by a question asked at an induction centre or in the screening interview.

### **4.4 Staff Training**

The UNHCR states that it is essential that the initial training and assessment process during a probationary period ensures that those who do not meet the required standards are released from this area. The UNHCR recommends the initiation of an induction training programme for newly recruited senior caseworkers as well as on-going training for existing caseworkers. Such training should include research technique. Stress management training would also usefully be incorporated as part of the regular work routine.

The UNHCR recommends that those responsible for identifying the training needs should be skilled to design or deliver the training. Minimum standards for internal trainers should be introduced and trainers should have recent casework experience. All internal trainers should hold formal 'training for trainers' accreditation before they take up the role. It is recommended that safeguards be introduced to ensure that trainers do not hold any biases against asylum seekers and refugees.

### **4.5 Country of Origin Information (COI)**

The UNHCR believes that access to good quality COI together with the knowledge of how to apply such information to the claim are keys to quality decision making. Respected country research from sources such as UNHCR (position papers), Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch should be made available unedited on a Knowledge Database. The UNHCR recommends that the unit dealing with Country Information be consistent in offering the UNHCR the opportunity to comment on all Operational Guidance Notes. Caseworkers and senior caseworkers should be provided with an initial background briefing on COI as well as on-going updates.

Caseworkers should be skilled and trained to do their own country research. They should be encouraged to consult a variety of COI sources and assess its relevance to the applicants claim. They should be trained to source all references to COI. External experts (academics, UNHCR field staff, and NGO field staff) should also regularly provide briefings on the latest COI to caseworkers, senior caseworkers and CIPU staff.<sup>76</sup>

#### **4.6 Assessment Form**

The UNHCR believes that an objective assessment form should be able to give an overall measurable outcome of the caseworker's performance. It should also be able to identify individual and collective training needs.

The UNHCR's research and experience dictates that a numeric scoring system is the most objective method of assessing asylum caseworker competency. A numeric scoring system can be adopted to set future targets. The UNHCR's experience indicates that asylum systems benefit from a measure of flexibility in regards time limits and other procedural parameters and recommends that:

- Case production targets are useful as management tools but should always be kept at reasonable levels.
- Meeting and exceeding quality targets should be emphasized as opposed to simply meeting quantity targets.
- Consideration be given to a fast track procedure for manifestly well founded claims to asylum.
- Each caseworker should receive monthly feedback on all of their decisions under appeal on a one-to-one basis.

#### **4.7 Stress Management**

The UNHCR believes that the identification and management of stress is essential for the retention of good quality caseworkers. Ignoring stress can result in staff burn-out and may lead to poor quality decisions and high staff turnover. It is recommended that stress indicators be monitored on a regular basis e.g. analyse absence and turnover figures. Stress management training would usefully be incorporated as part of the regular work routine. It is essential that caseworkers who are deciding refugee claims are working in an atmosphere which acknowledges the existence of stress and encourages open discussions.

The UNHCR recommends that caseworkers are regularly rotated off decision making duties for a short period. Caseworkers could be usefully deployed on other non-decision making duties for this week (including attending further training). One successful UNHCR model rotated caseworkers on a four-week-on, one-week-off basis.<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> UNHCR. (2004) *A UNHCR review of the UK Home Office Refugee Status Determination Procedures*. Not available online

<sup>77</sup> UNHCR. (2004). *A UNHCR review of the UK Home Office Refugee Status Determination Procedures*. Not available online

## **4.8 What Is Ireland Doing?**

### **4.8.1 International Protection Office**

All caseworkers and Panel Members in Ireland are trained by the UNHCR. This training covers core international protection determination issues including the legal framework of the protection process, the judicial review system, and the principles of fair procedures in public decisions. It is specific to Irish legislation and encompasses the European Asylum Support Office's (EASO) best practice. It is also constantly updated and amended when required based on queries that come, in as well as issues which arise in the quality assurance (QA) process which help to establish training needs.

Certain staff are specifically trained to interview children, while all staff are trained on LGBTI issues. This training is completed by or in conjunction with the UNHCR. All caseworkers and panel members have the UNHCR handbook and access to UNHCR website, plus access to all internal IPO resource materials.

All caseworkers and Panel Members have received training on how to source and utilise reputable and reliable COI as part of their comprehensive training. The Refugee Documentation Centre provide this training as a module in the overall training provided.

Ireland do not have an internal national body which produces its own regular COI country reports. This is due to a lack of resources. Instead, Ireland relies on others resources in that regard e.g. UNHCR, EASO, US, UK, or Canada.

### **4.8.2 International Protection Appeal Tribunal**

The International Protection Appeal Tribunal is committed to ensuring that its decisions and procedures are in line with the latest EU developments, most importantly the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU). In that regard, the Tribunal engages actively with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) Network of Courts and Tribunals, and Tribunal Members benefit from EASO's Professional Development Workshops for judges and tribunal members, covering all aspects of the Common European Asylum System. The Tribunal is an active participant in and contributor to training and networking opportunities provided through the EASO, the International Association of Refugee and Migration Judges (IARMJ) as well as the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN).

Moreover, Tribunal Members benefit from regular in-house training, including Lunch & Learn sessions, supported by external speakers, including from the UNHCR. Additionally, they receive regular updates on the latest national and EU case-law as well as up-to-date country information reports and country guidance provided by EASO and UNHCR and relevant international human rights organisations.

## Appendix 5: Processing Times for Asylum Applications

### 5.1 Introduction

Time is a crucial yet uncertain factor when it comes to processing asylum applications due to the nature and complexity of international protection. Shorter application processing times could undoubtedly be both cost-effective for asylum administrations, while also minimising uncertainty for asylum seekers and improving their overall experience.

The majority of European countries have laid down a time limit of 6 months in their legal frameworks. However, neither the Asylum Procedures Directive from the European Commission nor its transposition in domestic legal frameworks involve consequences for potential failures to comply with the time limit. However, authorities are expected to inform applicants of the date in which a decision is expected.

The recast Asylum Procedures Directive from the European Commission allows Member States a number of derogations from the 6-month deadline:

- An extension of 9 months may be applied for complex cases, in the event of large influx of applications, or due to non-cooperation of the applicant;
- This extension may last 12 months in exceptional cases where it is deemed necessary for ‘an adequate examination of the application’;
- A postponement is allowed if there is ‘an uncertain situation in the country of origin which is expected to be temporary.’

These derogations are allowable as long as Member States do not exceed 21 months.<sup>78</sup>

The table below details the processing times for asylum applications in eight different countries; Canada, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

---

<sup>78</sup> AIDA (Asylum Information Database). (2016). *The length of asylum procedures in Europe*. [Link](#)

## 5.2 Processing Times

Country	Processing Times
<b>Canada</b>	Of the asylum cases that are heard, the average processing time for cases which received a decision is approximately <b>4 months</b> . <sup>79</sup>
<b>Finland</b>	The average processing times for cases which received a first decision was 237 days ( <b>7.8 months</b> ) in 2018 and 173 days ( <b>5.6 months</b> ) in 2019. These figures have been calculated based on the case handling system from registering the application to the confirmation date of the first decision. <sup>80</sup> Under a new law in Finland, asylum applications which have been submitted on or after 20/07/2018 must be decided within <b>6 months</b> . <sup>81</sup>
<b>France</b>	In 2018, the average first-instance processing time of asylum applications for normal procedure was 112 days ( <b>3.6 months</b> ). This period encompasses the reception of the application, its evaluation, the interview with the asylum-seeker, the instruction process, and the decision. <sup>82</sup>
<b>Germany</b>	From 1 January 2018 to 30 September 2018, the average processing time of first instance asylum cases has been <b>8 months</b> for that period. <sup>83</sup>
<b>Netherlands</b>	According to a new law in the Netherlands, the IND must make a decision on asylum applications within <b>6 months</b> . In some cases, if more research is required, this is extended to 15 months. <sup>84</sup>
<b>Norway</b>	The average case processing time in Norway for asylum cases in the first instance from day of application to the first decision was 238 days ( <b>7.8 months</b> ) in 2018 and 257 days ( <b>8.4 months</b> ) for January-March 2019. <sup>85</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Government of Canada Website. *Claiming asylum in Canada – what happens?* Last Accessed: 06/05/2021. [Link](#)

<sup>80</sup> European Commission. (2019). *AD HOC QUERY ON 2019.49 Processing times first instance asylum cases*. [Link](#)

<sup>81</sup> Finnish Immigration Service Website. *Frequently asked questions about the maximum processing times of asylum applications*. Last Accessed: 06/05/2021. [Link](#)

<sup>82</sup> European Commission. (2019). *AD HOC QUERY ON 2019.49 Processing times first instance asylum cases*. [Link](#)

<sup>83</sup> European Commission. (2019). *AD HOC QUERY ON 2019.49 Processing times first instance asylum cases*. [Link](#)

<sup>84</sup> Netherlands Immigration and Naturalisation Service Website. *Processing times asylum: how long will my procedure take?* Last Accessed: 06/05/2021. [Link](#)

<sup>85</sup> European Commission. (2019). *AD HOC QUERY ON 2019.49 Processing times first instance asylum cases*. [Link](#)

<b>Sweden</b>	For the first three months of 2019 the average handling time is 301 Days <b>(9.8 months)</b> . The time is counted from the day of the asylum application until the day the first instance decision is made by the Swedish Migration Agency. <sup>86</sup>
<b>Switzerland</b>	In 2019, the average duration was 340.5 days <b>(11 months)</b> , compared to 465 <b>(15 months)</b> days in 2018, and an average of 339 <b>(11 months)</b> days in 2017. <sup>87</sup>

<sup>86</sup> European Commission. (2019). *AD HOC QUERY ON 2019.49 Processing times first instance asylum cases*. [Link](#)

<sup>87</sup> AIDA (Asylum Information Database) Website. *Country Report: Regular Procedure: Switzerland*. Last Accessed: 06/05/2021. [Link](#)



## **Appendix 6: Overview of IPO enabling and supporting Business Units**

### **6.1 Information Access Unit**

The Information Access Unit is an enabling function for the International Protection Office. The unit carries out tasks relating to freedom of information requests, data protection issues, gathering and maintaining country of origin information for decision makers, language analysis to establish the veracity of some applications, and staff support functions, such as monitoring the arrival and departure of staff to ensure sufficient staffing levels are maintained and accurate statistics are available to management at all times.

### **6.2 Judicial Review and Support Unit**

The Judicial Review (JR) and Legal Support Unit is an enabling function for the Case Processing (CP) Unit. The presence of a dedicated JR Unit prevents case processing staff being diverted from their essential core work processing applications to deal with time consuming judicial reviews. The main role of the JR Unit is to manage any challenges against the recommendations and decisions of the Chief International Protection Officer and the Minister (where appropriate). The Department has the Legal Services Support Unit who deal with their legal challenges. However, the JR Unit deal specifically with legal challenges relating to case processing recommendations, PTR decisions and Dublin Unit decisions made pursuant to the International Protection Act 2015 and the Dublin III Regulations.

### **6.3 Procedures and Training Unit**

The Procedures and Training Unit act as a support service, answering internal and external queries, completing quality checks, arranging induction training and refresher training, drafting guidance papers and resources on international protection, reviewing and drafting responses to legal challenges, attending European Asylum Support Office (EASO) meetings, and acting as the main point of contact for EASO.

### **6.4 Coordination Unit**

The Coordination Unit is an enabling unit within the IPO and consists of three staff (1 HEO FTE, 1 EO (0.76), 1 CO). The main functions of the unit are to:

- Coordinate and prepare finalised IPO briefing material, input into queries and statistics for ISD, Transparency Division, the Ministers Office, other Government Departments and Agencies, national and international bodies and other stakeholders involved in international protection.
- Coordinate and respond to requests from Transparency Division for material for PQs, Ministerial representatives and other Oireachtas business (in accordance with relevant guidelines).
- Support the IPO Senior Management Team.

In association with the IPO Management Team, continue to coordinate necessary representation and input into ISD/Department of Justice Transformation Programme and ISD Service Improvement Plan.

Ensure all IPOs commitments under the ISD Business Planning Process are met for 2020.

## **6.5 Customer Service Centre**

Customer Service Centre (CSC) deal with any correspondence that comes in to the IPO that is not addressed to someone/a specified unit in particular. The aim of the service is to provide high quality customer service to all international protection applicants ensuring that the applicant has a clear pathway forward after the correspondence with an applicant. The main functions of the CSC include; answer telephone queries, respond to email queries, acknowledge and respond to all correspondences, complete investigations, respond to withdrawal of application queries, deal with change of identity queries, return of original documents to applicants, update the IPO website, provide training on customer service management, and act as the Customer Service Liaison Panel (CSC consults with NGO's working with international protection applicants to get feedback on the service the IPO provide approximately 2 times per year).

## Appendix 7: User Personas and Journeys

### ***Table 17: User personas and journeys***

Customer personas and as-is customer journey maps were tools used to identify service improvement opportunities in the International Protection Process. This was done as part of the implementation of the recommendations of the Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process (otherwise known as the Catherine Day Report), specifically Action 3.18 which recommends carrying out an end to end review of the international protection process.

A supplementary report detailing '***Current state user personas and journey maps***' has been developed. This report, the user personas and user journeys generated form one part of the overall review carried out under action 3.18. This work should be viewed as one of the inputs to the full end to end review report and considered in the context of the full body of work of the review.

## Appendix 8: Additional Reports on Staff and User Perspectives

There are 10 additional staff and user reports which support this overall report. These 10 reports contain the full detail and analysis of the work done to gather and analyse staff and user perspectives of the international protection process. These reports have been looked at as a whole, and the insights within them used to develop overall understanding of the process, and to develop one overall set of holistic recommendations for improvements. **The 10 reports are listed below.**

**Table 18: Additional reports on staff and user perspectives**

Staff and user perspectives reports
Staff survey reports
CDR_SR1_IPOStaffSurveyReportFeb21_FINAL
CDR_SR2_IPOLegalPanelMembersSurveyReport_FINAL
CDR_SR3_IPATStaffSurveyReportFeb21_FINAL
CDR_SR4_IPATMembersSurveyReportFeb21_FINAL
Staff workshop reports
CDR_WR1_IPOStaffWorkshopReportFeb21_FINAL
CDR_WR2_IPATStaffWorkshopReportFeb21_FINAL
CDR_WR3_IPATTribunalMembersWorkshopMar21_FINAL
CDR_WR4_IPOLegalPanelRoundtableMar21_FINAL
User perspective reports
CDR_CR1_CustomerPerspectivesReport_FINAL (carried out by Connect The Dots)
CDR_CR2_CurrentUserPersonasJourneyMaps_v2