



**LAIDLAW UNDERGRADUATE LEADERSHIP AND RESEARCH PROGRAMME**  
**APPLICATION – 2022 COHORT**

Name	<i>Adam Ó Ceallaigh</i>
Programme	<i>Political Science and Geography</i>
Year of Study	<i>2<sup>nd</sup> year</i>
Research Project Title	<i>A New Sense of Home: A study into Ireland’s approach to the distribution and integration of asylum seekers after they leave the direct provision system.</i>
Proposed Supervisor(s)	<i>Dr Immanuel Darkwa – Department of Geography</i>

**Before completing this submission, you should review the [Laidlaw Programme Application Guide](#) and ensure you have included every component requested**

<b>Research Project Proposal (1000 words max.)</b>
<p><b>Research Project Title:</b> A New Sense of Home: A study into Ireland’s approach to the distribution and integration of asylum seekers after they leave the direct provision system</p> <p><b>Research Question:</b> Asylum seekers looking for a “new sense of home” are stigmatised by many parts of society. Many fail to integrate successfully, often experiencing isolation, discrimination, and neglect. Consequently, despite the existence of an Office for Promotion of Migrant Integration (OPMI) at the Department of Justice, little is seen to be done to address this failure to integrate, suggesting that “out of sight, out of mind” is, perhaps, unofficial government policy. As over 64,000 people having passed through the Irish direct provision system since its creation in 1999, it is important to understand what life is like for people on the other side of structured institutional supports. The purpose of this research is twofold: a) to understand where asylum seekers go to after leaving the direct provision system, and b) to understand how asylum seekers integrate into new communities and wider society. Furthermore, this research aims to understand the government policies influencing the choice of both place and practice referenced above, helping to explain why asylum seekers end up where they do. It is hoped that this understanding will allow us to establish connections and correlations between direct provision centres and destination communities, facilitating the qualification and quantification of the disparate assimilation processes employed in different locations, and providing guidance as to whether the assimilation process employed in one part of Ireland is more effective than that employed in another.</p>



### **Explanation:**

Integration, and how it is to be achieved, have only recently become a topic of policy and discussion in Ireland (Gray, 2006). Ireland's integration policies are largely based on those of other EU countries; Ireland is not a trailblazer in the policy area and has benefitted from being able to follow the early adopters, learning from their mistakes, and choosing those policies that work most effectively. Traser (2006) notes that Ireland and the UK have been prime destinations for migrants post the 2004 EU enlargement. Traser highlights the importance of government institutions putting suitable structures in place to support integration. While the transition from one EU state to another is easier than transitioning from outside the EU to within, the factors governing choice of destination and the process of integration are similar. Many asylum seekers, on exiting the direct provision system, are provided with little guidance or support. Ní Raghallaigh & Foreman (2015) found that few asylum seekers were provided with information about rights and entitlements. An uninformed approach to the transfer of asylum seekers into destination communities hinder integration and can be a source of community tension.

### **Methodology:**

1. Stage 1 will involve a desk-based collation and analysis of information pertaining to the distribution of asylum seekers throughout Ireland. The analysis will contain a specific focus on the urban / rural divide. To access relevant data, I plan to leverage a wealth of contacts maintained by my supervisor Dr Darkwa; these include contacts with asylum seeker representative groups and government departments. I also intend to make use of contacts that I have developed personally in the preparation of this proposal and through my involvement with the Green party.
2. Stage 2 will involve a desk-based collation and review of government and institutional policy regarding asylum seeker integration. This will involve a review of the assimilation policies adopted by organisations such as Doras, MASI, etc. Following this review, I intend to carry out field-based semi-structured interviews with members of these organisations. The purpose of the interviews is to enhance my understanding of assimilation policy and practice, and, if possible, to identify a correlation between the two.
3. Stage 3 will involve field-based semi-structured interviews with asylum seekers who have settled in Ireland. The purpose of these interviews is to gather first-hand accounts from asylum seekers of life during the direct provision to normal life transition. Note: Prior to any interviews taking place, I will develop ethical guidelines which will govern and guide the way data is collected, stored, and used. These guidelines will also address issues such as anonymity, the recording of interviews, etc. and will be approved by my supervisor.



4. Stage 4 will involve the plotting of the information gathered during the previous stages of onto a map. I will employ Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for this purpose. This map will detail the location of direct provision centres, the location of destination communities, and the flow of asylum seekers between the two. It will also detail other key transitory points that may have been identified during the interviews e.g., education, medical, and language facilities, which may have a bearing on the transition dynamic. When this work is completed, it should be possible to identify those factors requiring further research to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the asylum seeker’s transition journey.

**Impacts and relevance:**

I will employ the four stages detailed above to develop a multidimensional analysis of the asylum seeker’s transition journey and capture the asylum seeker’s perspective on that journey. I will also seek to identify those institutional policies that aid (or hinder) the asylum seeker developing “a new sense of home”. The aim of the research report and the corresponding map is to identify inadequacies in Irish asylum seeker policies and offer guidance as to future policy creation, with specific reference to the Government of Ireland’s migrant integration policy co-ordinated through the OPMI. It is suggested that the lack of research carried out on the issue of asylum seeker distribution and integration to-date has resulted in an insufficiency of knowledge and sub-optimal policy outcomes. This research will facilitate a better understanding of the relevant factors and the changes required to optimise the process. This research project will use a multidisciplinary approach, employing knowledge and expertise from the fields of geography, social policy, and migration studies. I can envisage further useful work being done in the future incorporating the fields of economics and psychology.

**Leadership-in-Action experience proposal (500 words max.)**

**LiA Category**

Category C: In-field application of research

During the first summer, I will have researched the policies and factors influencing the distribution of people once they leave the Irish direct provision system, and their integration into destination communities. This section of the project will allow me to develop as an action researcher, enhancing my ability to think and work independently. I will harness my supervisor’s network of contacts in Ireland and abroad (which include both academics and representatives from various refugee organisations) to access data and conduct interviews with key stakeholders. This will provide me with an intimate knowledge of the issues impeding asylum seeker integration and will suggest approaches to their resolution of these.

During summer two, my aim is to gain an understanding of why people choose to come to Ireland and enter the direct provision system. Between 2001 and 2014 Nigeria was, year-on-year, the country with the largest number of applications to the Irish direct provision



system. I have contacted Aurélia Donnard, the Regional Manager of the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) in West Africa, regarding the proposed project. The MMC has had a presence in West Africa since its foundation in 2018 and currently carries out an average of 500 surveys a month across a network of 33 monitors. The monitors gather information in relation to individual profiles, migratory drivers, means of movement conditions of movement, aspirations, and destination choices. This information allows MMC to create quarterly reports on the ongoing conditions of West African nations. I plan to work with MMC to better understand their work in West Africa and gain an appreciation of the factors that cause people to leave the country. The factors influencing migrants to choose Ireland as a destination are also of great interest.

While working with the MMC, I intend to utilize my time to research and report on the refugees within the system at that time, their feelings regarding leaving their home country, and opinions on which countries could be options for them to move to. The countries their friends or family members have moved to previously is likely to be a factor. Based on this localised research, I plan to create another map using Geographic Information Systems to plot the directional migration of Nigerians. The research I will be able to carry out in the region has the potential to be extremely useful in tracking migrant movements across West Africa and beyond into Europe.

I have been very fortunate to have spent time abroad in several countries including an opportunity to live and work in Switzerland. The key difference with this opportunity will be that I will be acting in the role of an active researcher and leader for the purpose of addressing current and emerging societal problems. Living and working abroad in such a role will enhance my understanding of leadership and my leadership skills and allow me to develop as a leader / researcher to the benefit of me, my academic colleagues, and the wider community.