

INTERCULTURAL CROSS-BORDER INCLUSION PROGRAMME NEWSLETTER



Issue One | August 2026

ICI PROGRAMME PUTS FRESH FOCUS ON ISSUE OF RACISM

WELCOME to your first newsletter highlighting the impact the Intercultural Cross Border Inclusion Programme is having right across the island of Ireland.

Launched in January of this year, the ICI Programme has been made possible through funding of €2,925,134.56 from PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

The money was allocated following a joint application by five partners – North West Migrants Forum (lead partner), Rural Community Network, Irish Network Against Racism, Donegal Intercultural Platform and Multi-Ethnic Sports and Cultures NI.

Four other organisations - The Committee on the Administration of Justice, Ulster University, Social Change Initiative and The John and Pat Hume Foundation - are acting as associate partners during the programme's three-year lifespan.

Following the programme's launch partners got to work



Dr Kimberlé Crenshaw with those who took part in an ICIP Programme discussion circle in North West Migrants Forum in May.



delivering on the responsibilities they signed up to. The most immediate challenge was recruitment, with staff needed across every organisation.

We are proud to be able to say that 15 new roles have already been created, from programme management to delivery to finance, administration and communications.

Throughout Ireland those staff have been busy rolling out workshops, training sessions, discussion circles, community activities and cultural celebrations that are creating opportunities for people to learn from one another, celebrate diversity, challenge racism and build stronger, more inclusive communities.

• In this newsletter you will read about what each partner has achieved to date what is planned for the months ahead.

MESSAGE FROM CHAIR OF NORTH WEST MIGRANTS FORUM



Vicky Aldana

Chairperson of North West Migrants
Forum Board of Directors

As the ICI Programme approaches the end of its first year, its importance is arguably even greater than when we first began to sketch out its initial plan.

Northern Ireland has just seen its third successive summer of racist rioting, amidst calls for even greater racial profiling and controls on the movement of minoritised peoples within this island. The need for wider and more informed intercultural dialogue, for improved racial literacy and for shared cultural celebrations cannot be overstated in the current climate and we remain hopeful that ICIP will play a crucial role in seeking to reshape and reframe the narratives that have encouraged hostility, conflict and misunderstanding.

Education is at the core of ICIP's mission, along with giving voice to those with lived experience of racism and hatred. The shared expertise of ICIP's five core partner organisations in anti-racism and peacebuilding has enabled us to get off to a strong start, but we know there is a great deal more work to be done.



North West Migrants Forum
Contact: Anastasiia Shevchenko
Email: Anastasiia.Shevchenko@nwmf.org.uk

Irish Network Against Racism
Contact: Marie Elena Costa Sa
Email: rights@enarireland.org

Donegal Intercultural Platform
Contact: Hanorah Hardy
Email: hanorah.dip@gmail.com

Multi-Ethnic Sports and Cultures NI
Contact: Jahswill Emmanuel
Email: jahswill@mscni.org

Rural Community Network
Contact: Antoine Ó Fionnagáin
Email: antoine@ruralcommunitynetwork.org



MEET THE STAFF OF THE ICI PROGRAMME



Lilian Seenoi Barr (NWMF). Lead Partner CEO and ICIP Oversight Officer.



Anastasiia Shevchenko (NWMF). ICIP Programme Delivery & Co-Ordination Officer.



Bashir Rashid Oguta (NWMF). ICIP Programmes Administrator.



Sylvester Katuamba (NWMF). ICIP Finance Officer.



Paul Sceeny (NWMF). ICIP Policy, Research and Strategic Development Officer.



Conor Sharkey (NWMF). ICIP Communications Officer.



Hanorah Hardy (DIP). ICIP Project Co-ordinator.



Serhii Havrylenko (DIP). ICIP Intercultural Project Worker.



Abeer Sadeeh (DIP). ICIP Admin and Development Officer.



Antoine Ó Fionnagáin (RCN). ICIP Project Community Manager.



Caitlin Devlin (RCN) ICIP Administrator.



Jahswill Emmanuel (MSCNI). ICIP Project Co-ordinator.



Sienna Barley (MSCNI). ICIP Administrator.



Berta Quiñonero (INAR). ICIP Community Development Organiser.



Maria Elena Costa Sa (INAR). Project Community Development Manager.

Flashback to ICI Programme launch

IT seems like a lifetime since the launch of the Intercultural Cross-border Inclusion Programme - the moment when the whole thing really sparked into life. Held in Monaghan Peace Campus, the launch brought together over 150 people for a morning of discussion, networking, reflection, music and enjoyment.

Among those who contributed to the ceremony were Northern Ireland's First Minister Michelle O'Neill, Junior Minister Joanne Bunting and the Republic of Ireland's Rural Affairs Minister Jerry Buttimer.

In her remarks, NI First Minister Michelle O'Neill said the ICI Programme will "support a shared and inclusive future that everyone, no matter where they come from, feels safe, respected and a part of their communities".

Her Stormont colleague, Junior Minister Joanne Bunting described the ICI Programme as "a landmark project that reflects our collective commitment to creating a fair and prosperous future for everyone".

Jerry Buttimer TD said the programme seeks to cultivate positive relationships characterised by "respect where individuals are able to live, learn and engage with one another, free from prejudice, hatred and intolerance".

You can read a more detailed insight into the launch [HERE](#). The videos provided by all three senior politicians are available to view on our Youtube channel [HERE](#).



At the ICIP launch, from left: Shane O'Curry of INAR, Kate Clifford of Rural Community Network, Ade Anjorin of MSCNI, Lilian Seenoi Barr of NWMF, Paul Kernan of Donegal Intercultural Platform, Avila Kilmurray of Social Change Initiative and Jahswill Emmanuel of MSCNI.



Northern Ireland's First Minister Michelle O'Neill addressing the audience.



Our Vice-Chair Imani Strong who compered the launch.



Two schoolgirls enjoying a giggle during the launch.



The fabulous New Land Choir who brought so much joy to Monaghan Peace Campus.

The Intercultural Cross-border Inclusion Programme is supported by PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)

Over the next few pages you will get a flavour of what each partner organisation has been up to since the launch. We start with lead partner, **the North West Migrants Forum**



Our Board Member Beverly Simpson who, along with our staff member Bashir Oguta, delivered an anti-racism workshop to pupils at Glendermott Primary School.

YOUNG people are at the heart of the Intercultural Cross-border Inclusion Programme. Partners have continued to strengthen relationships with schools while preparing a comprehensive programme of anti-racism education for the 2026/2027 academic year. The North West Migrants Forum has delivered anti-racism workshops at a number of schools. The lead partner organisation has also taken part in an international exchange event at Oakgrove Integrated College, where students from Northern Ireland and Seattle explored diversity, multiculturalism and inclusion. Communities also came together to celebrate Eid Al-Fitr, learning about the traditions, heritage and values associated with Ramadan and Eid while strengthening intercultural understanding. Another highlight was a wellbeing day at North West

Regional College where participants explored cultures from around the world through music, traditional drumming, henna art, international cuisine and cultural displays. The North West Migrants Forum has also, to date, created five discussion circles under the banner of 'Your Voice Matters'. These events have brought people together, offering some a platform to share their journeys into community leadership and political life while inspiring others to realise that their voices matter and that they too can make a difference. In July the ICI Programme brought over 250 people together in Derry's Brooke Park for a family fun day. On what was a lovely sunny Saturday people from all backgrounds chatted, ate, laughed and got to know each other just that little bit better.



One of five discussion circles the North West Migrants Forum has held in recent months.



Smiles at the NWMF family fun day.



Wellbeing day at NW Regional College.



Rural Community Network's ICIP Project Community Manager Antoine Ó Fionnagáin (centre) with members of Black Diamond Initiatives NI who are helping shape a new anti-racism toolkit.

SINCE the launch of the ICI Programme, Rural Community Network has been able to employ two new staff members in Antoine Ó Fionnagáin and Caitlin Devlin.

Together they have begun making inroads into their goal of engaging with 17 individual groups - nine in 2026 and eight in 2027.

In June RCN ran a focus group with Ulster University's BAME+ Network, where students and faculty staff spoke about their experiences of racism and how they felt both supported and let down by the government, public bodies and employers. The aim of the session was to encourage participants to discuss their journeys and their experiences, information which enabled Antoine and Caitlin to develop a work pack covering many aspects of racism. RCN is due to meet with Ulster University again on August 27



Antoine Ó Fionnagáin (blue jeans on left) with ICIP project partners at the launch of the Change Cup in Belfast, organised by Multi-Ethnic Sports and Cultures NI.

in Belfast before they meet for a second time with Black Diamond Initiatives on September 9.

Black Diamond has already made valuable contributions to the development of a new anti-racism toolkit.

On September 10 the focus moves to Dungannon where RCN will engage with Éalú Mental Health Support Group.

And in October there will be a three-part session with Building Communities Resource Centre in Ballymoney.

Rounding off what has been an extremely busy period for the organisation, Rural Community Network has also created an online survey which will further assist Antoine and Caitlin in sourcing information for their anti-racism toolkit.



With its offices in Letterkenny, Donegal Intercultural Platform challenge discrimination and racism and strives to foster a more inclusive and equitable society in Donegal. It is composed of individual members and affiliated organisations committed to human rights and social justice.

DONEGAL Intercultural Platform has been extremely busy delivering anti-racism and inclusion sessions to primary schools throughout the county.

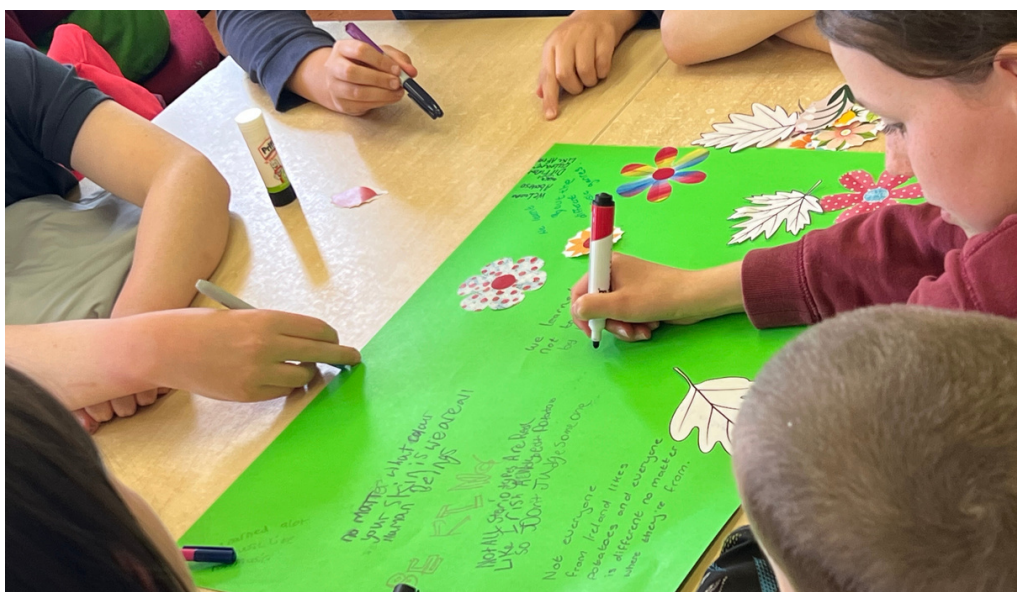
These workshops have increased awareness and shed light on discrimination, stereotyping and prejudice among students and teachers. They have also built confidence in recognising and countering such negative behaviours. During the workshops students discussed core concepts of racism and shared their views on fairness and equality as core values for school communities.

Donegal's ICIP team of Hanorah Hardy, Serhii Havrylenko and Abeer Sadeeh have also facilitated a focus group discussion with Donegal Youth Council, bringing together 16 school representatives to discuss issues related to discrimination and racist bullying. As the meeting initiated the discussion around existing policy gaps and real-life incidents, Donegal Intercultural Platform (DIP) and Donegal Youth Council agreed to collaborate on programme delivery, including potential cross-border engagement with their NI counterparts. DIP has also met with the Irish Second-Level Students' Union at the launch of the 'Roots of Racism: Revealing Racism in Irish Secondary Schools' report in Dublin, highlighting the frequency, type and effects of racism in Irish secondary schools.

DIP has hosted a workshop focused on the origins and the current state of racism in Ireland. In July, in partnership with the Irish Refugee Council, it also delivered information sessions in Letterkenny and Buncrana for refugees and people seeking



Anda Luma, one of Donegal Intercultural Platform's school facilitators, speaking to pupils of St Davaddog's National School in Fanad.



St Davaddog's pupils putting their thoughts on racism and inclusion down on paper during a workshop provided by Donegal Intercultural Platform.

asylum in Ireland. These sessions provided participants with updates around the asylum process, IPAS complaint procedures, rights after receiving status and employment/education information. The participants were also given an opportunity to ask questions and register for individual support. Looking ahead, in September 2026 DIP will continue to deliver ICIP

activities in Donegal, including discussions in secondary schools, as well as facilitating community sessions with groups to foster positive relations and inclusion. Acknowledging the significance of cultural diversity, the Platform will organise a Latin Hispanic Cultural Festival in October 2026 in partnership with the Donegal Latin Hispanic community.



INAR (the Irish Network Against Racism) is a national network of anti-racism civil society organisations who work collectively to highlight and address the issue of racism in Ireland.

INAR has been busy building relationships, meeting communities and laying the groundwork for its part in the Intercultural Cross-Border Inclusion Programme (ICIP). A big part of this work has simply been listening. INAR has been meeting with community organisations, activists and facilitators across Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Monaghan and Dundalk, hearing about the work already happening locally and what people would like to see from the programme.

According to INAR's Community Development and Rights Lead, Maria Elena Costa Sa, "We don't want this work to feel top-down or imposed. The people working and living in these communities know their areas best and their knowledge and experience should shape what happens next."

Growing the team and connections

This Summer INAR was delighted to welcome Berta Quiñónero to its team. Berta has been getting to know organisations and activists involved in the programme and will continue supporting the community development work over the coming months.

INAR has also been drawing on its wider network to find people who might be interested in becoming part of the training programme. This includes existing INAR anti-racism trainers, minority ethnic community leaders and people already doing important work within their own communities. At the same time INAR is making new connections, including with organisations working with people living in IPAS centres. It wants to find people who may already be strong organisers, facilitators or community leaders, even if they

haven't been involved in formal anti-racism training before. Training has already started. In June Shane O'Curry and Maria Elena Costa Sa delivered a session on racism and racialisation in Letterkenny. The session was aimed at programme staff and community facilitators, including people who were relatively new to anti-racism work.

There was also space to think about values. Participants looked at words from anti-racist activists and discussed what a racially just society might actually look and feel like.

Creating something useful

Alongside the training, work has begun on a Community Awareness Toolkit which is being co-created by Donegal Intercultural Platform and Rural Community Network, with INAR in an advisory role. Shane O'Curry has started rolling out training connected to the toolkit, while Maria Elena has shared examples of existing anti-racism toolkits, training programmes and charters from unions, community organisations and schools. Looking at what has worked elsewhere gives the team plenty to learn from while still making sure that what they create fits the communities involved in this project.

INAR is also carrying out a needs assessment, mapping community organisations and gaps across the areas. These conversations and connections will continue over the coming months.

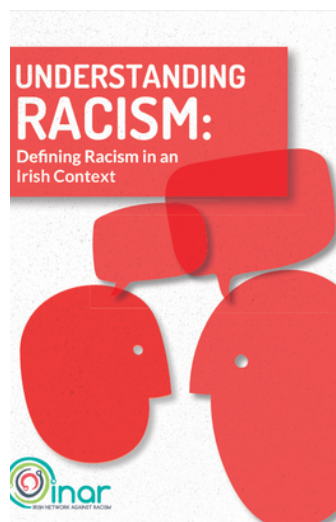
There is still plenty to do, but that's part of the process. For INAR the most important thing is that the programme grows from the ground up — sharing ideas, learning from what already works and making sure communities have a real say in what they build together.



From left: Bukky Adebawale, Maria Elena Costa Sa and Shane O'Curry of Irish Network Against Racism (INAR).



Shane O'Curry, along with his INAR colleagues, delivering an upskilling workshop in Letterkenny.



An 'Understanding Racism' document that has been compiled by the team at INAR as part of the ICI Programme.

The Intercultural Cross-border Inclusion Programme is supported by PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)

Founded in 2016, MSCNI works with asylum seekers, refugees, ethnic minority communities and local residents to build stronger, more connected communities. It designs and delivers inclusive programmes that use sport and cultural engagement as tools for participation and social cohesion.

SPORT continues to be one of the most powerful ways of bringing people together. Since its foundation a decade ago, Multi-Ethnic Sports and Cultures Northern Ireland (MSCNI) has used sport to build friendships, strengthen understanding and encourage participation among people from different cultural, ethnic and faith backgrounds. In terms of its contribution to the ICI Programme, through initiatives including the Northern Ireland Super League, anti-racism mini-tournaments and Intercultural Children's Day, hundreds of participants have come together in recent months to enjoy sport while learning more about one another and the wider opportunities available through the ICI Programme.

Arguably though the greatest success story to date has been the Change Cup. Throughout the competition, teams demonstrated outstanding commitment, discipline, respect, fair play and community spirit, earning the admiration of everyone who turned out to watch. The Change Cup showcased perfectly just how much of a unifying force football is. These sporting events have become a gateway to wider community participation with many individuals and families choosing to continue their association with MSCNI by taking part in their many cultural activities, educational programmes and leadership opportunities, again demonstrating how sport can inspire lasting engagement and help create stronger, more connected communities.



Dancers who brought Windsor Park to life during MSCNI's recent African Cultural Day. The event drew hundreds of people to the stadium.



Celebrating Sportsmania, in typically colourful MSCNI style!



Left and above, photos from the many events MSCNI has organised as part of its ICI commitments.

And so to the future...

IT has taken a lot to get to this stage of what is a huge body of work.

As with most organisations and businesses, there were challenges in recruitment and finding the right people for the right posts.

It took time and only now, almost a year into the Intercultural Cross-border Inclusion Programme, are the final creases being ironed out. With a full complement of talented and committed staff, each organisation has been able to move forward with the commitments they have made. The next 12 months will undoubtedly be smoother as the five respective teams can now see the road in front of them, free from the bumps that inevitably turned up during the initial bedding in period.

Looking ahead and there remains much to be done.

This includes:

- The establishment of an Anti-racism Trainers Network
- School anti-racism sessions
- Cross-border school students' conferences
- Facilitated sessions for welcoming communities
- Community anti-racism learning exchange conferences
- Cultural expression and celebration activities
- Sport and culture-based activities promoting social interaction

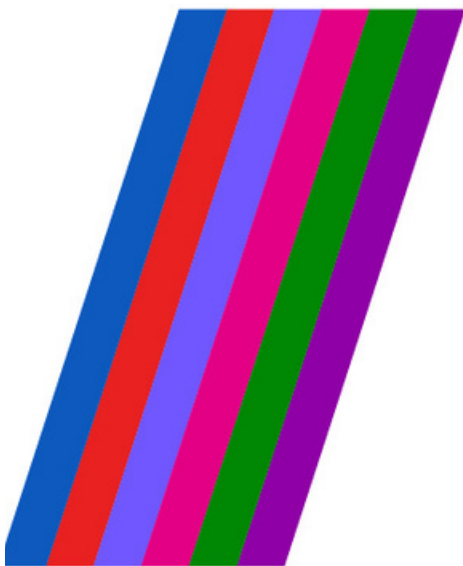
It will be a challenge for everyone tasked with delivering the ICI Programme. But there is also an immense appetite to make it happen.

The ultimate aim of the programme is to open up a much-needed space for dialogue and conversation, even with those who may not yet share ICIP's aims.

All partners believe in engaging with everyone, especially those who feel uncertain or unheard, because inclusion can only be real when everyone is invited to the table.

The Intercultural Cross-border Programme is more than a project to those responsible for building it and delivering it, it is an opportunity to create a shared, respectful future across Ireland's increasingly diverse communities.

If you are an individual or organisation interested in getting involved in the ICI Programme you can email icip@nwmf.org.uk or info@nwmf.org.uk



PEACEPLUS

Northern Ireland - Ireland

Co-funded by the



European Union



UK Government



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Northern Ireland
Executive

www.northernireland.gov.uk

The Intercultural Cross-border Inclusion Programme is supported by PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)