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Department of Justice,
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General Scheme of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2026

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Head 1 - Long title

Provide that:

An Act to restate and modify certain aspects of the law relating to naturalisation and immigration, to include amending certain provisions governing how Irish citizenship is acquired, retained and revoked under the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956.

Explanatory Note

This is a standard provision setting out the purposes of the Bill.

Head 2 - Short Title and commencement

Provide that:

(1). This Act may be cited as the Irish Nationality and Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2026.

(2). This Act shall come into operation on such day or days as the Minister may appoint by order or orders either generally or with reference to any particular purpose or provision and different days may be so appointed for different purposes or different provisions.

Explanatory Note

These are standard provisions.

This Head provides for the citation of the proposed Bill and provides that the Minister may commence any or all provisions as and when appropriate.

Head 3: Definitions

Provide that:

“Act of 1956” means the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956

“qualifying period of residence” means the qualifying period of residence as provided for by Section 15(1)(c) [of the Act of 1956.]

“sufficient resources” and “minimum level of income” means as prescribed by the Minister provided for in Section 15(4) and Section 15F [of the Act of 1956.]

Explanatory Note

This head provides for certain definitions and interpretations.

Head 4: Amendment to Section 6B of the Act of 1956

Provide that:

Section 6B of the Act of 1956 is amended

1. By replacing subsection (4) with the following:

“(4) Subject to subsection (4A) a period of residence in the State shall not be reckonable for the purposes of calculating a period of residence under section 6A if it is not reckoned when calculating a period of residence for the purposes of granting a certificate of naturalisation in accordance with section 16A (1).

2. Inserting the following subsection after subsection (4):

(4A) Subsection (4) shall not apply to a person born before the commencement of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship (Amendment) Act [2026].

Explanatory Note

The head is intended to ensure consistency remains between Section 6B (4) of the 1956 Act, and Section 16A (1).

Head 5 - Amendment to Section 15 of Act of 1956

Provide that:

Section 15 of the Act of 1956 is amended

1. In subsection 1,

a. by replacing paragraph (c) with the following text:

“(c) has had a period of two year's continuous residence in the State immediately before the date of the application and, during the ten years immediately preceding that period, has had a total residence in the State amounting to six years;”

b. by removing “and” from the end of paragraph (d)

c. by inserting the following paragraphs after paragraph (e):

“(f) subject to subsections (3), has sufficient resources for himself or herself not to become an unreasonable burden on the State;

(g) has not committed any offences listed in the first schedule to this Act at any point before or after an application for naturalisation;

(h) has demonstrated a proficiency of the Irish language or the English language, or Irish sign language to such a standard and verified in such a manner as may be prescribed by the Minister;

(i) has demonstrated a knowledge and understanding of Irish civics [civics, society and politics] to such a standard and verified in such a manner as may be prescribed by the Minister;

(j) has continued to reside in the state and adhere to the conditions specified in (b), (f) and (g), pending the Minister’s decision in respect of the application.

2. In subsection (2), by replacing “(e)” with “(i)”.

3. By inserting the following subsection after subsection (2):

“(3) The conditions specified in subsection (1)(f) shall be considered to have been satisfied where the applicant —

(a) is at the time of his or her application and during the application process, in receipt of at least the minimum level of income prescribed under section 15 F (1) [Head 7], and

(b) is not, at the time of his or her application or at any time during the application process, in receipt of a prescribed social welfare payment or a prescribed housing support, and subject to subsection (4), has not, in the period of 2 years immediately preceding the application, been in receipt of such payment or such support, and

(c) does not at the time of his or her application and during the application process, owe a debt to the Revenue Commissioners, owe a debt to the Department of Social Protection or have an outstanding court fine.

(4) The Minister may grant an application for naturalisation under section 15(1) where the applicant does not satisfy the requirement under subsection (3)(b) where the Minister is satisfied that the applicant has been in receipt of a prescribed social welfare payment or a prescribed housing support for a period that does not, or periods the aggregate of which do not, exceed 6 months in the period of 2 years immediately preceding the application.”

Explanatory Note

Subhead 1(a) increases the period of time a person is required to be residing in the state before being eligible to apply for naturalisation. These changes are to establish a proportionate timeline that encourages steady economic and social integration before naturalisation, thus demonstrating a meaningful long-term connection to the country.

Subhead 1(b) is punctuational change, reflecting the extension of the list in subsection 1.

Subhead 1(c) inserts several new conditions for naturalisation including:

Paragraph (f) which provides that the applicant is required to be self-sufficient. This is in line with a similar provision introduced to the family reunification process by the International Protection Act 2026. The wording proposed here mirrors in section 205(3)(d) of the International Protection Act 2026. The paragraph provides that the Minister, when assessing an application for naturalisation, must consider if the applicant has sufficient resources for himself or herself, such as not to be a burden on the State.

The purpose of paragraph (g) is to clearly state that where an applicant has committed an immigration offence listed in the the first schedule of the Act this will preclude them from being granted naturalisation, whether this occurred prior to making an application for naturalisation or at some stage during the naturalisation process. This is to discourage abuse of immigration and naturalisation processes.

Paragraph (h) provides the Minister with the authority to prescribe by regulation specific language requirements that applicants for naturalisation must demonstrate, that is, a requisite proficiency in Irish, English, or Irish sign language. In preparing these regulations the Department will work in close consultation with the Attorney General's Office.

Paragraph (i) provides the Minister with the authority to prescribe by regulation a specific standard of understanding of Irish civics and explicitly prove they possess a foundational knowledge of how Irish society, government, and the Constitution operate. This will bring Ireland into closer alignment with such requirements in other EU Member States. In preparing these regulations the Department will work in close consultation with the Attorney General's Office.

Paragraph (j) provides that the applicant is required to maintain lawful / legal residence in the state throughout the application process. This is to further discourage potential abuse of the naturalisation process and to bring a level of consistency with section 15(d), that is, that it is the applicant's intention to continue to reside in the state. Further, the amendment confirms that certain naturalisation conditions are maintained throughout the application process. This is to ensure consistency and fairness across the cohort of all applicants and to reflect the policy position that it is not just a matter of applicants meeting the conditions for

naturalisation in a moment in time but rather the conditions demonstrate a longer and permanent stability within the state. This reflects the intended permanence and gravity of the status being granted.

Subhead 2 is a typographical change, reflecting the extension of the list in subhead 1.

Subhead 3 is associated with subhead 1(c) and the new paragraph (f). Subhead 3 provides the framework under which the Minister, may assess if an applicant has sufficient resources for himself or herself, such as not to be a burden on the State. Subhead 3 mirrors the section 205 subsections (6) to (9) (to the extent that they are relevant in this context) of the International Protection Act 2026.

The proposed new subsection (3) outlines the main self-sufficiency criteria that an applicant must satisfy to apply for naturalisation. Subsection (3)(a) requires that the applicant, at the time of the application, must be in receipt of a minimum level of income prescribed by regulations to be made by the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration having taken into account of the CSO data on annual earnings and labour costs, the cost of living, along with other relevant matters.

Subsection (3)(b) requires that the applicant is not, at the time of the application, in receipt of a prescribed social welfare payment or a prescribed housing support in the period of 2 years prior to the making of the application. The relevant social welfare payments and housing supports will be prescribed by way of regulations to be made by the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, in consultation with the Minister for Social Protection and the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, as appropriate.

Subsection (3)(c) requires that the applicant does not owe Revenue or Social Welfare debt to the State or have an outstanding court fine. This includes money or statutory obligations owed directly to a Government body, including but not exclusive to, monies owed to the Revenue Commissioners, any court fines, or social welfare overpayments.

Subsection (4) provides that the Minister may grant naturalisation to a person who does not satisfy the requirements outlined under subsection (3)(b) where the Minister is satisfied that the applicant was in receipt of a prescribed social welfare or housing support for a period no longer than 6 months of the preceding 2 years.

Head 6 – Amendment of Section 15A of Act of 1956

Provide that:

Section 15A of the Act of 1956 is amended

1. In subparagraph 15A(1)(c)(i) by replacing “3” with “five”.
2. In subparagraph 15A(1)(c)(ii) by replacing “3” with “five”.
3. In subparagraph 15A(1)(e) by replacing “one” with “two”.
4. Replacing subparagraph 15A(1)(f) with the following text:

“(f) had, during the five years immediately preceding that period, a total residence in the island of Ireland amounting to three years.”

5. By inserting the following paragraphs in subsection (1) after paragraph (h)

“(i) has not committed any offences listed in the first schedule to this Act at any point before or after an application for naturalisation;

(j) has demonstrated a proficiency of the Irish language or the English language, or Irish sign language to such a standard and verified in such a manner as may be prescribed by the Minister;

(k) has demonstrated an understanding of Irish civics to such a standard and verified in such a manner as may be prescribed by the Minister;”

Explanatory Note

Subhead 1, 2, 3, and 4 are to increase the period of time a non-national spouse or civil partner of an Irish citizen should be residing in the state before being eligible to apply for naturalisation.

These amendments are to establish a proportionate timeline that encourages steady economic and social integration before naturalisation, thus demonstrating a meaningful long-term connection to the country while acknowledging an enduring relationship with an Irish citizen. Taken together, these amendments are to assist in further deterring “marriages of convenience” as defined under the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014 and thus entered into in order to solely exploit or abuse the immigration system.

Subhead 5 inserts a number of new criteria to reflect additions being made in section 15 of the Act of 1956, to ensure consistency between these cohorts of applicants.

The purpose of paragraph (i) is to clearly state that where an applicant has committed an immigration offence listed in the the first schedule of the Act this will preclude them from being granted naturalisation, whether this occurred prior to making an application for naturalisation or at some stage during the naturalisation process. This is to discourage abuse of immigration and naturalisation processes.

The insertion of paragraph (j) provides the Minister with the authority to prescribe by regulation specific language requirements that applicants for naturalisation must demonstrate, that is, a requisite proficiency in Irish, English, or Irish sign language. In preparing these regulations the Department will work in close consultation with the Attorney General's Office.

The insertion of paragraph (k) provides the Minister with the authority to prescribe by regulation a specific standard of understanding of Irish civics and explicitly prove they have a foundational knowledge of how Irish society, government, and the Constitution operate. This will bring Ireland into closer alignment with other EU Member States. In preparing these regulations the Department will work in close consultation with the Attorney General's Office.

Head 7: Insert new Section 15F into the Act of 1956

Provide that:

The Act of 1956 is amended by the insertion of the following section after section 15E

“15F (1) The Minister shall, for the purposes of section 15(3)(a), prescribe a minimum level of income.

(2) In making regulations under subsection (1) the Minister shall have regard to—

- (a) annual and quarterly data on earnings and labour costs published by the Central Statistics Office,
- (b) the average cost of living in the State having regard to the most recent information made available by the Central Statistics Office,
- (c) the economic and social well-being of the State,
- (d) the power of the Executive in relation to the control of entry into, and presence in, the State, of non-nationals, and
- (e) such other matters as the Minister considers appropriate.

(3) The Minister shall, with the consent of the Minister for Social Protection and for the purposes of section 15(3)(b), prescribe:

- (a) a payment or class or classes of payments under the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005;
- (b) a payment or class or classes of payments under schemes administered by the Minister for Social Protection.

(4) The Minister shall, with the consent of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage and for the purposes of section 15(3)(b), prescribe:

- (a) a social housing support provided, facilitated or managed under section 19 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 or a class or classes of such supports;

(b) accommodation or lodgings made available, or assistance provided, under section 10 of the Housing Act 1988 or a class or classes of such accommodation, lodgings or assistance;

(c) any housing or housing support provided in conjunction with of by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration;

(d) charitable housing supports.

(5) In making regulations under subsection (3) or (4) the Minister shall have regard to—

(a) the nature and purpose of a payment, social housing support, accommodation, lodgings or assistance including whether any is means-tested,

(b) the extent to which receipt by a person of a payment, social housing support, accommodation, lodgings or assistance is indicative of an absence of sufficient resources for an applicant and his or her family members not to become an unreasonable burden on the State,

(c) whether, in the case of regulations under subsection (4), the social housing support, accommodation, lodgings or assistance, as the case may be, is intended primarily as long-term maintenance, subsistence or housing support,

(d) the objectives of promoting the self-sufficiency an applicant and ensuring the sustainable use of the resources of the State, and

(e) such other matters as the Minister considers appropriate.

Explanatory Note

The purpose of this head is to introduce an amendment to provide for regulation making powers, setting out the elements to be taken into account by the Minister in prescribing the minimum level of income required, relevant social welfare payments and relevant housing supports for the purposes of the assessment in section 15(1)(f) and section 15(3). The text of the amendments set out in the subhead mirror section 212 (to the extent that they are relevant in this context) of the International Protection Act 2026.

Subsection (1) provides that the Minister may prescribe a minimum level of income an applicant must be in receipt of in order to qualify for naturalisation.

Subsection (2) provides that when prescribing a minimum level of income under subsection (1), the Minister may consider annual and quarterly data on earnings and labour costs published by the Central Statistics Office (CSO); the average cost of living in the State have regard to the most up to date information published by the CSO; the economic and social well-being of the State; the power of the State to control the entry into and presence of non-nationals in the State; and any other matters deemed appropriate by the Minister.

Subsection (3) outlines that the Minister, with the consent of the Minister for Social Protection, may prescribe a payment or class of payments under the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005 or a payment or class of payments under schemes administered by the Minister for Social Protection, for the purposes of section 15(3)(b) which requires that the applicant is not, at the time of his or her application for naturalisation, in receipt of a prescribed social welfare payment.

Subsection (4) outlines that the Minister, with the consent of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, may prescribe a class or classes of social housing support provided, facilitated or managed under section 19 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 or assistance, accommodation or lodgings made available under section 10 of the Housing Act of 1988, for the for the purposes of section 15(3)(b) which requires that the applicant is not, at the time of the application, in receipt of a prescribed housing support.

Subsection (5) provides that when making regulations under subsections (3) and (4), the Minister may have regard to the nature and purpose of such payments or supports; the extent to which receipt of such payments or supports indicate that an applicant does not

have sufficient resources, or his or her family members would be a burden on the State; whether the payments or supports are intended as long-term payments or supports; the aim of promoting the self-sufficiency of applicants and ensuring the sustainable use of State resources; and any other matters the Minister deems appropriate.

Head 8 – Amendment of Section 16 of the Act of 1956

Provide that:

Section 16 of the Act of 1956 is amended by inserting the following text after subsection (1)

“(1A). The Minister may, in his absolute discretion, waive the condition specified in paragraph (h) and paragraph (i) of subsection (1) of section 15 and paragraph (j) and paragraph (k) of section 15A in certain circumstances, as prescribed.

(1B). The condition of good character in sections 15 (1) (b), 15A (1) (b) and 15B (1) (b) cannot be waived in any circumstances.”

Explanatory Note

The purpose of the insertion of subsection (1A) is to provide absolute clarity that the Minister may by regulations waive the requirements of the new section 15(1)(h) and (i) and section 15A (1) (j) and (k) for particular categories of applicants. This is to ensure that the requirement to demonstrate language proficiency do not unduly discriminate against vulnerable applicants for naturalisation. In preparing these regulations the Department will work in close consultation with the Attorney General’s Office.

The insertion of subsection (1B) is to ensure that the condition for naturalisation set out in section 15(1)(b) requiring applicants for naturalisation to be of good character cannot be waived for any applicant. This is to ensure consistency and to reflect the policy position that all applicants must be of good character.

Head 9 - Section 16A of the Act of 1956

Provide that:

1. Section 16A of the Act of 1956 is amended:

(a) in subsection 1 paragraph (c) by removing the 'or'

(b) by inserting the following paragraphs after subsection 1 paragraph (d):

“(e) it is in accordance with a permission given to a person under subsection (8) of section 237 of the International Protection Act 2026,

(f) a period during which a person has been given a permission to reside in the State in accordance with subsection (6) of section 60 of the Act of 2015,

(g) it consists of a period during which a person is provided with a temporary permission whilst they are subject to an examination of their personal circumstances under the European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2015, and is subsequently not granted permission to reside,

(h) it consists of a period during which a person is provided with a temporary permission while seeking a review of a decision by the Minister under regulation 25 of the European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2015, but who is subsequently found not to have an entitlement under these Regulations to enter or reside in the State,

(i) it consists of a period of residence, where in accordance with Regulation 27 of the European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2015, the right, entitlement or status concerned, as the case may be, is or was claimed on the basis of fraud or abuse of rights, and where the Minister revokes, refuses to make, or refuses to grant said permission, as the case may be,

(j) it consists of a period of residence, purported to be in compliance with the European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2015, where the individual is later found not to have been entitled to exercise such a right,

(k) on the basis of a permission of a temporary or limited duration as the Minister may prescribe.”

2. In subsection (3) by inserting the following text after “2001”

“, or the commencement of Irish Nationality and Citizenship (Amendment) Act [2026]”

Explanatory Note

Subhead 1 provides for two amendments: (a), and (b); to section 16A of the Act of 1956.

Subhead 1(a) is a punctuational change to reflect that the list of permission provided for under 16A (1) is being extended.

Subhead 1(b) sets out amendments to section 16A (1) to clarify that any time spent on temporary permission is not reckonable residence for the purposes of granting a certificate of naturalisation.

Paragraphs (e) and (f) are to move time spent in the State on the basis of Temporary Protection under the Temporary Protection Directive 2001/55/EC from being reckonable residence for naturalisation purposes.

Paragraphs (g), (h), (i) and (j) are to remove from reckonable residence any time spent either as an applicant for EU treaty rights where the individual in question was subsequently found not to be entitled to such rights, or time spent while awaiting the outcome of a review of a Ministerial decision refusing or revoking such an application and where the Minister’s decision is subsequently upheld, or time spent where the entitlement claimed is found to have been claimed on a fraudulent basis.

In subhead 1(b) the insertion of paragraph (l) is to provide the flexibility for the Minister to reflect the need to add any additional temporary or limited duration permission as may be appropriate, this is to reflect the changing and ever evolving context of immigration permission more generally and to ensure that the law can fully reflect the policy decision that

time spent in the State on permissions that are inherently transitory, temporary or not intended to be durable in nature are not reckonable for the purpose of naturalisation.

Subhead 2 provides that the changes to reckonable residency made in these amendments do not apply to applicants that have already submitted an application for naturalisation prior to the commencement of this legislation. The wording here mirrors that used in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956 section 6A(2)(a) to restrict the application of the changes introduced by the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 2004.

Head 10 - Section 19 of the of the Act of 1956.

Provide that:

Section 19 of the Act of 1956 is amended

1. In subsection 1 by

(a) inserting an “or” at the end of subsection (e)

(b) Inserting the following subsection after subsection (e)

“(f) that it is in the interests of public policy, public order or national security.”

2. In Section (1P) by the removal of the words

“in consultation with the chairperson of the Committee of Inquiry and”

Explanatory notes

Subhead 1(a) is punctuational change, reflecting the extension of the list in section in Section 1.

Subhead 1(b) includes an additional distinct ground to provide the Minister with the explicit power to revoke citizenship specifically because someone is a threat to national security. Having regard to the backdrop of a changed EU and international security landscape and a more complex threat environment we consider that broad wording better lends itself to the variety of circumstances (albeit relatively rare) that may arise for consideration by the Minister.

Subhead 2 establishes an enduring regulatory framework so that new regulations are not required each time this process is utilised.

Schedule 1: Offences and contraventions by an applicant which would preclude the issue of a certificate of [grant of] citizenship

- a. An offence under Section 29A of the Act of 1956,
- b. An offence under sections 3, 4, or 8 of the Immigration Act 1999,
- c. An offence for a contravention of sections 4(2), 4(5)(b), 4(5)(c), 4(5)(d), 4(6), 4(8), 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 or 12 of the Immigration Act 2004,
- d. An offence under sections 16, 17, or 26 of the International Protection Act 2015,
- e. An offence under Regulation 30 of the European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2015,
- f. An offence under Regulation 21 of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) (Citizens' Rights) Regulations 2020, or
- g. An offence under section 19, 32(1), 32(6), 69(6), 96, 120, 134, 155(12), 192, 209, 237(17) 275, 276, or 278 of the International Protection Act 2026.