

Irish hit hardest by reunification rules

By Viktor Posudnevsky

IRISH CITIZENS are finding it more difficult to get their non-EU family members recognised by the State than Filipinos, it has emerged. Filipino professionals who are employed in Ireland under a Green Card experience very little difficulty in bringing their spouses and children over, sources in the Filipino community have confirmed.

Andrei Mendoza (32), originally from Manila, has been working in Ireland as an occupational therapist since 2001. His wife and their daughter joined him in 2003. "I had no problem getting my wife and children over to join me," he said, though he pointed out that it is very difficult for a person in his situation to bring their parents over.

"A friend of mine, who is legally working in Ireland, invited her mother from the Philippines to stay with her. I think that woman was approaching 70, but still she was only given a three-month visa. My friend couldn't get a dependant status for her, and in three months she had to go back," said Mendoza.

He also spoke of the importance of family reunification in Filipino culture: "That's very vital in our culture. We're more comfortable leaving our kids with grandparents than leaving them in crèches. If you know that your child is being looked after by a family member you're going to be working much better because you know your child is in good hands. You're going to be more efficient."

Meanwhile, Irish citizens who are married to non-EU nationals are having difficulties getting their spouses recognised by the State, according to an opposition TD.

Speaking at a recent Dáil committee debate, Fine Gael TD Denis Naughten praised the green card scheme, which allows holders to avail of speedy family reunification, but noted that the same rules do not apply to Irish citizens.

"Irish citizens are obliged to wait for long periods before their applications [for family reunification] are processed," he said.

"For example, I am familiar with the case of one of my constituents who has an American partner and whose child was born in Ireland. The individual in question is experiencing major difficulty in obtaining a residency visa for his partner."

Filipino consul in Ireland John Ferris agreed that family reunification is not affecting Filipinos as much as other immigration issues, most notably the long wait to obtain long-term residency status.

"Ironically, the restrictions on family reunification hit the Irish people most," he said.

At the Dáil committee debate in May, the Government appeared to be resolved not to amend its family reunification policy. Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform Dermot Ahern maintained: "We cannot have a situation where migration to Ireland by an individual leads irrevocably to movement of a larger number of family members."

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