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# International Decade for People of African Descent

## Consultation Report

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## Introduction

### Background

International Decade for People of African Descent

In the 2001 Durban United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, and the 2011 United Nations International Year for People of African Descent, the United Nations Member States highlighted the necessity to focus on the specific needs of People of African Descent across the world. Recognising the history of mistreatment of People of African Descent globally from slavery and colonialism and its continued prevalence today, the United Nations Member States have continued to engage on the matter

This engagement led the UN General Assembly in 2013 to proclaim under resolution 68/237 the 'International Decade for People of African Descent', effective through 2015-2024. The resolution proclaimed a need to strengthen national, regional and international cooperation in order to encourage and firmly entrench full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by People of African Descent. Resolution 68/237 is underpinned by the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

The theme for the International Decade is "People of African Descent: recognition, justice and development". Resolution 68/237 established the following objectives for the International Decade:

- To promote respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by people of African Descent, as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- To promote a greater knowledge of and respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contribution of people of African descent to the development of societies;
- To adopt and strengthen national, regional and international legal frameworks in accordance with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and to ensure their full and effective implementation.

As a signatory of the DDPA, Ireland committed to combatting racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The DDPA reaffirmed international human rights instruments including CERD. As part of this commitment, Ireland agreed to the following principles, actions and measures as a minimum requirement:

- Identify that the legacies of slavery and colonialism are the key sources of contemporary racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance;
- Recognise and value the diversity of the cultural heritage of Africans and people of African descent and affirm the necessity of ensuring their;
  - full integration into social, economic and political life
  - facilitate their full participation at all levels in the decision making process;
- Adopt legislation to address discrimination and victimisation, as defined in the DDPA, in employment and training.

#### International Decade for People of African Descent in Ireland Steering Committee

In March 2019, the International Decade for People of African Descent in Ireland (IDPADI) Steering Committee was established to advance the celebration of the International Decade. The IDPADI Steering Committee consists of organisations working within the African community. The organisations represented on the IDPADI Steering Committee are:

- AkiDWA- Akidada wa Africa
- African Scholars Association of Ireland
- African Students Association of Ireland
- African Lawyers Association of Ireland
- Wezesha
- African Social Workers Association of Ireland
- African Priests and Religious Association of Ireland
- Association of Mix Race Irish
- African Advocacy Network of Ireland

The IDPADI Steering Committee holds twelve meetings in the year and has established seven subcommittees chaired by committee members covering key themes including: Children, Parents and Youth; Education; and Justice and Legal. . The IDPADI Steering Committee have undertaken research to support their work, tendered submissions, conducted extensive outreach activities, and organised or participated in a wide range of events and activities to raise awareness and advance the objectives of the International Decade for People of African Descent.

## Consultation

The Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration within the then Department of Justice and Equality<sup>1</sup> held a stakeholder consultation event in 2019. Approximately 100 stakeholders, many of whom represented African community organisations, attended the event. The purpose of the event was to involve stakeholders in the design of a programme of action in Ireland to mark the International Decade for People of African Descent.

### Consultation methodology

The consultation was organised using the World Café model, in which participants engage with a series of consultation questions at informal café style tables of not more than eight people per table. At each table, a host was nominated at the outset of the consultation and participants discussed a question for 25 minutes. During the consultation, participants moved between tables at the end of each round to ensure all participants had to opportunity to address each question. Participants considered three questions.

#### Question 1

*Themes: Recognition and Justice*

What could Ireland's Decade include?

- Culture • History • Heritage • Intergenerational • Language

#### Question 2

*Theme: Development*

How could Ireland's Decade help to address issues facing People of African Descent in Ireland today?

- Employment/underemployment/unemployment • Social Inclusion • Intergenerational • Housing • Health • Education

#### Question 3

What would make Ireland a better place to live for People of African Descent?

At the end of each round, when participants moved to a new table, the table host remained to share insights from the previous discussion. The moderator provided an overview of the main discussion

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<sup>1</sup> Responsibility for integration policy moved to the Department of Children, Equality, Integration and Youth following a transfer of functions between Ministers as part of the new Government formation in 2020.



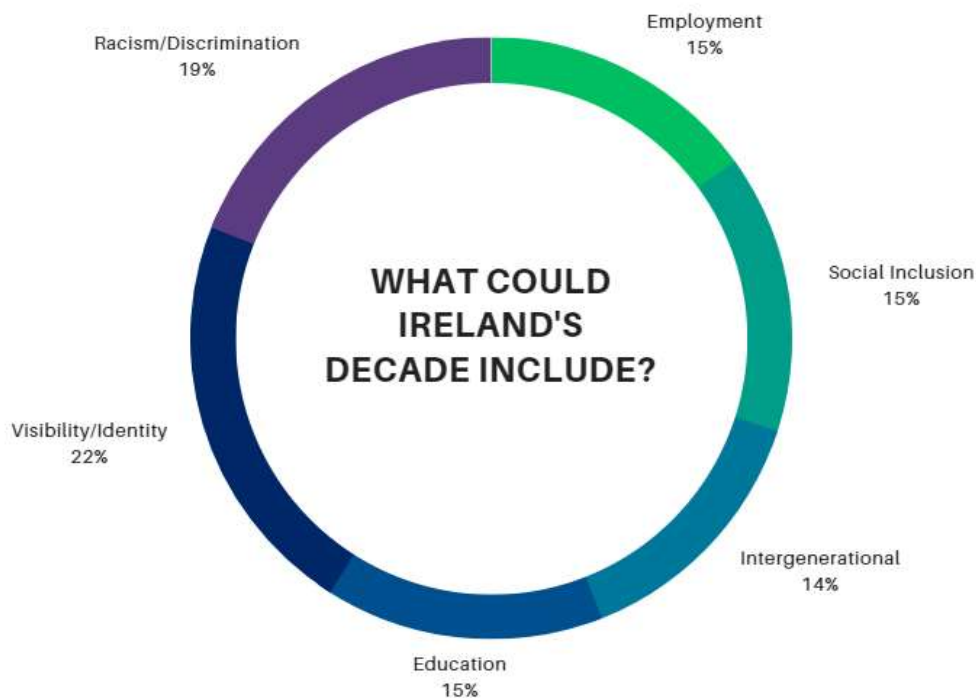


Figure 1: Responses to question one by theme

In response to question two, participants highlighted employment as the most significant issue for People of African Descent in Ireland. Forty two percent of responses referenced this theme with many proposing actions to improve employment opportunities.

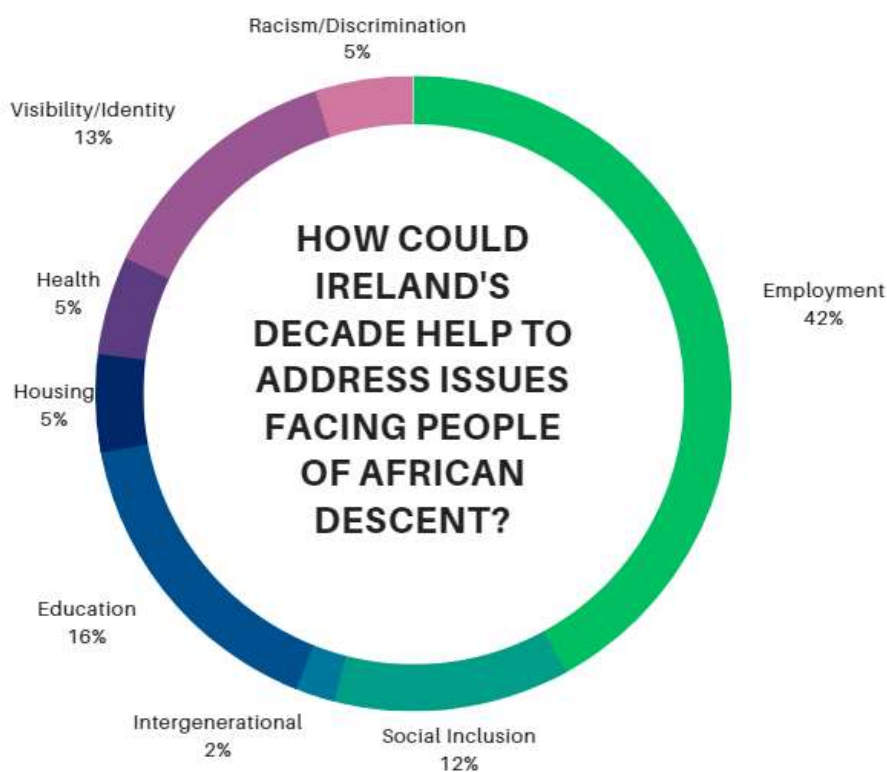


Figure 2: Responses to question two by theme



The theme of social inclusion was given most consideration in response to question three. Participants also emphasised the importance of addressing employment issues, and enhancing the visibility of People of African Descent for making Ireland a better place to live.

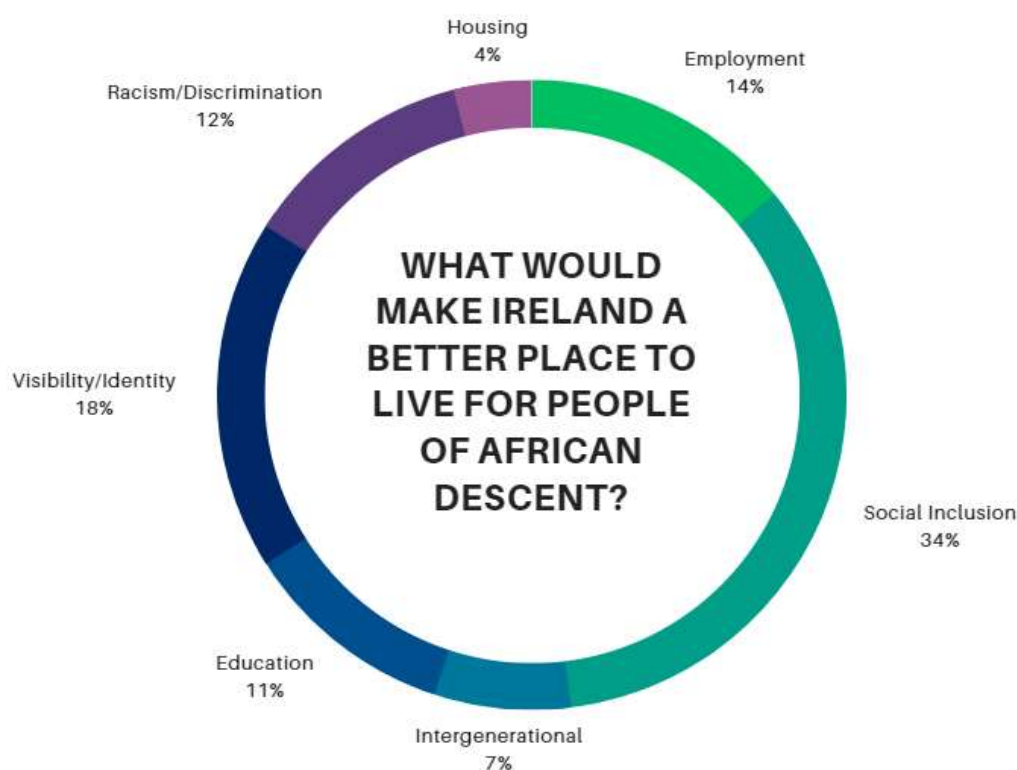


Figure 3: Responses to question three by theme

### Key Themes

This section describes the key themes that emerged from the consultation. Under each theme, the main considerations addressed by participants are detailed with supporting quotes from the participants discussions highlighted in italics.

#### Employment

Participants emphasised the higher levels of unemployment and underemployment for People of African Descent. The issues of gaining employment or employment that corresponded with qualifications was a key theme within the consultation.

Discrimination was identified as an important factor underpinning this issue. Discrimination was experienced within recruitment processes and negatively affected opportunities for advancement. Education and training on discrimination for employers was recommended as a means to address exclusionary practices.

*Algorithmic Injustice – recruitment selection discrimination*

*Ethnic nepotism*

*Work place discrimination should be handled by the people affected by the issues*

*Hard for Africans to get to the top*

*End discrimination in the workplace by educating employers*

*Training for companies on conscious bias – unconsciously people are doing this  
and discriminating without knowing it*

A number of participants suggested that meaningful affirmative action was required to eliminate discrimination and increase employment prospects. This would enable People of African Descent to gain employment in positions that matched their experience and qualifications.

*Employment integration via affirmative action for PAD*

*Positive discrimination to enable qualified Africans to get better jobs*

*Affirmative action for People of African Descent*

The reluctance of Irish employers to recognise African qualifications was also seen as an important feature in reducing employment opportunities. A review of the accreditation/recognition of third level and vocational qualifications from African institutions was suggested as a necessary step in removing these barriers.

*To remove barriers such as people with qualifications from abroad seeking  
employment here*

*Academic cultural integration to get a better job for qualified Africans*

Participants recognised the important role of the Government in leading the way in best practice. It was recommended that the diversity within Irish society should be reflected within Government Departments and agencies.

*Government agencies should be an example of work place integration*

*Government should lead by example. All public jobs should be open to all those with the right to work*

*Government agencies should be a reflection of multicultural Ireland 'practice what you preach'*

*Commitment to recruiting African people into the Civil Service*

A number of supports were suggested to remove barriers and create employment opportunities. This included targeted employment schemes, and employment champions within the workforce. Employment supports would address needs on an individual level but also encourage employers to recruit more People of African Descent.

*Enhance employment supports for PAD*

*Create opportunities (employment schemes) for African descent i.e. EU 'quota' to break the bias*

*Employment champions for PAD with each organisation, public sector to look at mentoring, progression, promotion, recruitment*

#### Visibility/Identity

Visibility and identity emerged as the second most common theme from participants' responses. Participants identified the need to create better awareness within Irish society of African culture, diversity and heritage. This would help to ensure that African culture was valued equally.

*Recognition of African cultural values*

*Raising awareness of African culture, diversity and heritage*

*Celebrating publicly the values that Africans bring to Ireland*

*Celebrating African history on a public level*

Participants highlighted the need for more opportunities and platforms for the promotion of the rich and diverse African heritage and culture, as well as the contributions of Africans and African Descent writers, scientists, entrepreneurs, human rights activists, and musicians amongst others. A media presence led by People of African Descent would challenge stereotypes and give a voice to people to speak on their own behalf.

*A supporting media to promote African brands, culture, music, business, etc.*

*Giving more media time on TV stations to promote African culture – paint a much more positive image of black people on the media*

*Positive public image for People of African Descent*

*More positive visibility of PAD everywhere!!!*

The increased visibility of People of African Descent role models, particularly in Government/public sector positions and education would both improve access to decision-making positions and provide a positive public image of People of African Descent.

*Tired of people speaking for us*

*Regarding decisions made or being made on behalf of African people need to include the input from African people*

*Having African representative in the Government, in decision making positions*

#### Social Inclusion

The theme of social inclusion, interlinked with visibility/identity, was a significant area of concern for participants. Participants expressed the need for more promotion of cross-cultural cooperation across the African and non-African communities. They highlighted the two way process that was required for realising integration and inclusion.

*More contact between PAD and those not of African Descent*

*To create, foster a respect for all cultures*

*Recognition of other cultures, religion and celebrations*

*By being fully accepted it would make Ireland a welcoming place*

*National campaign to promote cross cultural understanding and cooperation*

*Integration is a two ways process*

Participants hoped to see increased involvement of People of African Descent in the narrative of African stories and lives in Ireland and ultimately more meaningful encounters between African and non-African communities.

*Media needs to portray people of African descent in a more positive light and engage with them regularly*

*Make Africans non-strangers, normalisation in all aspects*

*Regular celebration of mixed Irish and African culture and heritage*

*More representation – affirmative action in RTE, media and political parties and additional training to open doors for People of African Descent to play a bigger role in Irish Society*

*National campaign to promote cross cultural understanding and cooperation*

There was support within participants' responses for targeted policies to address the issues People of African Descent experience in Ireland.

*5 year strategic plan or integration strategy for PAD show Black Lives Matter*

*Introduce inclusion policies, recognise People of African Descent who inverted things and who brought change for Africans*

*We need a government strategy for people of African Descent*

## Education

The education curriculum was deemed Eurocentric, excluding African history and experience. Participants suggested that African history should be part of the curriculum and integration should be embedded in the education system.

*Introduce African history in the Irish curriculum – start by some questions in the exam papers*

*Acknowledge colonialization and slavery in the curriculum*

*Education – primary and secondary not Eurocentric*

*The challenge for the under African communities is to demystify cultural identity, this needs to be included in schools*

*Integration and social inclusion should be embedded in the education system*

Additionally, the recruitment of more People of African Descent within all levels of the education sector would support more diversity within the curriculum and provide positive role models. The Irish language entrance requirement was noted as one barrier that would need to be addressed.

*Education and information of PAD and Africa in schools at all levels taught by African scholars and teachers. Then our native population become used to seeing PAD as educators and challenge the single story of PAD as asylum seekers/spongers*

*More African teachers and lectures*

*Training on multiculturalism*

*Irish language as entrance requirement: address for teaching*

Racism and discrimination

Racism and discrimination underpinned many of the issues that were highlighted by participants in the preceding themes. Challenging racism and discrimination emerged as a key focus of participants' discussions. The need for criminal legislation and effective reporting structures was recommended as crucial steps in recognising and addressing underlying racism and discrimination.

*More commitment from Government to reduce racial discrimination in employment, education, health, accommodation to improve our lives (positive discrimination)*

*Criminalise racism, penalties on people who discriminate against African people.*

*Immediate passing of Hate Crime Law to ensure speedy justice*

*Establishing agency for reporting race crime issues and one that can be trusted by People of African Descent (Monitoring Agency)*

The important role of the media was prominent in participants' responses as a means to counter negative stereotypes and provide a platform for promoting a positive and inclusive narrative.

*Media is key to challenging negative perceptions*

*More campaigns against racism – celebrating Africans who have done great things on the media – telling more positive stories of African role models*

Intergenerational

Interlinked with the negative narratives and stereotypes that People of African Descent often have to confront, participants felt that young people are misrepresented in the media as associated with anti-social behaviour.

*Young Africans - misrepresentation by media - anti social behaviour*

*Misrepresentation of African Youth*

Many participants called for better support for young people. They suggested that young people would benefit from more visible positive role models, learning more about their heritage, and mentoring programmes for all young people in Ireland to prevent anti-social behaviour.

*Invest in organisations that promote good role models for the Afro - community and young children/youths*

*Educate their younger children/generation on their origin*

*To develop mentoring programmes to prevent young Africans/ children in Ireland getting involved in anti-social behaviours*

*PAD tech programs - young girls, intergeneration*

There was positive experiences noted for second generation People of African Descent, who felt that Ireland is their home and they are welcome. Although it was also suggested, that greater recognition of African Irish by wider society was required.

*The 2nd generation born here feel Ireland is really home. A welcoming place.*

*Mainstream society should understand that there are African Irish.*

## Health and Housing

The disproportionate rates of sickle cell anaemia amongst People of African Descent was highlighted as an issue requiring more attention. Participants also recommended more health research on the needs of People of African Descent to support evidence based policy.

*Accessibility to medical resources to help with illness affecting Africans such as sickle Cell NB*

*Accessibility to services re: unique conditions – sickle cell prevalence in African population – Disability*

*Policy and research – evidence based research to influence policy*

Participants felt that there was a pattern of placing African families together in social housing. This limits opportunities for integration reducing important connections with wider society. Participants suggested that social housing should have a mix of different families in each area.

*Social housing – remove the bunching of placements of large African families in social housing areas*

*Regards to housing /social housing to be in area of mix nationality where  
"Africans can integrate better with the Irish Community - Acceptance!*

*Ghettoization' should be tackled by better social housing policies and also avoid housing same race in same area.*




## Conclusion

The findings from the consultation have shown that there are a number of common issues that participants felt needed to be addressed as part of the Decade and to make Ireland a better place to live for People of African Descent. Employment was the most commonly referenced issue with discrimination underpinning exclusionary recruitment practices. Participants spoke about the impact of employers disregarding their qualifications, which limited employment and career advancement. The role of the Government in leading the way in best practice recruitment, the introduction of employment schemes, and the creation of employment champions within organisations were suggested as effective measures to improve employment opportunities.

The limited awareness of African culture, diversity and heritage was seen as a barrier to equality and inclusion. Participants called for more opportunities and platforms to promote the richness and diversity within African culture and heritage. The media was seen to have an important role in counteracting the negative narratives and stereotypes often perpetuated, through sharing the achievements and contributions of People of African Descent within Ireland and internationally. By sharing African stories and experiences, this would not only increase awareness within Irish society but provide young People of African Descent with positive role models.

Racism and discrimination underpinned many of the themes that emerged from the consultation. Participants highlighted the need for criminal legislation to address hate crimes and effective reporting structures that people could have confidence in to report racism and discrimination.

Participants highlighted the two way process that was required for meaningful integration and inclusion. This requires cross-cultural cooperation across African and non-African communities. The education system was seen as a key site for integration. The inclusion of African history in the curriculum was suggested as an important step in raising awareness but also to support young People of African Descent to learn about their culture and heritage. In addition, supports to encourage more teachers of African descent would provide important visibility and role models for young people.



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