

# Operation Vantage Update – November 2016

**Detective Superintendent Stephen Courage**  
**Garda National Immigration Bureau**

*Note: information presented in this report is based on provisional data and may be subject to change.*



# ANALYSIS AND TRENDS



# Emerging Trends - Overview

- Significant increase in marriages between certain non-EU nationals and EU nationals observed – predominantly males from the Indian sub-continent and females from Eastern Europe and Portugal.
- Significant increase in asylum applications from non-EU nationals from the Indian sub-continent.
- Significant increase in reporting of lost identify / travel documents from the same nationalities.
- Significant increase in applications for residency under EU treaty rights from 3<sup>rd</sup> country nationals



## EU / Non EU Marriages - trends

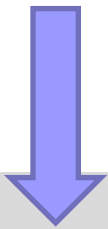
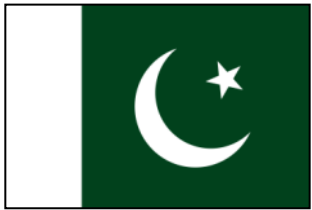
- A total of **1,509**\* notices of intention to marry in Ireland were received in 2015 between EU and non-EU nationals.
- Pakistani males account for 40% of males presenting for marriage, followed by Indian nationals (11%) and Bangladeshi nationals at 5%.
- Together these three Nationalities from the Indian sub-continent account for over half (56%) of grooms involved in marriages between EU nationals and non EU nationals.

\* *Excluding marriages to Irish nationals*



# EU / Non EU Marriages - trends

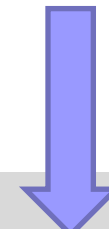
Pakistani males



Indian males



Bangladeshi males



**Nationality of brides**

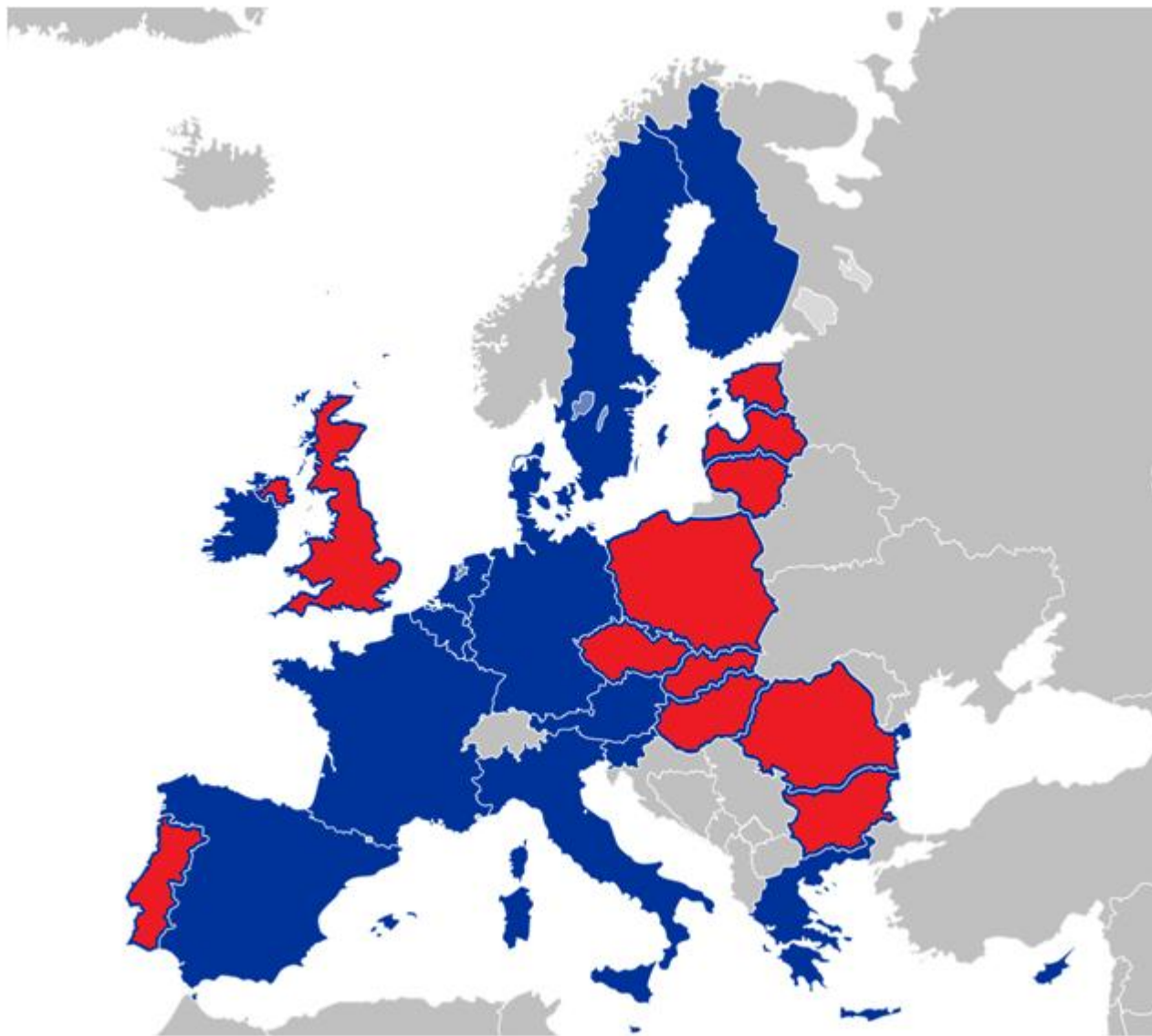
Romania	20%
Portugal	16%
Latvia	11%
UK	11%
Hungary	10%
Poland	6%
Bulgaria	5%
Lithuania	5%
Other	15%

Portugal	29%
Estonia	14%
Hungary	12%
Romania	11%
Slovakia	7%
Poland	6%
Latvia	6%
Bulgaria	5%
Other	9%

Portugal	41%
Hungary	18%
Poland	11%
Romania	7%
Slovakia	5%
Estonia	5%
UK	4%
Lithuania	4%
Bulgaria	3%



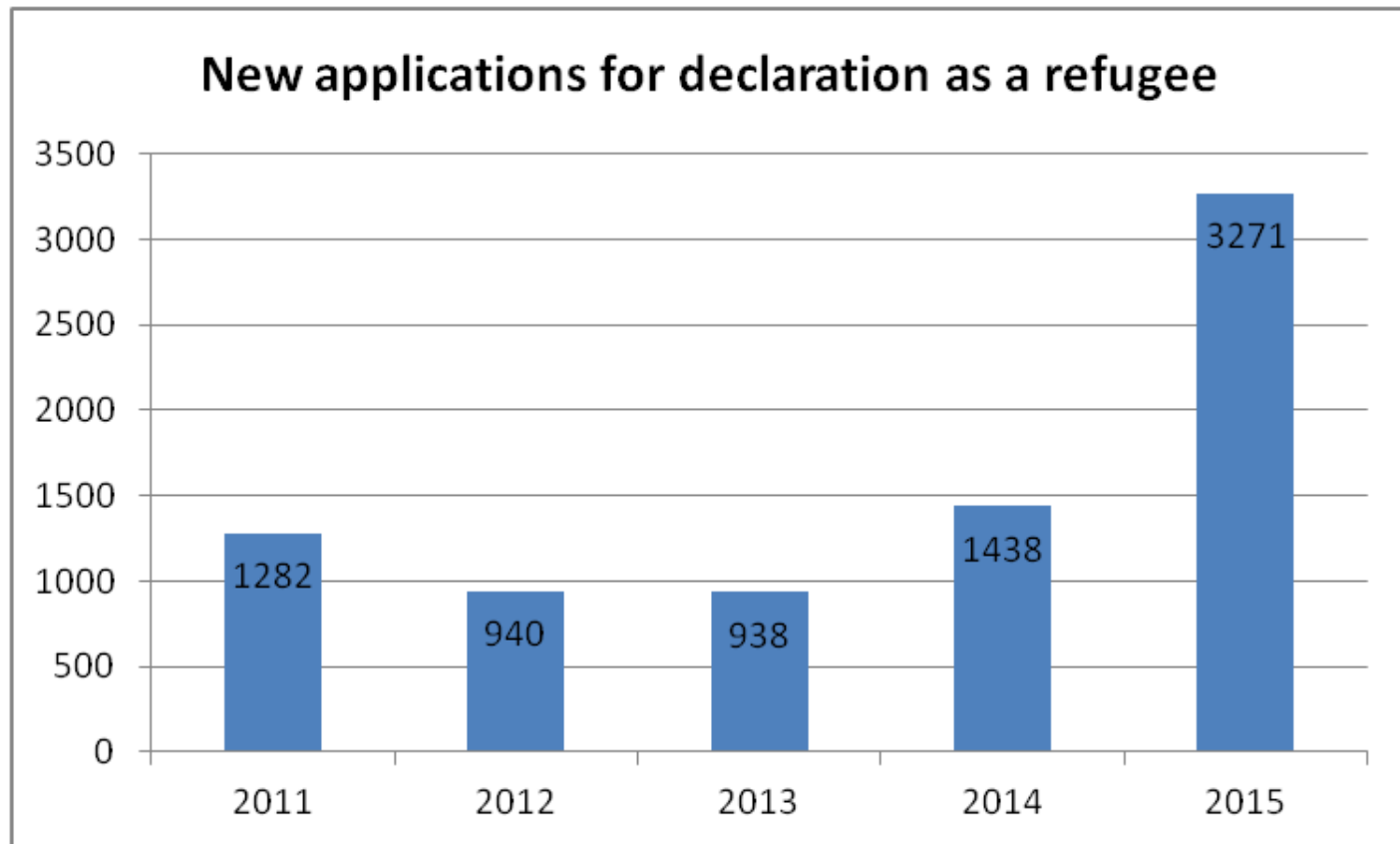
## 2015 – Nationality of brides for suspected marriages of convenience



<b>Portugal</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Romania</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Hungary</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Latvia</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>UK</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Estonia</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Poland</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Slovakia</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Lithuania</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Czech Republic</b>	<b>2%</b>



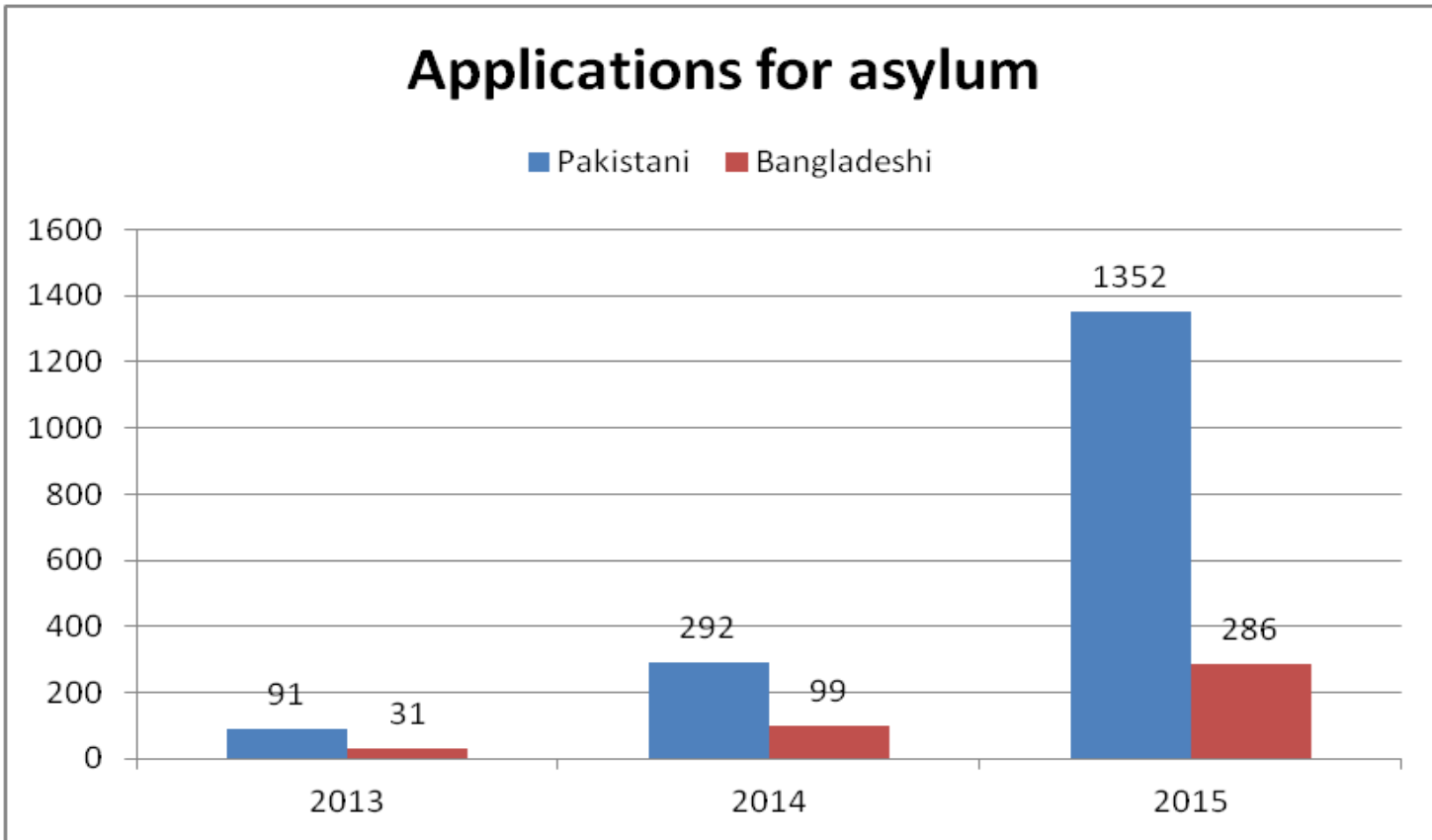
# Applications for Asylum – Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner



- Number of asylum applications more than doubled in 2015 compared to 2014 (+127%)



# Applications for Asylum – Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner

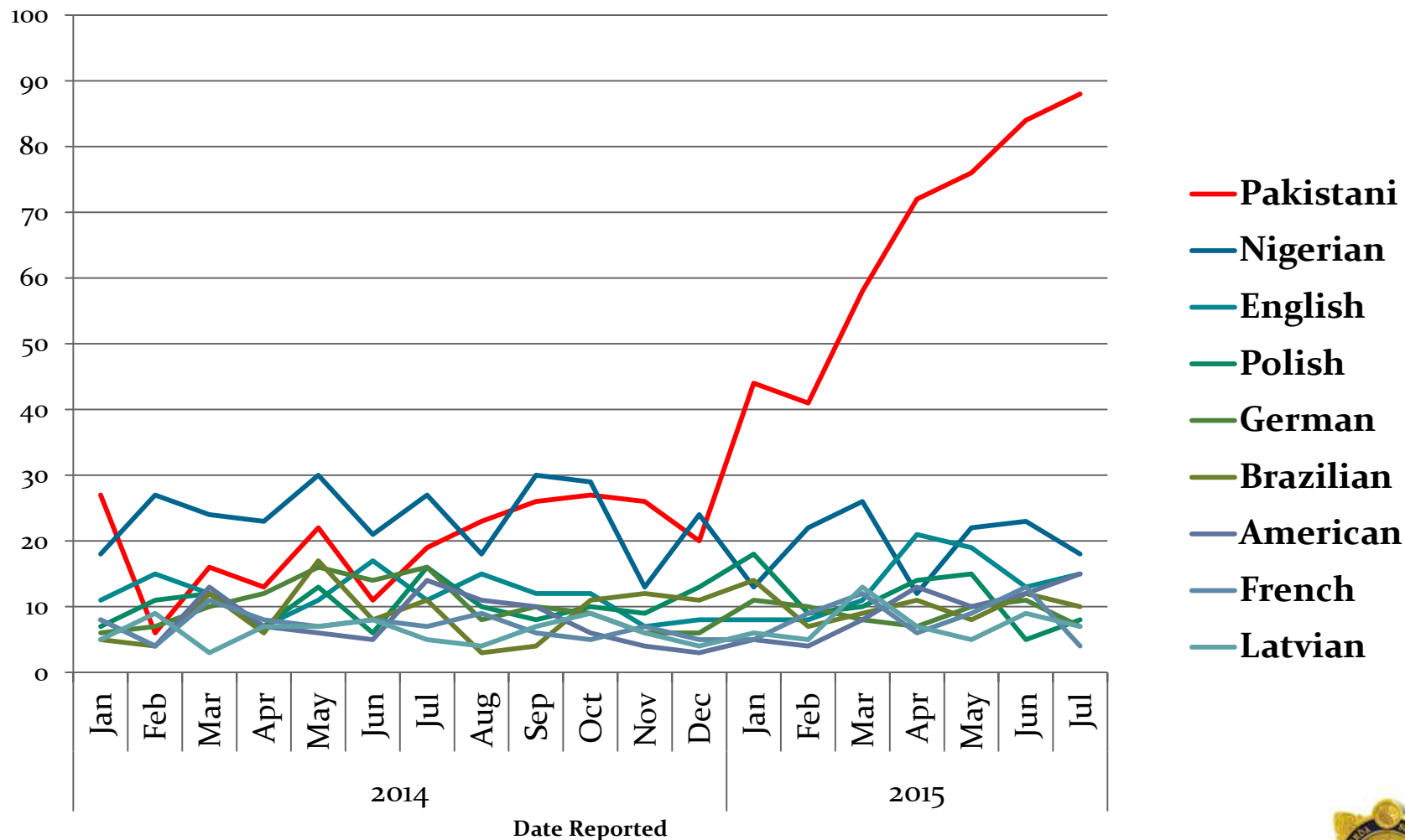


- Pakistani applications have increased from 292 in 2014 to 1,352 in 2015. Account for 41% of all applicants in 2015.





# Non Irish Nationals – Lost Passport Reports (PULSE)



## Non Irish Nationals – Lost Passport Reports (PULSE)

Nationality	2014	2015
Pakistani	236	714
Nigerian	284	225
English	138	138
Polish	122	139
German	120	130
Brazilian	104	117
American	91	127
French	85	83
Latvian	74	88



# Operation Vantage - Overview

- Established 10<sup>th</sup> August 2015
- Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) staff supplemented by:
  - Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau (DOCB)
  - National Bureau of Criminal Investigation (NBCI)
  - Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation (GBFI)
  - Special Detective Unit (SDU)
  - Crime and Security Branch
  - Crime and Policing Analyst



# Operation Vantage - Objectives

- Operation Vantage set up to:
- identify “***marriages of convenience***” as defined under the Civil Registration Act 2004 as amended
- i.e. a marriage where at least one of the parties to the marriage is
  - (A) Foreign national
  - (B) Enters into the marriage solely for the purpose of securing an immigration advantage

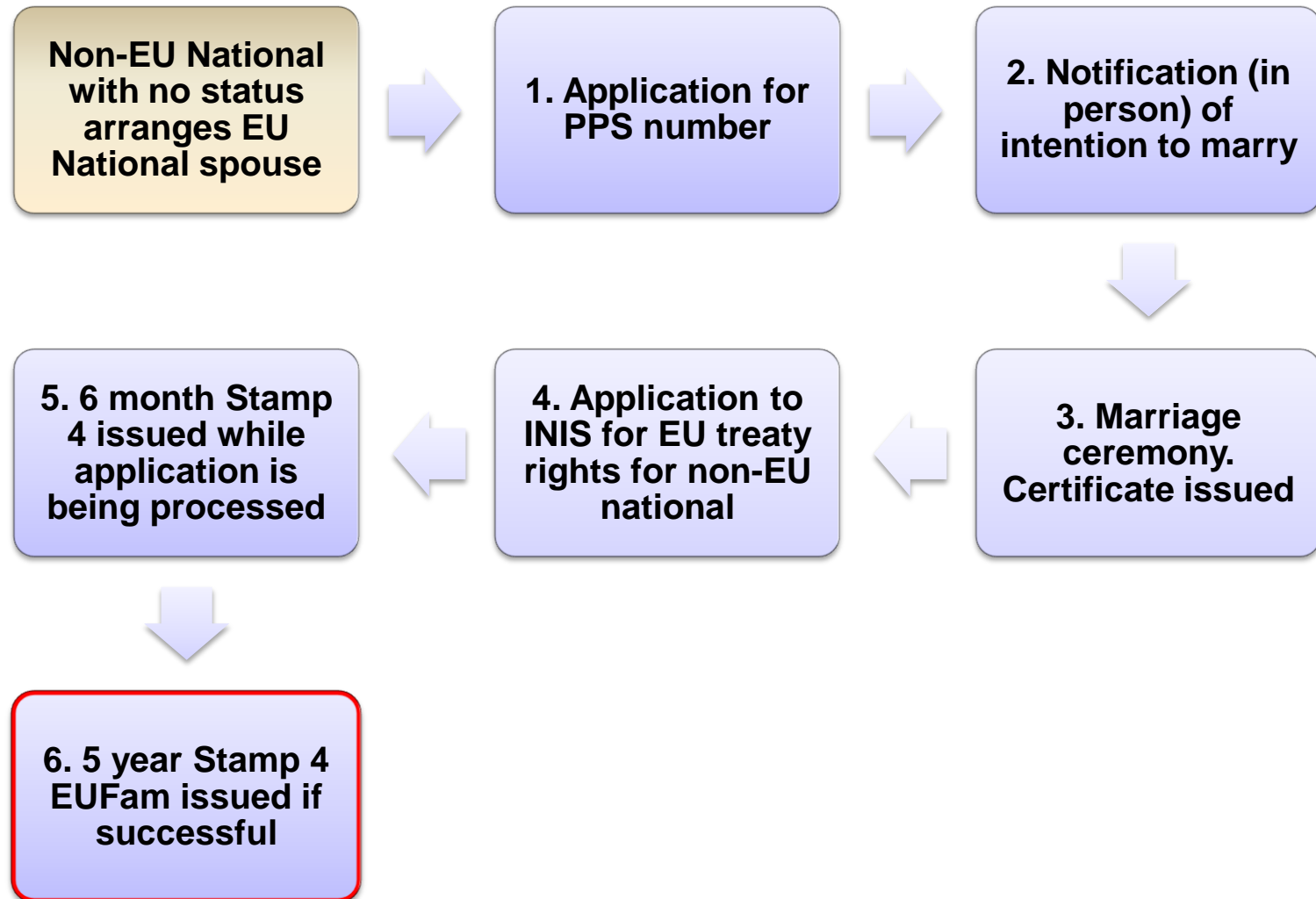


# Operation Vantage - Objectives

- Investigate any marriages of convenience identified and initiate criminal proceedings if any offences are disclosed; object to any marriages pending, and notify INIS to revoke EU Treaty rights for completed marriages
  
- Investigation into organised criminal networks
  - Establish how illegal immigrants are entering the State
  - Identify any human trafficking/smuggling occurring
  - Procurement of forged documents
  - Gather intelligence on facilitators and organisers of marriage of convenience
  
- Comprehensive investigation into all monies associated with any of the above elements



# Marriages of convenience



# Travel routes

- Significant number of non-EU nationals from Indian sub continent are arriving from the UK via the common travel area between Ireland and the UK.
- Will travel to Scotland, ferry over to Northern Ireland and travel by bus or taxi down to Dublin.
- Will report their travel documents lost and acquire new passport from their embassy
  - To conceal their illegal status in the State
  - Eliminates travel history
  - Risk of being returned to first country
  - Apply for PPS number



## Family Reunification / Surinder Singh

- After 3 years of marriage a non-EEA national is entitled to apply to retain his residency rights in the event of a divorce.
- Non-EEA nationals with residency status are entitled to bring their dependant family members to live with them – this is not restricted to their spouse.
- Non-EEA nationals with residency status in the UK are now using Ireland to apply for status for their family members as the system is far more lenient than the UK equivalent.
- Once EU treaty rights are secured in Ireland they can be transferred back to the UK under EU law – **Surinder Singh** route
- In order to do so false employment records / proof of addresses / bank accounts are being generated by another level of facilitators to prove they are exercising their EU treaty rights here







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## Fraud offences and Company Law offences

- In order to show that the EU national is exercising their EU treaty rights in Ireland they must show proof of residence here and also
  - Must be a student **OR**
  - Must be working (as an employee or self-employed) **OR**
  - Must have the necessary means to support themselves and dependants
  
- Bank accounts are being used to show residence – typically the EU national will set up the account but it will be controlled by the facilitator.
  
- Shelf companies or business names will be used to generate payslips. The PRSI / tax will be paid for the employee however they are not resident and no work is actually done.
  
- These documents are provided as part of the EU1 Residence application for treaty rights.



# Operation Vantage

## **INVESTIGATION AND RESPONSE**



# New Domestic Legislation - Civil Registration Act, 2004 to 2014

- New 2014 amendment enacted on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2015
- Gives Registrars of Marriage new powers and allows for the consideration of:
  - If parties speak a common language
  - Period both parties are known to each other
  - Lived together
  - Familiar with details of other party
  - Immigration status of applicants
  - Money paid as inducement
  - Has any party been subject to previous objection
  - Any other information that the Registrar requires to determine if a proposed marriage is legitimate



# Intelligence developed

- A number of major facilitators identified who are well known within their respective community for arranging marriages of convenience including arranging brides, booking flights, arranging payment and arranging documentation
- Number of non-Irish national professionals supporting the facilitators above – solicitors, accountants and “immigration experts”.
- More local facilitation done an ad hoc basis – for example, a Pakistani male may ask his sham bride to source another EU National for his brother.



# Europol / EUROJUST

- Identify criminal networks – the recruitment or trafficking of EU nationals for marriages of convenience
- Identify “sham brides”
  - Existing marriages
  - Working or claiming social benefits in home country while claiming EU rights in 2<sup>nd</sup> country (Ireland)
- Sharing of intelligence in respect of the above
- Ongoing operations include Op GROF (CZ) and Op WHITECUP (UK)



# Op Vantage – Results to date

- **600** marriage files investigated(both pending and completed) requested and currently under investigation
- To date a total of **247** marriages have failed to proceed due to objections and investigations
- **52** persons arrested with multiple charges preferred under:
  - Section 69 (3) of the Civil Registration Act 2004 as amended
  - Section 29 of the Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) Act 2001
- Several convictions in the District and Circuit Court



## Results to date – ORAC

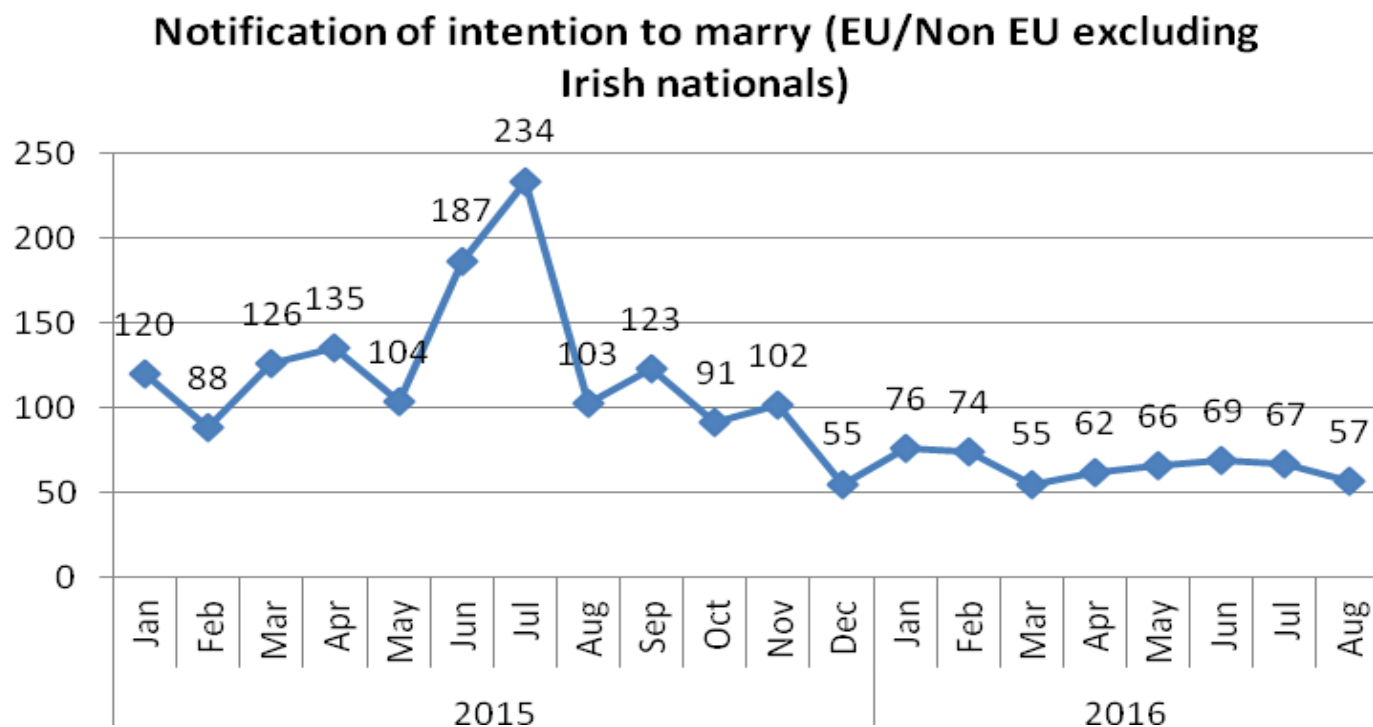
- Figures from ORAC show a total of 1,573 new applications for asylum were received up to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016. This compares to 2,510 for the same period last year, a reduction of **37%**.
- However more tellingly, Pakistani applicants have reduced from 1,118 in 2015 (as of 30<sup>th</sup> September) to 195 in the same period in 2016, a reduction of **83%**.





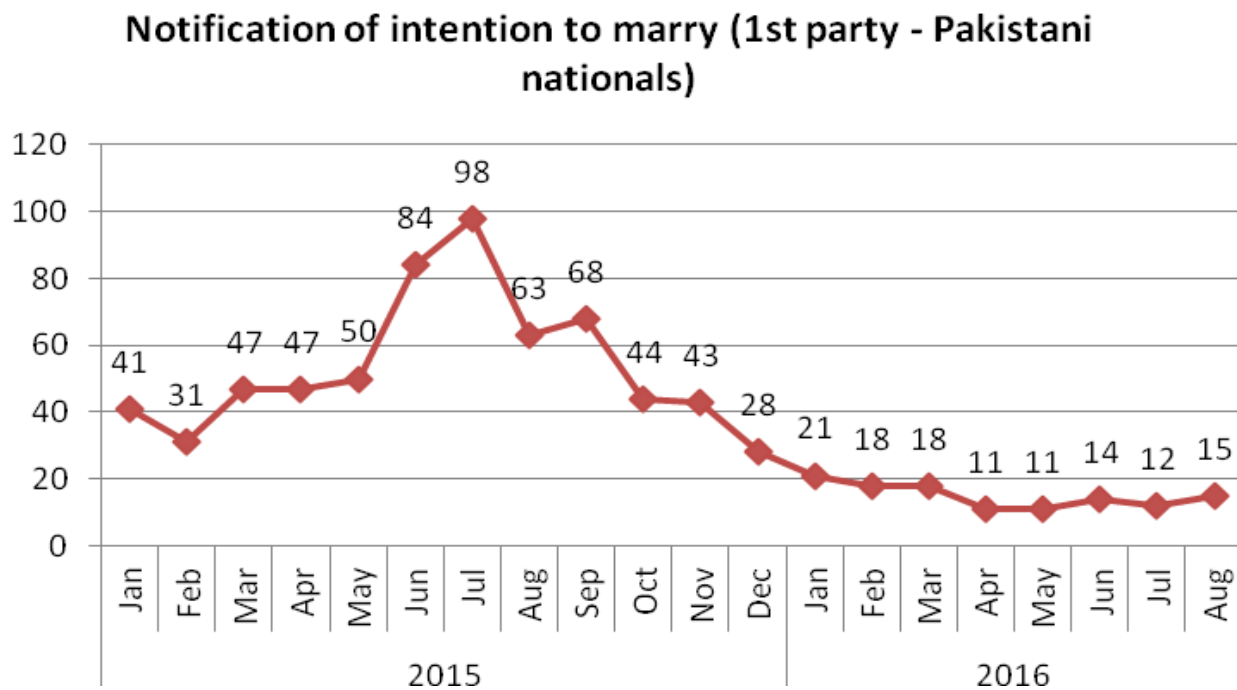
# Results to date – marriage notifications

- To date in 2016 (end August), year to year reduction of **52%** in notifications of intention to marry between EU/non-EU nationals in Ireland.



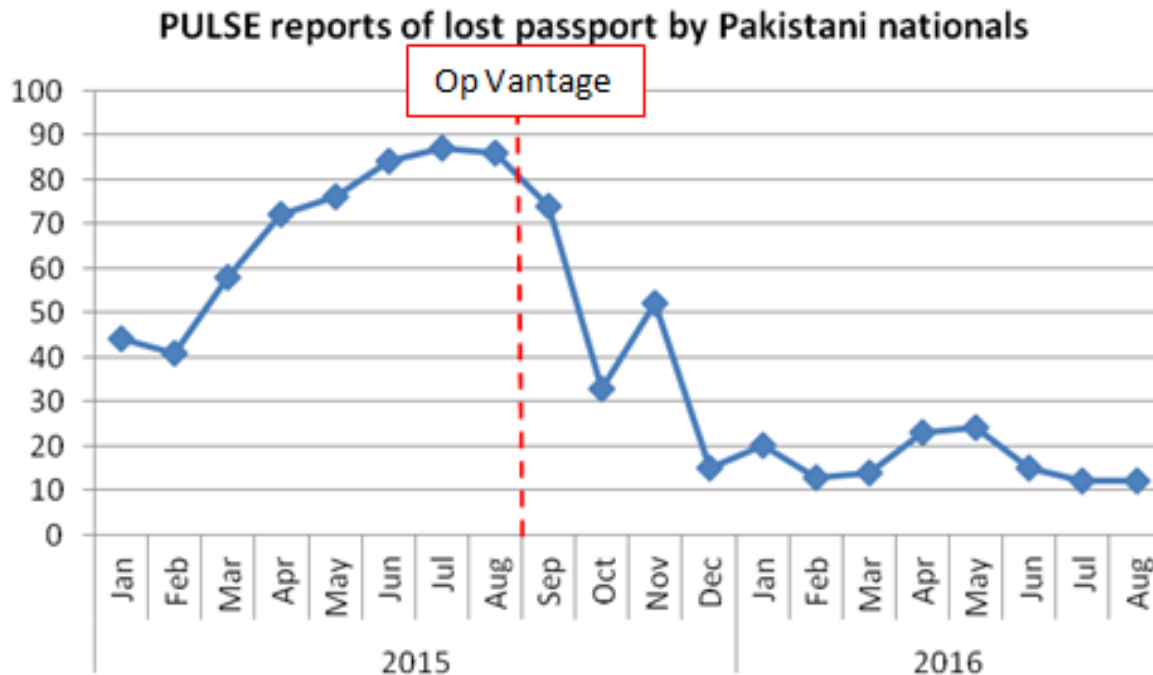
# Results to date – marriage notifications

- Even more pronounced results for Pakistani nationals with year to year reductions of **74%**.



# Results to date – reports of lost documents

- Provisional figures indicate a reduction in the reporting of lost passports by **23%** (all nationalities) and **76%** (Pakistani nationals).



# NEW THREAT - WHAT WILL BREXIT MEAN ???

Brexit



# EU Treaty Rights Applications - INIS

- EU1 applications (EU Treaty Rights/Residency) nearly doubled from 3,230 applications in 2014 to 5,996 in 2015
- Large increase from certain Asian countries.
- Pakistani nationals increased from 683 in 2014  
1,920 in 2015
- Afghan nationals had increased from 68 applicants in 2014  
881 applicants in 2015.



# Op VANTAGE – contact details

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