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Phone no. 046-9093120, fax 046 9093120  
[www.cultur.ie](http://www.cultur.ie) [info@cultur.ie](mailto:info@cultur.ie)

## ***Moving on and meeting new challenges: Cultúr moves office and launches its new website and e-bulletin***

### ***Welcome to the new e-bulletin for Cultúr!***

Cultúr is a locally based community development organisation whose mission is to facilitate intercultural awareness, community development and capacity building with ethnic minorities living in Co. Meath.

This e-bulletin will be published on a quarterly basis and will contain updates on the work of Cultúr, its various programmes and initiatives, local and national policy developments relating to ethnic minorities and other useful information on issues relating to ethnic minorities living in Co. Meath.

Our website will also be updated on relevant news and events that arise in a timely fashion so that information in between the e-bulletins can be disseminated. More information on the work of Cultúr can be found on our revamped website [www.cultur.ie](http://www.cultur.ie). If you are interested in signing up for this e-bulletin, you can subscribe on our website page by using the subscribe button on the home page.

We welcome prospective articles and news bites from contributors to our e-bulletin and the next one will be published in December 2009. Please note we have a Google translate button on our website which means all information on the website can be translated into a number of languages.

### ***Cultúr moves to a new central office location to meet the increasing demand for supports***

Cultúr has recently moved office to the 1<sup>st</sup> Floor of the CYWS Hall opposite the Fairgreen in Navan. This move took place in mid August and will ensure that Cultúr can meet the increasing demands on the organisation and also support the development of new initiatives and projects. A map with our new office location is available on our website [www.cultur.ie](http://www.cultur.ie) and all our contact details are the same (please see the top of this page.)

This e-bulletin features articles on the following topics:

- Reflections on Migration in Co. Meath

- Unemployment issues facing Migrant Workers
- Bridging Visa Process
- News bites section with up to date information on a range of topics

### ***Bridging Scheme for Undocumented Workers***

The Minister for Justice, Mr. Dermot Ahern TD has announced a new workers scheme for non EEA workers who at one point held a valid work permit in Ireland and became undocumented due to reasons beyond their control due to e.g.

1. Deception or false promises
2. Non renewal of their work permit by an employer
3. Work place exploitation
4. Other extenuating circumstances e.g. illness

Some important points in the operation of this scheme include:

- It does not matter how long you have been undocumented before you make an application
- If successful you will be given a four month temporary permission to remain from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
- This TPR will allow you to apply for a work permit and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will waive the usual eligibility criteria to apply for a work permit
- Each application will be judged on a case by case basis
- The scheme is not applicable to work permit holders being made redundant, a separate scheme for these workers was announced by the Minister in August this year (see website below).

### ***Time frame***

- The scheme was open from October 1<sup>st</sup> to the end of this year and application forms are available on [www.inis.gov/](http://www.inis.gov/) under the undocumented workers scheme section.

**Cultúr will provide a local perspective on this scheme with an information session with SIPTU Navan Branch in the coming weeks.**

# ***MIGRATION IS GLOBAL, IMMIGRANTS ARE LOCAL: Reflections on Migration***

***By Fr. Bobby Gilmore SCC, chair person of the Migrants Rights Centre Ireland***

## **Irish Experience.....**

Fr. Bobby Gilmore is a member of the Columban Missionaries, and has worked extensively on migration issues with migrant workers over the years. He has worked in Jamaica, the Philippines and with the Irish community in the UK in the 1980s. He is a founder member of the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) and is the current chair person of MRCI.

Listening to the news recently there was a report about a footballer returning home from Australia because of injury and homesickness reminded me that migration is about a break in primary relationships and the loss that accompanies it. Migration means leaving home, family, friends and familiar surroundings. As a result there is a break in primary relationships and the challenge to form new relationships in the discomfort of unfamiliar surroundings.

In the modern era of easy travel and communications there is assumption that because distance has diminished that migration is simple. However, in migration there are two journeys. One is external, a geographical shift from one place to another, a trip in the external landscape by road, sea or air. Nowadays this journey is easily accessible. The second part of the journey is the difficult one because it entails a trip in one's inner landscapes, one's heart and emotions. It is a journey that most of us are unprepared for and unsure as to how it will pan out. Migration is the human heart on a journey of hope.

Irish people have been leaving over the centuries to migrate and find a living in strange places. They left in the hope of a welcome and those they left behind bereft hoped that a welcome would await them wherever they went. They are three million Irish citizens living outside Ireland. We all have relatives abroad.

Since Ireland joined the European Union immigrants from around the world have been arriving in Ireland in the same way as Irish people had been arriving in foreign lands over the centuries. In many instances there were people and friends to meet them at points of arrival. But for many on arrival there was no one to meet them.

On arrival at the airport or docks or bus station they had to make their way by finding accommodation, employment and other services. If those arriving were a family they had to locate schools for children, discover how to go about getting there and back to where they lived. They had to deal with the loss of home, homesickness, the discomfort of unfamiliar surroundings, strange food and maybe a strange language.

## **Immigrant Identity.....**

Immigrants in Ireland are a mirror image of what Irish emigrants experienced over the centuries and which Irish emigrants are experiencing again. Irish people should be kind to immigrants because that is what Irish parents wish for their own children who have to migrate.

The one desire that we all have whether at home or away is to feel at home, a sense of belonging and an identity. Essentially, this is the desire to integrate into the new society that one arrives in.

Integration is a two-way street. It is a challenge to the new arrival and to the settled and it begins with a greeting, meeting, the sharing of stories and information. It is here that commonality of aspirations are shared, where strangers become friends.

### **Immigrants are Us**

However, in a global economy in which governments and industry expect people to migrate, support systems need to be in place so that immigrants do not end up on the margins of cities and towns.

If we wish that Irish emigrants be integrated wherever they go, we should reach out to those immigrants who are here in County Meath and support them feel at home.

### **Role of Civic Society Organisations**

Finally, some thoughts on the work of Civic society organisations and the key points in supporting integration at a county level:

- Reach out and seek ways to make links with immigrants living in your area, meeting people where they are at and exploring what their needs are
- Build alliances with immigrant organisations or other organisations working with immigrants in your local area
- Solidarity with immigrants, immigrants are part of the local community as their issues are your issues and vice versa. Creating a sense of solidarity between and with all the communities you work with is crucial and is a way to form and build positive relationships
- Engagement with policy makers and decision makers and communicating the issues on the ground as experienced by immigrant communities is vital in order to change the situations people may find themselves in.

# *Cultúr responds to unemployment issues impacting on Ethnic Minorities living in Co. Meath*

<i>Current Context</i>	<i>Profile of the Target Group</i>
<p><b>Current context of unemployment</b>            The level of unemployment for migrant workers living in Co. Meath is increasing and these statistics are also reflected nationally through the recent figures published by the ESRI and the OECD report in March 2009 citing 20.3% on the live register nationally as being migrant workers in comparison with 16% in February 2009. This rapid growth required an immediate response to support those being made unemployed to be able to access the appropriate activation supports in a timely fashion.</p> <p>Through contact with migrants Cultúr, DSFA and Meath VEC identified a large number of unemployed migrant workers who are currently deemed <i>non progression ready</i> due to the fact that they have either none or only basic levels of English. Cultúr has also taken referrals from FAS on a daily basis for English language supports for migrants who they have assessed as non progression ready. This makes successful interventions with migrants extremely difficult for the key agencies focusing on social welfare, training and education.</p> <p>Due to the increasing needs on the ground, Cultúr applied for funding to the local social welfare office for Co. Meath to pilot an accredited course Basic English Communication Skills for Beginners.</p> <p><b>The overall aims of the programme were:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To pilot an accredited course developed specifically for this cohort of learners. The course will be documented and evaluated to inform future training for migrants at FETAC level three dependent on the course participants and their level of English.</li> <li>• To provide learners with e-learning equipment, software and supporting materials (audio/visual aids) which would enhance their ability to communicate in every day situations e.g. engaging with employment/training services</li> <li>• To boost participants competence and confidence with regard to language proficiency</li> <li>• To support the work of various agencies with an employment and training brief tasked with providing supports to migrants and enhance their interaction and communication with migrants as a target group which would result in successful interventions.</li> </ul>	<p>The profile of ethnic minorities (including migrant workers) presenting to Cultúr are in the main from the EU including nationalities such as Poland, Lithuanian, Hungary Latvia and Romania with African communities and non EEA workers beginning to make links with the projects different initiatives. The gender breakdown is mixed between male and female and the age profile ranges from early twenties to sixty with the median age in the mid thirties.</p> <p>This target group for this course were actively seeking opportunities to develop their English language skills to a functional level that would allow them to participate with the training and employment services.</p> <p>The target group were recruited in a number of ways e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As clients of social welfare through the Jobs Facilitators for Co. Meath</li> <li>• English language referrals from Meath VEC to Cultúr</li> <li>• Through contact with Cultúr directly (by coming to our offices for information/advice and seeking English language classes)</li> <li>• Referrals from the local FAS office in Navan</li> </ul> <p>The initial course catered for ten people and due to the level of demand, Meath VEC ran two additional courses which catered for another twenty participants. All of the courses are due to finish at the end of October.</p> <p>The net benefit of the course to the participants and its impact will be communicated back via the evaluation, once it is completed. The future potential of replicating the course will be discussed with a range of agencies concerned with activation in Co. Meath. These include: Meath Co. council and its attendant economic forum, the County Development Board, FAS, the trade unions, employers groups and Meath area based partnership.</p> <p><b>Future Developments</b>            It is evident that at a local and national level a range of supports need to be put in place ensure that ethnic minorities are in a position to be able to access English language initiatives which can support labour market activation measures and participation.</p> <p>The provision of funding and the co-ordination of this process should be placed with the appropriate agencies. This work could be supported by community development organisations like Cultúr working with ethnic minorities at a local level.</p>

## NEWS BITES

### Polish Saturday School

Cultúr has organised a Polish educational, social and cultural Saturday school for young Polish children over the past number of years. The classes will take place in Cultúr offices and are facilitated by Cultúr project officer and volunteers. Registration took place in early October and the school will run from October to May 2010. The school receives a small donation from the Polish Embassy in Ireland to support its work and there are a number of similar schools around the country. The curriculum of the school includes language classes, arts, music and cultural activities.

### English Classes Recommence

Cultúr has co-ordinated conversational English classes for non English speakers at beginners, elementary and intermediate level for the past five years. This year we have begun to semesterise our classes with the autumn classes having begun at the end of September following an enrolment process. Currently classes are being rolled out in Navan, Trim and Kells. All classes are now full; however Cultúr will operate a waiting list for those interested in accessing classes in January 2010. We hope to be in a position to roll out classes in new locations at that stage.

*For further information on the above initiatives, contact the office of Cultúr.*

### Cultúr Drop in Service

Cultúr operate a drop in information and support service as part of our work with ethnic minorities living in Co. Meath. The purpose of the drop in service is to provide ethnic minorities with information and advice on immigration related issues with translation supports (where available). The drop in centre is open on the following days and times:

**Monday 2-5**

**Tuesday 2-4**

**Wednesday 10-1**

Currently, we have translation available in Polish, Lithuanian and Russian for non English speakers at the drop in. We have recently recruited additional information and support volunteers to support our drop in work and are currently training new volunteers in the provision of immigrant related information. One of our new volunteers will focus on providing specific supports to non EEA workers. We welcome all ethnic minorities to access our information and support service in our drop in centre.

## *Jargon Buster*

### **The Irish Naturalisation & Immigration Service (INIS)**

was established in 2005 in order to provide a 'one stop shop' in relation to asylum, immigration, citizenship and visas. The INIS is responsible for administering the administrative functions of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform in relation to asylum, immigration (including Visas) and citizenship matters.

**Non EEA workers:** A non EEA worker is someone who comes from outside the European Economic Area which includes the EU, Norway, Lichtenstein, Iceland and Switzerland.

## **Ethnic Minorities Forum for Co. Meath**

Cultúr is in the process of organising a series of information meetings in November with ethnic minorities. These meetings will be posted on our website; we will also disseminate the information through a range of organisations working with ethnic minorities, our own database and through our drop in centre and our English classes. The purpose of the information meetings is to explore the development of a forum for ethnic minorities living in Co. Meath.

This group would seek to:

- Create a space to support ethnic minorities in identifying their concerns/issues, identifying the ways in which to pursue these issues collectively
- Act as a forum for discussion and awareness raising on the issues and needs of migrants
- Support and build the capacity of migrants to participate and represent themselves on policy fora
- Foster leadership and self determination by ethnic minorities in the forum in managing and setting the agenda of the forum
- Create opportunities for ethnic minorities to shape and influence the work of Cultúr and the way we respond and address the issues affecting ethnic minorities.

Cultúr will begin to develop the forum by organising a number of information meetings focusing on topics and themes that are relevant to ethnic minorities. The focus of the initial meetings will be on the issue of unemployment and the fall out from this. Cultúr will be linking with other agencies in hosting these workshops.

### **Immigration Updates for non EEA workers**

#### *Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service raise costs for Long Term Residency Fees*

Long Term Residency is an administrative scheme operated by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform since 2004. It enables those legally resident in the state on the basis of a work permit, authorisation or work visa conditions to apply for long term residency for five years and allows them to engage in work without the need for a work permit and registration with the garda national immigration bureau (GNIB). On expiry of the LTR permission, the person can then apply for renewal of their LTR. The fees for the LTR have increased to €500 as of September '09, it is valid for five years, however no fee will apply for subsequent renewals other than the GNIB registration fee.

#### *New regulations announced by INIS and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment*

If a person has been legally resident in Ireland for over five years with a valid work permit, they need to go to their local immigration office so that their status can be changed from a Stamp 1 to a temporary Stamp 4 for one year. This change is operational as of 31<sup>st</sup> August 2009. Information on the provisions can be found on [www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/New](http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/New) Provisions for Non-EEA workers or alternatively information can be accessed from Cultúr.