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## **EU Week Against Racism-The inaugural recognition of this important initiative in Co. Meath**

On the week of 21<sup>st</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> March this year a range of events took place to coincide and mark the week in the county. The overall aim of the week was to highlight the reality of racism and the role all of us living in Co. Meath can play in addressing it.

The European Week Against Racism is celebrated every year across Europe (including Ireland) and centres on the International Day Against Racism with events during the week and focusing on people coming together to show their opposition to racism and celebrate the diversity of Europe.

A working group formed from members of the Meath Intercultural Network co-ordinated the week's events and individual events were managed by a wide range of organisations. The week itself was funded directly by Meath County Council, Meath Partnership, Navan CDP and Cultúr, with other organisations providing staff time, venues and other supports to ensure the week was a success.

The events for the week were co-ordinated and delivered in conjunction with a range of partners including the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, Navan CDP, the Irish Network Against Racism, the Equality Authority under the EU Progress Initiative, the Africa Caribbean Forum, the African Women's Development Initiative, Peoples Resource Centre Kells, Meath Partnership, REHAB Care and the Kite project in conjunction with Navan Travellers Workshop, Meath Youth Federation, No Name Club Kells, Brownies Kells undertaken and Girl Guides Navan.

These contributions made the week the success that it was and a summary of the key events that took place highlight the diversity of initiatives that were:

**Launch Event:** incorporating European Network Against Racism (ENAR) *'State of the Nation' Report* – state of racism in Ireland as an EU member state.

**The Africa Caribbean Forum** launched the **THEME:** **"ONE TOWN/ ONE COUNTY/ONE PEOPLE"**

**Kite Project –Visual Arts Project in conjunction with Mark Smyth artist in residence REHAB Care on The Hill of Tara** The Kite Project saw young people making kites that display anti racism message which seek to build solidarity within and among communities in Co. Meath.

Navan Community Development Project Ltd project all 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> class primary children to put their ideas of the cultures they meet every day and put it into a picture called **'My Multicultural World' and Poetry Competition-** Navan CDP project in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class to put together a poem entitled **'My Multicultural World'**

**Tools for Social Change-A workshop on developing Community Work approaches with Migrant workers and their families hosted by Migrant Rights Centre, Ireland (MRCI), Cultúr and the Peoples Resource Centre Kells**

**Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) Seminar in conjunction with Cultúr** on different forms of racism and how we – as organisations – in Meath can address and monitor racism

**School Workshop** on Bullying as a form of racism, hosted by **African Women Development Initiative in St. Oliver's Plunkett Primary School Navan**



L-R Launch of EWAR Susuana Komolofe Africa Carribean Forum with members of the working group for the EU Week Against Racism- Rachael Brennan Meath County Council, Yemi Adenuga African Womens Development Initiative and Lorraine Flynn Meath County Council-photo Marta Treziak

## **Migrants Workers Rights to Unionise not being recognised in Co. Meath Meat Factory-article by Mark Lohan Meat Processing Sector Organiser UNITE**

### **Migrant Workers Rights to unionise not being recognised in Meath Factory**

Early in 2010 Unite and SIPTU worked together to organise workers in Irish meat factories. One of the first companies we looked at was Dunbia Foods; a Tyrone based operation with 4 locations around the country. Tyrone and Antrim recognise Unite as the trade union for workers in these plants and Westmeath has SIPTU. Slane is the only Dunbia plant in Ireland that has not got a right to a recognised trade union.

In the beginning of our campaign, Unite began speaking with workers and quickly found out that they wanted change. The majority of the workforce now attends union meetings and the vast majority are union members. Unite is an Organising union with a focus of building sustainable organisation rather than a recruitment process.

Alongside Dunbia Slane workers we have been able to form a union committee, this committee is representative of all work areas and all nationalities within the plant. This committee is the backbone to our organising campaign and continues to be the mechanism to win for workers on all issues within the day to day working life of our members.

Many problems were identified during our campaign including bullying, injuries at work and confusion over how their pay had been calculated for their pay slips.

Through the committee, actions involving all workers were agreed and driven forward by workers, these actions included petition's, collective grievances and demos.

There have been a number of successful results and with a strong organised workforce with a new confidence; Unite proceeded to file for formal recognition with the Labour Court. This was granted in January of 2011.

The company has ignored the workers and the union since losing the decision in the Labour Court and Slane workers do not understand why they have no recognised union, no mechanism for collective bargaining and certainly do not understand why they are discriminated against like this.

The majority of Dunbia employees at the Slane plant are from Brazil and eastern European countries. They have helped make Dunbia a stronger more profitable company.

Meath is their home now and they continue to work hard for themselves and their families. They work in most cases for minimum wage, and their desire to organise themselves into the union comes from wanting to just be treated as equals. We will continue to fight for equality for the Meath workers.

### **Polish School to become an independent entity**

#### **Positive Action Initiatives**

A taskforce of trade union, political, religious and community leaders is seeking a meeting with Dunbia owners to resolve this problem. *Postscript-Cultúr* attended a recent rally of workers in Navan and has offered our support to UNITE, SIPTU and the workers in the quest for union recognition. We co-signed a letter of offer to meet with Dunbia Foods to seek a mediated agreement to this issue but to date this offer has not been taken up by Dunbia.



**Photo: Joe Higgins TD speaking with Brazilian workers and Peadar Tobin TD speaking on the platform in April at Navan Rally for Union recognition taken by Sinead Smith**

### **Polish School to become Independent Entity**

The school year 2010/2011 for the Polish Saturday School had come to the end. On 4<sup>th</sup> June 2011 the school celebrated this occasion - a ceremony of the award of the certificates of attendance took place in the CYMS Hall. Children and their parents also celebrated Polish Mother's Day (which falls on 26th May) and Father's Day (23<sup>rd</sup> June) jointly – the pupils prepared a short performance for their parents and the small handmade souvenirs. This year around thirty five students have attended the Polish Saturday classes. Enrolment for the next school year has commenced. Cultúr has supported the school over the past four years through its provision of staff resources which included management of the school, its policies, volunteers and administration of same. Given our own increasing work load and new strategic plan we are now in the process of supporting the school to become an independent entity managed by a committee made up of parents, volunteers and other relevant representatives. Cultúr will no longer have responsibility for the school but will continue to highlight its work. We wish all those associated with the school the best of luck in the future.



## **Update on the MIME Project (Migrants Integrating in Meath Equally) Project**

**What is the MIME Project?** Cultúr has been aware that only 16% of the people who access our drop in centre were from outside of the European Union and we responded to this issue by carrying out a baseline community profile to assess the issues impacting this target group which fed into the development of a funding proposal under the European Integration Fund under the auspices of the European Commission and is administered by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform through Pobal.

From March 2011 to August 2012, we have received funds to deliver the MIME Project and we are making a concerted effort to reach out to this community, to identify their needs using a community work approach providing support, training, information and building leadership among migrants from outside the EU supporting their social inclusion in the county.

**Who are the Project Partners?** The project will include a training programme which will be delivered by the main project partner Meath VEC in four parts of the county. The project is also co-funded by the Department of Social Protection Co. Meath, Meath County Council and Meath Partnership over the lifetime of the project.

**What is the aim of the project?** The project aims to promote the integration of Third Country Nationals resident in Co. Meath, and in particular those who are at risk of poverty, discrimination and social exclusion.

**Progress of the project to date:** To date the pre development stage of the project is underway and we have been in contact with over 125 migrants from outside of the EU. Other work undertaken by the project includes

- An educational needs survey is being carried out. Based on the findings of this survey a targeted training and induction programme (STEP) will be designed and delivered by County Meath VEC in September. Cultúr will feed into the design of the programme and recruitment of participants.
- The STEP training will be an 80 hour modular part time programme. This training programme will be delivered in the 4 centers of Trim, Navan, Kells and Ashbourne. It will provide pathways to further education and training and labour market options.
- An information and referral service is now available for all migrants from outside of the EU through the project worker and will be linked

directly to our drop in centre work which provides information and advice to migrants in general.

- A number of focus groups have taken place to date with others scheduled throughout the month of June and the purpose of the focus groups is to inform the project about the needs of migrants from outside the EU and in turn will inform the development of a strategic plan for the lifetime of the project.
- The project worker has developed strong contacts with many schools, churches, ethnic led groups, agencies, trade unions, community organizations in the county and individual migrants themselves

### **Next steps for the MIME project**

Over the coming months the MIME project will develop a strategic plan based on the findings of the pre development work undertaken. Key action or thematic groups will be developed based on the needs identified in the strategic plan and members of these groups will be supported by the project to address and respond to their issues using a community work approach.

**Who do I contact about the project?** The project worker Theresa Martin can be contacted in Cultúr office on 046 9093120 or by email on [theresa@cultur.ie](mailto:theresa@cultur.ie), a web page on the project is on our website [www.cultur.ie](http://www.cultur.ie) and will be updated as new information and initiatives occur.



**Attendees at the launch of the EU Week Against Racism in Co. Meath-L to R: Susuana Komolofe and Victor Oduko Africa Caribbean Forum, Kay Kearns Navan CDP, Theresa Martin Cultúr, Sandra Okome HSE Health Promotion, Joanna Rozmyslovic Cultúr and Livingstone Thompson Africa Caribbean Forum-photo by Marta Treziak**

## Meath Migrants Forum

The Meath Migrants Forum has been in development since September 2010 and a number of core working group meetings have taken place since that time with migrants who are actively involved in community activism in general or specifically with their own community as volunteers.

The group met in October and again in February to review what migrant forum structures existed in other areas, work that was happening at a national level and planning what potential topics or thematic areas could be undertaken by the Forum. Planning also took place regarding how to advertise and draw attention to the work of the forum and with this in mind, two events were planned.

In April and June 2011 two focused open meetings took place where current burning issues could be discussed in a forum where migrants themselves could develop ideas and their analysis in order to take action relating to their collective experiences living in Ireland.

The first meeting in April reviewed the Habitual Residence Condition and its impact on migrants and an input was provided by FLAC (Free Legal Advice Centres) on this topic. In June, again based on the issues migrants has raised the topic of Education and Training options for migrants was presented by Michelle Magnier, the Adult Guidance Centre in Meath VEC and a discussion followed her input to explore the specific issues and experiences of those attending the meeting.

Following on from this a review of the initial open meetings will take place to follow up on potential actions that can be taken forward from the two meetings that.

## Update on the REACH Project-Realising Equality, Achieving Change Holistically-an Education and Training Programme for Migrant Women

The REACH Project is funded under the auspices of the European Social Fund is administered by the Gender Equality Unit in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and administered through Pobal.

The project aims to provide targeted supports to a number of Migrant women who are currently seeking to access the labour market in order to provide them with the knowledge and skills to access further education, training supports and employment in the following areas:

- English Language Skills
- Career Pathways Mapping and Mentoring
- Job skills Preparation

The project provides this set of interlinked education and training courses which are both accredited and non-accredited for Migrant Women living in Co. Meath. The programme covered a number of urban areas in Co. Meath: Navan, Kells in Year 1 where 78 migrant women attended programmes.

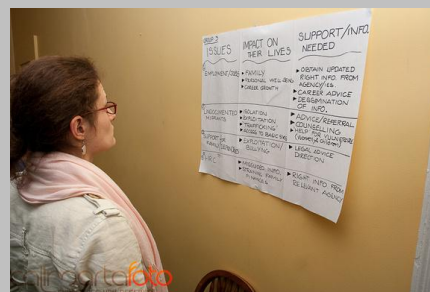
In year 2 of the project which begins in early July the project will be reaching out to deliver training in Trim and Ashbourne. In total the project will target 160 migrant women in Co. Meath over a two-year period. If you are interested in participating in this programme or finding out more information please contact project officer Joanna Rozmyslovic who is managing the project at our office or by email on [joanna@cultur.ie](mailto:joanna@cultur.ie)



The last Failte Isteach English class before the summer took place on Thursday, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011. Classes will resume in mid September in Navan. Cultúr ran classes from September 2010 to June 2011 and financial support to deliver the classes which including resource for premises, teas and coffees were provided by Meath Partnership. Cultúr would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge this support which made it possible for 30 to 40 students to attend each week supported by ten volunteer tutors. We would like to thank tutors and students who facilitated and attended the classes each week. Special thanks go to Sergei Khamen the volunteer co-ordinator who organised the centre each week.

No classes will take place in July or August and a review of the programme will be undertaken over the summer period. If you are interested in participating in classes or would like further information please contact Joanna Rozmyslovic project officer in the offices of Cultúr or by email on [joanna@cultur.ie](mailto:joanna@cultur.ie)

**Meath Migrants Forum-continued** that have taken place to date. Over the coming months a number of meetings on specific topics will be organised by Cultúr and the core working group. If you are interested in the work of the Forum or in attending its meetings, contact the interim project manager Joe Tighe on [joe@cultur.ie](mailto:joe@cultur.ie) or alternatively by phone at the contact details on page 1 of the e-bulletin.



**Meath Migrants Forum meeting Photo by Marta Treziak**

**FETAC level 6 English for Work and Academic Purposes** Cultúr would like to congratulate the seventeen graduates of the programme who were presented with their certificates on July 5<sup>th</sup> by the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown. This project was a joint initiative between Cultúr, RAPID Navan and ITB. We wish them every success in the future.