



Migrant Rights Centre Ireland - Pathways to Work Submission

The Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) is a national organisation working to promote the rights of migrant workers and their families living in situations of vulnerability throughout Ireland. In 2018 MRCI provided information and support on 1949 cases to people from 111 different countries. Of this, 34% were undocumented, 1 in 12 worked in care and domestic work and 1 in 12 in restaurants. Other sectors included retail, hospitality and fisheries.

Introduction

When considering pathways to work, it is essential that consideration is given to new and emerging evidence and that action is taken to address these concerns. ERSI 2018 research shows that ethnicity and nationality impact on access to and progression in the labour market. This forms the basis for our submission.

As of May, 2019, Ireland had reached full employment (Lucey, 2019) with an unemployment rate of 4.4%. Sectors such as ICT, advanced manufacturing, biopharmaceuticals, science and chemical analysis and health have faced skills shortages since the recession (McGrath in McGuire (2018); McGuire (2018)).

Of all migrants, despite being only 1.4% of the population, Africans have the lowest rates of labour market access (45% in 2018 compared to 66% for Irish people and 89% for Western Europeans) (McGinnity, et al. 2018).

While Eastern Europeans do not have the same predicament with labour market access, they are much less likely to hold a managerial or professional job (McGinnity et al. 2018).

It is the experience of MRCI that it can take years for migrants in low-paid work, such as care, to show progression and career mobility within and across sectors of work, even if they acquire Irish citizenship (Rojas Coppari, Forthcoming PhD Thesis, 2019). In many cases they never resume their careers from home countries.

Migrants are 50% more likely to be overqualified for the job they are doing (OECD, 2014) than their peer native workers.

Emerging Issues

The skills and experience of the migrant workforce are being underutilised, which is a waste of scarce yet available resources at a time when some employers are struggling to fill positions in certain sectors.

The recognition of qualifications is well documented as being a barrier to entry and progression in the workplace. Qualifications and experience acquired outside Ireland are generally not valued or appreciated in the same way as those of their Irish peers by employers.

There is often an over-emphasis on migrants having language barriers. It is important to note that migrants from English-speaking developing countries are equally affected by labour market exclusion. Migrants are three to five times less likely to hold managerial or decision-making positions (McGuire, 2018).

There are indications that there is recruitment bias that favours standard or culturally familiar candidates over those not (Rajan, 2019; (McGinnity, etal. 2018)), such as migrants.

Standard recruitment procedures can be a barrier to accessing potential employees of migrant backgrounds. Continuous rejection of candidates from the same group impacts not only on the particular group, but also on society long term.

A Solutions-Based Approach for the State

We believe that

1. Public employment services need to upskill on the rights and entitlements and persistent barriers for migrants to facilitate matching skills gaps with employer need.
2. Public employment services should work with NALA to ensure the use of clear, simple language throughout services and recruitment
3. The State should provide a renewed focus on in-work training with a specific focus on migrant workers to enhance existing experience to meet skills gaps.
4. The State should work with employer groups to develop tools to assist employers in their recruitment practices – including awareness of bias, conscious or unconscious, to provide equal opportunities during recruitment and ensure opportunities for long-term employment.
5. The State should find swift and practical ways to recognise qualifications of migrants.
6. The State should ensure migrant workers are included policies addressing transitions to LCE
7. As an employer, the State should closely examine its HR practices in all branches of the public services to ensure equal employment opportunities for all
8. The State should set a target for diversity within the civil service that reflect the diversity of Ireland's population.

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