

# New studies on access to higher education and recognition of overseas qualifications

“What about recognition of overseas qualifications? It’s not fair. It’s not fair. Something must be done. If we are given a chance to stay in the country – like me, now I’m not just a refugee, I’m an Irish citizen – I think the best guarantee to make sure that we are really part of Irish society is to secure a good education – which I already have. I’m sorry, nobody can prove to me that I don’t have a good education. The second thing is to give me employment in the professional area I was trained in. If I’m prevented from practising in my professional area, how can I be integrated? How can I be socially included?”

Those were the words of one overseas professional interviewed by a working group, including Prof Munck and Deirdre Coghlan from DCU, set up by Integrating Ireland to carry out a study entitled ‘International Students and Professionals in Ireland: An Analysis of Access to Higher Education and Recognition of Professional Qualifications’ (available at <http://www.dcu.ie/themes/international/>). The report of the working group addresses the issues of

access and recognition from a broad perspective and is mindful of the major changes currently underway in Irish society, such as migration and the economic boom. The picture painted in the report points to the urgent need for ‘joined up thinking’ on these issues that must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

A subsequent research project was commissioned by DCU’s Theme Leader’s Office aimed at identifying and examining the barriers to access to further and higher education experienced by nationals of non-EU or EEA countries resident in Ireland. This work was carried out for Pobal Ltd (previously Area Development Management), a not-for-profit company established to promote social inclusion, reconciliation and equality, and to counter disadvantage through local social and economic development. Both projects were carried out by Visiting Research Associate Rosemary Warner with Deirdre Coghlan as Project Manager.

– *Ronnie Munck*

## European Intercultural Workplace (EIW) Project

Foreign nationals now officially account for 8 per cent of the Irish workforce. To meet the demands of the growing Irish labour market approximately 50,000 foreign workers will need to be recruited annually for the foreseeable future. Within this context, DCU is

promoting and leading the European Intercultural Workplace (EIW) Project (2004–7), funded by the EU Leonardo da Vinci Programme II.

This pioneering international research project explores the implications of cultural diversity at work. It highlights key issues for



Aileen Pearson Evans

managers, employees and customers from host and foreign cultures in public, private and education sectors. The broad range of experience represented within the 10-country partnership – spanning countries with a long history of immigration (Sweden, Norway, Finland, UK and Germany) and others relatively new to the experience (Ireland, Poland, Bulgaria, Italy and Greece) – should facilitate the sharing of expertise and the development of informed policies and strategies for managing cultural diversity.

The EIW project will produce national reports outlining the current situation in each partner country; trans-national sector-specific manuals to aid worker mobility within sectors throughout Europe; a European database of relevant organisations/courses information on the intercultural workplace; and training materials for the intercultural workplace in print, video, DVD and multilingual (all partner languages) format.

On completion of this three-year project in 2007, DCU in

conjunction with three European partner universities plans to introduce an accredited Diploma in the European Intercultural Workplace. In doing so it will play a part in furthering the overall aim of the EU to develop the world's most qualified workforce by 2010.

Currently the partnership is completing the national reports, which will be available on the project website in autumn 2006 ([www.eiworkplace.net](http://www.eiworkplace.net)).

– *Aileen Pearson Evans,*  
*SALIS*

# DCU / Fáilte Ireland Cultural Diversity Project

A Fáilte Ireland Report in 2005 revealed that the Irish tourism industry currently employs more than 25,000 international workers, making it the leading employer of overseas workers in Ireland. With the number of visitors set to increase significantly over the next six years, an additional 6,000 people will need to be employed annually in the hotel sector. It is likely that these posts will be filled mainly by international workers.

Diversity has many proven benefits: enhanced employee recruitment and retention, improved corporate image and reputation, greater innovation, improved decision-making process, and enhanced market opportunities. Even so, diversity can also give rise to conflict between workers due to lack of trust and cohesion, discrimination and stereotyping, etc. In order to benefit from diversity each organisation will have to make sure that diversity is managed effectively from the viewpoint of human resource management.

The DCU / Fáilte Ireland Cultural Diversity Project aims to analyse the career development patterns and prospects for migrant workers in the hotel industry

in terms of existing diversity management policies. It will therefore address the existing gap by including workplace interactions and social networks of employees because interpersonal relationships are critical determinants of what occurs in any organisation. The project will also gather further evidence on the training needs of the migrant workers in the hotel sector and especially the barriers encountered in accessing training and education.

The study will be carried out in a sample of hotels in Dublin, Killarney and Donegal. It will combine both qualitative and quantitative research methods: in-depth interviews with HR managers and also with migrant workers, social network analysis and secondary analysis of available performance data. By selecting employees from multi-ethnic backgrounds, it will enable a comparison between different patterns of social interaction in different ethnic groups. The research is being conducted by Gloria Macri, Research Associate in the Theme Leader's Office.

– *Ronnie Munck*