

Pres: Nicola Steele

To: Vincent Gribbin/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP
Subject: Migrant workers report - press release

Re: 14/06/04 03:32 PM

Vincent

As promised, please find attached a revised press release, based on the information provided on Friday.

I have highlighted a few queries that we have and would be very grateful if you could please fill in the gaps. I also wanted to highlight to you the issues that were briefly raised in the original press release, ie - racism and poor living and working conditions. These issues, if found to be of great significance in the report, will dominate the press focus in this story. The launch of the report and the numbers of migrant workers working here etc., will become secondary information.

With this in mind, I would ask you to please advise on any specific action that is being taken to combat the issues surrounding racism and poor living and working conditions. Do we have any lines to take on these, in the event of media questions. We would also advise that a submission is sent to the Minister, advising him of the issue and the lines to take. We need to say more than we are merely working with the Housing Executive to improve living conditions. I hope you agree with this. Please advise.

I would also be very grateful if you could please advise if the report will be available online - I have left a gap for the web address to be inserted.

Many thanks.

Best regards

NICOLA



Press release 1.doc

Press release

Re: Report from Institute for Conflict Research – 'Migrant workers in Northern Ireland'

Date: 14 June 2004

Report launched on 'Migrant workers in Northern Ireland'

A report entitled 'Migrant workers in Northern Ireland' was launched today by the Institute for Conflict Research. It estimates that there are X NUMBER of migrant workers here.

The report, commissioned by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, provides an overview of the current levels of migrant workers in Northern Ireland and the issues affecting them.

Neil Jarman, Acting Director of the Institute for Conflict Research said: "The report is a source of information on the current situation surrounding migrants working here in Northern Ireland. We looked particularly at their numbers, location, type of employment, form of recruitment and experience of living in Northern Ireland.

"Although it is difficult to measure accurately, the number of migrant workers currently working here, the research suggests there is a minimum of 6,000 and a maximum of 26,000 (WHY IS THERE SUCH A DIFFERENCE IN MIN AND MAX?? CAN WE USE ONE FIGURE?). They come from a wide range of countries, with the largest proportion from the Philippines, India, Poland, Ukraine, USA and China. The Portuguese are the largest European group living here.

"The input and contribution of migrant workers to the Northern Ireland workplace is growing ever more necessary to help fill the gaps in our labour market. The evidence from this research suggests that skilled migrant workers are filling significant gaps in the health service, while unskilled workers are balancing labour in the food processing and agricultural sectors."

Employment needs mean that migrant workers are widely distributed across Northern Ireland. While there is a significant Portuguese-speaking community working in (WHICH SECTOR – FOOD PROCESSING?) in Dungannon and Portadown, increased migrants (FROM WHERE) are being employed by the food-processing factories in Ballymena and Coleraine. From Belfast to Fermanagh, Health Care Trusts are employing staff mainly from (WHERE – PHILIPPINES?), while farms, stretching from Newtownards to the border, employ workers from (WHERE).

Racism, lack of information on such matters as immigrant rights and responsibilities, as well as poor working and living conditions, are some of the issues facing migrant workers that are highlighted in the report.

Neil Jarman said however, that such matters are being addressed:

"Government departments are in the process of developing strategies to deal with the issues facing migrant workers. They are working alongside statutory bodies such as the Housing Executive and Social Services to ensure assistance programmes are developed and matters such as translating and interpreting are put in place.

"Locally, Trade Unions and Citizens' Advice Bureaux are also working to meet the needs and to resolve issues, facing migrant workers on a daily basis.

"In order to provide improved information on the rights and responsibilities of migrants arriving in Northern Ireland, there is a need to identify and develop good practice and to determine a strategy for future action, involving statutory agencies, the Government, employers and community and voluntary organisations."

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- Research for the compilation of the report involved a review of government statistical data, a survey of 176 migrant workers and interviews with a range of service provider organisations and employers. This was carried out between April and December 2003.
- An advisory group was established. This included, amongst others, the Citizens' Advice Bureau, ICTU, Belfast Law Centre, NIHE, NICEM, the Equality Commission. The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister acted as a steering group for the research.
- The research examined the following areas –
Demography
Employment
Harassment
Housing and Public Services
Information and support
- A copy of the report is available online at (ADDRESS)