

# information booklet on **access** to **employment** and **education** for migrants

May 2010

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9B Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1, Ireland. t: 01 814 8582 e: [info@akidwa.ie](mailto:info@akidwa.ie) w: [www.akidwa.ie](http://www.akidwa.ie)  
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Design by Dara Ní Bheacháin (086 3112260)

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# About AKIDWA: background and context for work

AkiDwa (Akina Dada wa Africa, Swahili for 'sisterhood') is the only ethnic minority-led national network of African and migrant women living in Ireland. The non-governmental organisation with charitable status was established in August 2001 by a group of African women, in order to address the needs of an expanding population of African and other migrant women in Ireland.

The organisation is a recognised authority on migrant women's issues and a representative body for all migrant women, irrespective of their national or ethnic backgrounds, culture, religious beliefs, and socio-economic or legal status. AkiDwa's advocacy approach is based on strengthening migrant women's voices by applying a gender and cultural perspective to policies and practices, and by promoting the equality of migrant women in Irish society.

AkiDwa has always focused on employment as a key issue for achieving equality for migrant women in Ireland. To achieve better outcomes for themselves, their families and their communities, migrant women need better access to the labour market. AkiDwa recognised this in 2006, when it was a partner of Business in the Community's EPIC programme. In 2007 the organisation published a research report entitled *Black African Women in the Irish Labour Market*, which found that many migrant women experience barriers to accessing the labour market and face discrimination at work. AkiDwa's three-year strategic plan, 2008-2011, also identified employment as a key area of work for the organisation.

## PLEASE NOTE

Government departments are referred to throughout this booklet. In May 2010 many government departments' names were changed. In the booklet the following new department names will be used;

### New

Department of Social Protection  
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation  
Department of Education and Skills  
Department of Justice and Law Reform

### Old

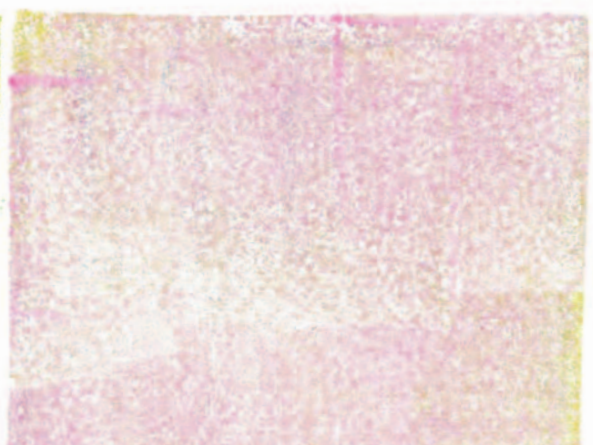
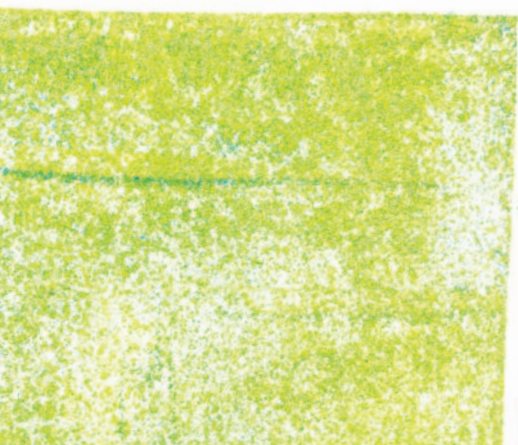
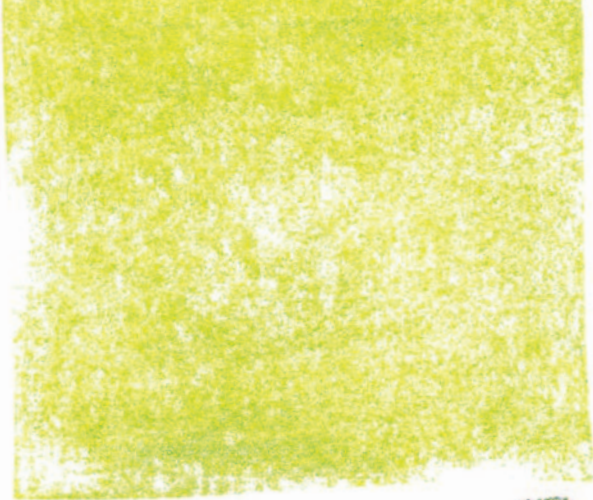
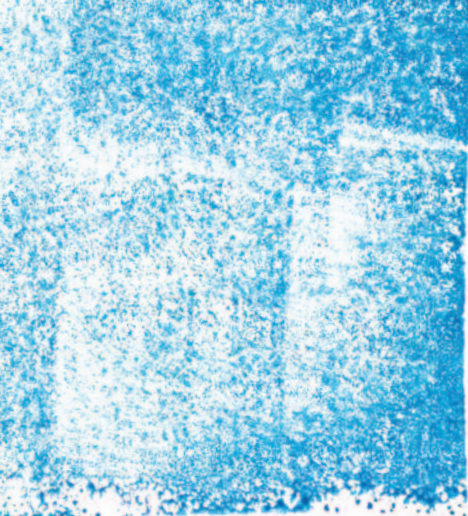
Department of Social and Family Affairs  
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment  
Department of Education and Science  
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform

# Table of contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>01</b>
<b>HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET</b>	<b>03</b>
<b>1. ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>04</b>
1.1 EU, EEA and Swiss Nationals	04
1.2 Non-EEA Nationals	04
1.3 Employment Permits	04
1.4 Domestic Workers	05
1.5 Personal Public Service Number (PPSN) and Tax Credits	06
1.6 Garda Vetting	06
<b>2. SUPPORTS FOR ACCESSING EMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>07</b>
2.1 Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS) – the National Training and Employment Authority	07
2.2 Local Employment Service (LES)	07
2.3 Employment for People from Immigrant Communities (EPIC)	07
2.3.1 Case Study on EPIC	08
2.4 Welfare to Work	08
2.4.1 Family Income Supplement (FIS)	08
2.4.2 One-Parent Family Payment (OPFP)	09
2.4.3 Part-Time Work and Unemployment Payments	09
2.4.4 Revenue Job Assist	09
2.4.5 Medical Card	09
2.4.6 Rent Supplement	09
2.4.7 Case Study on Welfare to Work: Lone Parent	10
2.5 Community Employment (CE)	11
2.6 Childcare	11

<b>3.</b>	<b>SELF-EMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1	Types of Self-Employment	12
3.2	Income Tax	12
3.3	Supports for Self-Employment	13
3.3.1	Jobs Facilitator: Department of Social Protection	13
3.3.2	Back to Work Enterprise Allowance	13
3.3.3	Short-Term Enterprise Allowance	14
3.3.4	Local Development Companies, e.g. Partnership Companies	14
3.3.5	County & City Enterprise Boards	14
3.3.6	First-Step Microfinance Ltd	15
3.4	Case Study on Self-Employment	15
<b>4.</b>	<b>VOLUNTEERING, WORK PLACEMENT AND INTERNSHIPS</b>	<b>16</b>
4.1	Volunteer Centres	16
4.2	FÁS Work Placement Programme	16
4.3	Internships	16
<b>5.</b>	<b>EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS</b>	<b>18</b>
5.1	Employment Equality Acts 1998-2008	18
5.2	Maternity Leave and Protection	18
5.3	Minimum Wage	19
5.4	Payment of Wages	19
5.5	Holidays	19
5.6	Organisation of Working Time	19
5.7	Terms of Employment	19
5.8	Unfair Dismissal	20
5.9	Redundancy	20
5.10	Rights Commissioner Service	20
5.11	Employment Appeals Tribunal	20
5.12	Trade Union Membership	20
5.13	Case Study on Employment Rights Redress	21
<b>6.</b>	<b>RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN QUALIFICATIONS IN IRELAND</b>	<b>23</b>
6.1	The National Framework of Qualifications	23
6.2	Qualifications Recognition	23
6.3	QualifaX – the National Learners’ Database	23
6.4	Regulated Professions	24

<b>7.</b>	<b>ACCESS TO FURTHER EDUCATION</b>	<b>25</b>
7.1	Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC)	25
7.2	Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS) – the National Training and Employment Authority	25
7.3	Vocational Education Committee (VEC)	25
7.4	Fastrack to Information Technology (FIT)	26
7.5	Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)	26
<b>8.</b>	<b>SUPPORTS FOR ACCESSING FURTHER EDUCATION</b>	<b>27</b>
8.1	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)	27
8.2	VEC Grant for Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) Courses	27
8.3	Student Support Bill 2008	27
<b>9.</b>	<b>ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION</b>	<b>28</b>
9.1	Universities	28
9.2	Institutes of Technology (IT)	28
9.3	Other Higher Education Institutions	28
9.4	Tuition Fees	29
9.5	Student Services Charge	29
<b>10.</b>	<b>SUPPORTS FOR ACCESSING HIGHER EDUCATION</b>	<b>30</b>
10.1	Free Fees Initiative	30
10.2	EU and Non-EU Fees	30
10.3	Higher Education Grants Scheme	31
10.4	VEC Grant	32
10.5	Postgraduate Degrees	33
10.6	Student Support Bill 2008	33
10.7	Back to Education Allowance	33
10.8	Student Assistance Fund	33
10.9	Bank of Ireland UCD Scholarship Scheme	34
10.10	Case study on access to higher education	34
	<b>APPENDIX A: 2010 SOCIAL WELFARE RATES</b>	<b>36</b>
	<b>USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS</b>	<b>37</b>



# Introduction

As the migrant women's network in Ireland, the organisation believes that the area of employment equality needs to be addressed urgently.

AkiDwA's members report frequent discrimination in recruitment practices, and they find it very difficult to gain access to jobs. The 2009 research study by the Economic and Social Research Institute and the Equality Authority, *Discrimination in Recruitment – Evidence from a Field Experiment*, which reported strong discrimination in Ireland regarding job applicants' ethnic origins, bears out these experiences.

As a response to the high levels of discrimination experienced in Ireland, AkiDwA wanted to pursue an innovative training programme for migrant women, which involved direct contact with employers to raise awareness about the barriers faced by migrant women, and to build links with these employers. Unfortunately, the Equality for Women Measure's funding stream was significantly cut in 2009, and AkiDwA was invited to apply for a much-reduced level of funding, with a maximum of six months' project time.

AkiDwA decided to use this opportunity to produce an informational booklet on employment and educational

opportunities for migrant women in Ireland. Its members often report that there can be a lot of confusion and a lack of migrant-specific information about access to these opportunities.

The project started by consulting individual AkiDwA members and affiliate migrant organisations about women's experiences of accessing the labour market in Ireland. Women reported unequal access to employment, with the main barriers being race discrimination, unaffordable childcare, an inability to get recognition for foreign work experience and qualifications, and unequal access to higher education. The issue of unequal access to higher education was reported most often. Coupled with this was a dearth of information about the financial supports available and to whom they were available.

As a result of the consultations, AkiDwA decided to include a large element on education in this booklet. Thus, there are sections on qualifications recognition, the National Framework of Qualifications, further and higher education, and the supports available to people who wish to access education in Ireland. It is clear from these sections that one category of long-term resident in Ireland is excluded from accessing higher education (unless they have access to significant private funds), and that is

the parents of Irish-citizen children. We feel that the exclusion of this category of migrant from all kinds of financial supports for accessing higher education is grossly unfair.

We hope that the availability of this migrant-specific informational resource will help migrant women to assess their options in a more complete way and gain better access to suitable and meaningful employment in Ireland.

# How to use this booklet

This booklet is designed for migrant women who are trying to access the labour market or educational opportunities in Ireland. It will be useful for migrants from non-European Economic Area (non-EEA) countries who have a **Stamp 4**.

**Non-EEA nationals with a Stamp 4 can seek and take up employment in any sector and for any employer. The following people are given a Stamp 4 upon registration with the GNIB:**

- > refugees (both 'programme' and Convention refugees);
- > those granted permission to remain based on being part of a family unit of a refugee;
- > those granted permission to remain based on parentage of an Irish-citizen child;
- > those granted permission to remain based on being part of a family unit, including marriage to an Irish or EU/EEA national;
- > those granted permission to remain based on being the cohabiting partner of an Irish or EU/EEA national;
- > those granted permission to remain based on humanitarian grounds;
- > those granted long-term residency;
- > those granted subsidiary protection.

This booklet covers information about the labour market, supports for people who are looking for work, self-employment and employment rights. It also looks at further and higher education and the supports available for people who are thinking of returning to education. Throughout the booklet there is a focus on a person's rights and entitlements, as well as the variety of options that are open to individuals.

# 1. Access to employment

## 1.1 EU, EEA AND SWISS NATIONALS

European Union (EU) nationals are entitled to work in Ireland. Romanian and Bulgarian nationals are entitled to travel freely to Ireland, but many must have an employment permit if they wish to work. Other Romanian and Bulgarian nationals are entitled to work without the need for an employment permit. Other nationals of the European Economic Area (EEA) and those of Switzerland do not require an employment permit to work in Ireland. For more information on the right to work in Ireland, and specifically Romanians' and Bulgarians' access to the labour market, please see [www.entemp.ie/labour/workpermits](http://www.entemp.ie/labour/workpermits).

## 1.2 NON-EEA NATIONALS

All non-EEA nationals except asylum seekers must be registered with the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB). Upon registration, they will receive a 'certificate of registration' card with a stamp number on it. The stamp number will indicate the person's access to the labour

market. Asylum seekers are not entitled to work in paid employment.

**Non-EEA nationals with a Stamp 4 can seek and take up employment in any sector and for any employer. The following people are given a Stamp 4 upon registration with the GNIB:**

- > refugees (both 'programme' and Convention refugees);
- > those granted permission to remain based on being part of a family unit of a refugee;
- > those granted permission to remain based on parentage of an Irish-citizen child;
- > those granted permission to remain based on being part of a family unit, including marriage to an Irish or EU/EEA national;
- > those granted permission to remain based on being the cohabiting partner of an Irish or EU/EEA national;
- > those granted permission to remain based on humanitarian grounds;
- > those granted long-term residency;
- > those granted subsidiary protection.

## 1.3 EMPLOYMENT PERMITS

Non-EEA nationals, except those with a Stamp 4, who wish

to work in Ireland must have an employment permit issued by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation.

### **There are two types of employment permits:**

A **work permit** allows an employee to work for a specified employer, and the employee can only move employment if they receive a new work permit. A work-permit holder may apply for long-term residency after 5 years of having a work permit. If granted, the person will be issued with a Stamp 4, thus allowing them to take up employment in any sector and for any employer.

A **green card** is issued to a highly skilled worker, and allows an employee to work for a specified employer in a specified employment sector. A green card is issued for 2 years, and after that, a person may apply to the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) for a Stamp 4, which will allow them to work without the need for an employment permit.

People with employment permits receive a 'certificate of registration' card with a Stamp 1 from the GNIB. For more

information on employment permits, please see [www.entemp.ie/labour/workpermits](http://www.entemp.ie/labour/workpermits).

## **1.4 DOMESTIC WORKERS**

A domestic worker is a person who works in someone's home. The type of work carried out may include childcare, housekeeping, cleaning and other caring responsibilities. Domestic workers can work part time or full time, and can live in or outside their employer's home. Many domestic workers are non-EEA migrant women.

Domestic workers have the same protection under employment law as other workers in Ireland. Their rights are outlined in the Labour Relations Commission's 'Code of Practice for Protecting Persons Employed in Other People's Homes'. It is very important for a domestic worker to get a written statement of employment (also known as a contract) before they start work, which outlines their duties, hours of work and rate of pay.

The trade union SIPTU has a domestic workers' support group, which gives support and advice to domestic workers and assists them with any employment issues.

The Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) has a domestic workers' action group, which brings domestic workers together to work towards better employment conditions in Ireland.

### **1.5 PERSONAL PUBLIC SERVICE NUMBER (PPSN) AND TAX CREDITS**

A PPSN is a unique number given to people in Ireland, which helps them to access public services. A person needs a PPSN before they start working. A person can check if they have been allocated a PPSN by contacting their local social welfare office. If a person has not been allocated a PPSN, the local social welfare office will advise as to how to get one.

Before a person starts work for the first time, they will have to apply to their local tax office for tax credits. The amount of tax that a person pays depends on their personal circumstances. To find your local tax office, please see [www.revenue.ie/en/contact](http://www.revenue.ie/en/contact).

### **1.6 GARDA VETTING**

If you would like to work with children or vulnerable adults, for example, as a childcare worker or care assistant, you will need to go through a procedure called Garda vetting.

This means that the Garda Central Vetting Unit is asked to do a check of a person's record, including any criminal prosecutions or convictions.

An individual cannot apply for Garda vetting in a personal capacity. It must be done through an organisation, for example, a potential employer or training provider. If a person is attending relevant training with Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS), then FÁS can apply for Garda vetting for them. Presently, it is not required to provide vetting from other countries, but some organisations may ask a person to provide foreign vetting, if possible.

If you wish to work as a security guard or in the security industry, you will need an employee licence issued by the Private Security Authority. In order to get this licence, you will need to go through the Garda vetting procedure, processed by the Private Security Authority. The Private Security Authority requires a non-Irish national, or an Irish national who has lived outside Ireland for more than 6 months, to obtain a foreign criminal record certificate from their previous country of residence/origin.

## 2. Supports for accessing employment

### 2.1 FORAS ÁISEANNA SAOTHAIR (FÁS) – THE NATIONAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT AUTHORITY

FÁS is the government's national training and employment authority. Its services include help with job-seeking, a database of available jobs, job clubs, delivery of training and apprenticeships, and the Work Placement Programme. FÁS's services, which are free, are open to all persons with a Stamp 4, and their self-service job-search facility is open to other migrant workers. If you are unemployed and receiving an unemployment payment, for example, Jobseeker's Benefit, for at least 3 months, you should register with FÁS. You can find out more about FÁS and your nearest FÁS office by looking at the website [www.fas.ie](http://www.fas.ie).

### 2.2 LOCAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE (LES)

The Local Employment Service (LES) operates in Ireland's most disadvantaged areas. It provides assistance and support to unemployed people living in these areas in their pursuit of employment and training.

The LES gives information and advice about jobs and training, and offers the services of a mediator, who can work on a one-to-one basis with jobseekers. The LES mediator works through a career plan with an individual, and offers them support in accessing employment schemes and educational options.

To find out if you live in an area that is covered by the Local Employment Service Network (LESN), you can ask in your local FÁS office, or please see [www.localemploymentservices.ie](http://www.localemploymentservices.ie)

### 2.3 EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE FROM IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES (EPIC)

EPIC is a pre-employment training programme for EU residents and non-EU residents with a Stamp 4 who are living in Dublin. The programme assists people in finding suitable employment, training or education. It is a 6-week programme that covers professional English for employment, IT training and life skills. The life-skills modules cover topics like employment rights, social welfare, housing, health and education. Participants are also linked to a training and employment officer for one-to-one advice and support in their pursuit of suitable employment or training opportunities.

### 2.3.1 CASE STUDY ON EPIC

Emma, who is from Nigeria, was looking for a job when a support group she attended told her about EPIC. She went to their offices and registered for their 6-week pre-employment training course. She found all elements of the course interesting and useful, especially EPIC's life-skills section. It included topics on housing, employment rights and social welfare, delivered by experienced professionals. Emma learnt a lot about her rights, and compared to other training that she had done, she found this part of the course really beneficial.

According to Emma, the best part of the EPIC programme is the one-to-one support from the training and employment officer. Emma was helped to locate suitable jobs for which to apply, and then had some sessions on interview preparation. After her interviews, she was able to have a debriefing session with the training and employment officer, and she found this really helpful in preparing for future interviews. Emma got a job as an agency care assistant, and most of her work is in a hospital.

Nine months after she finished the course, Emma still has

contact with EPIC's staff, and she finds this really helpful in her new search for a permanent job. Emma's advice to other migrants is to check out EPIC – as she says, 'They are good people, and they are ready to help.'

EPIC, 30/31 Lower O'Connell Street, Dublin 1; Tel. 01 874 3840; [www.bitc.ie/epic](http://www.bitc.ie/epic)

## 2.4 WELFARE TO WORK

If you are dependent on social welfare, you may face challenges in moving from welfare to work. There are some schemes that help make this difficult transition easier. Generally, in order to qualify for the schemes, you must be receiving particular payments for specific periods of time, as specified below. For 2010 welfare rates, please see **APPENDIX A: 2010 SOCIAL WELFARE RATES** at the end of this booklet.

### 2.4.1 FAMILY INCOME SUPPLEMENT (FIS)

Family Income Supplement (FIS) is a weekly cash payment made to low-income families at work. If you have at least one child and you are working as an employee for more than 19 hours per week, you may qualify. There are set income limits for each family size, and if

you earn under these limits, you can receive 60% of the difference between what you earn and the set limit. Information and application forms for FIS are available from your local social welfare office or from the website [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie).

#### **2.4.2 ONE-PARENT FAMILY PAYMENT (OPFP)**

If you are parenting alone and receiving the One-Parent Family Payment (OPFP), you can work part time and keep your full payment as long as your income does not go over a set limit. You can also keep a portion of your payment if you work full time and earn under a set limit.

#### **2.4.3 PART-TIME WORK AND UNEMPLOYMENT PAYMENTS**

You can also get an unemployment payment, for example, Jobseeker's Benefit/Allowance, if your hours of work are reduced or you work part time. You must be unemployed for a period of 3 out of 6 days, and you must continue to look for full-time work.

#### **2.4.4 REVENUE JOB ASSIST**

Revenue Job Assist is a scheme in which you receive extra tax credits if you have been unemployed for at least one

year and are returning to work. This means that you pay less tax when you re-enter the workforce. You also get to keep your medical card for a further 3 years. You must apply for this scheme at your local tax office.

#### **2.4.5 MEDICAL CARD**

If you have a medical card and have been unemployed for at least one year, you get to keep your card for a further 3 years if you get a full-time job.

#### **2.4.6 RENT SUPPLEMENT**

Usually, if you take a full-time job, you lose your Rent Supplement. You can keep some of your Rent Supplement if the job is less than 30 hours per week. If you are assessed as being eligible for the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) by your city or county council, you will pay differential rent, which is a set percentage of your income.

For more information on welfare-to-work options, please see the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE) publication *Working for Work*, or visit your local Citizens' Information Centre.

#### **2.4.7 CASE STUDY ON WELFARE TO WORK: LONE PARENT**

Omo had always worked full time outside the home before she came to Ireland, so it seemed right for her to look for work in Ireland, too. However, as a lone parent with four children, without any family supports here, she found it very difficult to combine work and family life on her own. Despite these difficulties, Omo found evening work as a sales assistant, and with the continued support of the One-Parent Family Payment (OPFP), she managed to make ends meet. Omo found out about her entitlements online, and when she needed any extra information, she contacted her local Citizens' Information Centre.

Returning to work gave Omo the stimulation and increased confidence that she wanted, and she found the experience to be beneficial for her self-esteem. She found that although she had less time with her children, it was quality time, and she made more of an effort to do interesting things with them. However, it was difficult for Omo to juggle everything on her own, and the childcare costs for her youngest child, combined with the increased

rent she had to pay, made things quite tight, financially.

Looking to further education as an option to improve her skills, Omo signed up for an information technology (IT) course in a Vocational Education Committee (VEC) college. As a Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) participant, she received financial assistance for her childcare costs, which helped a lot. Omo is hoping to continue to improve her education, and has applied for another course in September. She stresses that balancing work and family life when you are a lone parent is a major challenge, although it is easier when your children are older and in school. Omo says that it takes a lot of determination to succeed, but depending on an individual's needs and desires, progressing your career as a woman brings a lot of rewards.

For information on welfare-to-work options for lone parents, please visit your local Citizens' Information Centre or see [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie).

For information on VTOS courses, please contact your local VEC.

## 2.5 COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT (CE)

Community Employment (CE) is an employment and training scheme aimed at the long-term unemployed and other disadvantaged groups. Participants usually work 19.5 hours a week and avail of training. The idea is that CE assists long-term unemployed people to get back into the workplace, learn new skills and build up contacts. CE is funded by FÁS, and most jobs are in the community and voluntary, arts, tourism, health-care and education sectors. For more information, please contact your local FÁS office by looking at the website [www.fas.ie](http://www.fas.ie).

## 2.6 CHILDCARE

The availability of affordable childcare can be one of the biggest barriers to employment being faced by women and families in Ireland today. Most childcare providers are privately run, but there are some community crèches that have cheaper rates. You can contact your local childcare committee (through your city or county council) for a list of private and community childcare providers.

Financial support is available for preschool children attending childcare in the form of the Early Childhood Care and

Education Scheme. The scheme pays a subsidy to the childcare provider for every child aged between 3 years 3 months and 4 years 6 months in the September before the child starts primary school. This subsidy is then passed on to the parent, who pays a reduced rate to the childcare provider. The amount of reduction depends on the amount of hours and days that the child spends in the childcare facility.

## 3. Self-employment

All EEA nationals (including Romanian and Bulgarian nationals) and non-EEA nationals with a Stamp 4 are permitted to set up their own business in Ireland. Self-employment can be an attractive option for many people who wish to work for themselves and have a business idea. While this option allows a person to be their own boss and control their own hours of work, this type of employment is quite insecure. It may not provide a steady income, and the business may not ultimately succeed.

### 3.1 TYPES OF SELF-EMPLOYMENT

There are three different legal structures that a self-employed person can use for their business: sole trader, partnership and limited company. The type of structure that a person chooses depends on the business type, who is involved in the business and any potential risk factors.

The easiest way to set up a business is as a **sole trader**. A person is obliged to register as self-employed with the Revenue Commissioners, and if they wish to use a business name, to register this with the Companies Registration Office.

If a person is entering into self-employment with one or more

persons, then the structure is considered a **partnership**. This structure type should be drawn up by a solicitor.

If a person sets up a business as a **limited company**, then the company is a separate legal entity from the person, and any debts of the company can only be reclaimed from the company and not the individual. A company must be registered with the Companies Registration Office, and the company must submit audited accounts to this office on an annual basis.

### 3.2 INCOME TAX

A self-employed person must make their own tax return to the Revenue Commissioners on an annual basis under the self-assessment system. The closing date for a tax return is 31 October, and the tax due is for the preceding year. For example, the tax on income generated in the year 2009 will be due by 31 October 2010.

A person pays income tax on their net profit, and they are also obliged to pay the health levy and Pay-Related Social Insurance (PRSI) contributions. It is advisable to keep a record of all income and expenditure for

the year, as this will be essential when making a tax return. Many self-employed people use accountants to make their annual tax returns, depending on the complexity of their structure type.

### **3.3 SUPPORTS FOR SELF-EMPLOYMENT**

There are supports for people who are considering setting up their own business. These supports are available from local social welfare offices' Jobs Facilitators, local area partnerships, and County & City Enterprise Boards.

#### **3.3.1 JOBS FACILITATOR: DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION**

Most local social welfare offices have a Jobs Facilitator to assist unemployed people in availing of schemes that encourage self-employment, the return to education and training opportunities. Once a person is on an enterprise allowance, for example, Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, then they can receive financial assistance through the Jobs Facilitator.

The Jobs Facilitator can access the Technical Assistance and Training Fund to assist with start-up business costs, for example, advertising, website

design and training costs. The costs are paid directly to the provider of the service. In the case of printed advertising, for example, the payment is made directly to the printing company.

#### **3.3.2 BACK TO WORK ENTERPRISE ALLOWANCE**

The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance scheme encourages people who are receiving social welfare payments to become self-employed. If a person has been receiving Jobseeker's Allowance for 12 months and they have an approved business idea, then they can avail of the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance. It is a weekly payment paid for 2 years – 100% of a person's social welfare payment in the first year, and 75% in the second year – regardless of a person's income from self-employment.

In order to qualify for the payment, a person must get written approval of their business idea from either the Department of Social Protection's Jobs Facilitator or the enterprise officer of the local partnership company.

### **3.3.3 SHORT-TERM ENTERPRISE ALLOWANCE**

The Short-Term Enterprise Allowance was introduced in May 2009. It is designed for people who have recently become unemployed and wish to set up their own business. It is a weekly payment paid to those who have an approved business idea. There is no qualifying period, which means that as long as a person has an entitlement to Jobseeker's Benefit and their business is approved by either the Department of Social Protection's Jobs Facilitator or the enterprise officer of the local partnership company, then they can avail of the scheme. The payment lasts for as long as the Jobseeker's Benefit would have lasted for a recipient – that is, either 9 or 12 months, depending on a person's previous Pay-Related Social Insurance (PRSI) contributions.

### **3.3.4 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT COMPANIES, E.G. PARTNERSHIP COMPANIES**

The role of the local development companies is to encourage local and community development in areas affected by social exclusion. Many partnership companies have an enterprise officer who can give support and advice to

unemployed people who wish to set up their own business. Information on business plans, social welfare supports, bookkeeping and business promotion is available. Partnership companies are funded by Pobal, a not-for-profit company that manages programmes on behalf of the Irish government and the EU. For a list of development companies, please see [www.pobal.ie](http://www.pobal.ie).

### **3.3.5 COUNTY & CITY ENTERPRISE BOARDS**

County & City Enterprise Boards offer support and advice to small start-up businesses in the community. The Enterprise Boards give advice and mentoring to new entrepreneurs, and they offer training on issues such as taxation, marketing and innovation. Financial assistance is also available to new businesses, however, the criteria are strict and include the condition that the business employs a minimum of 10 people. To find your local Enterprise Board, please see [www.enterpriseboards.ie](http://www.enterpriseboards.ie).

### 3.3.6 FIRST-STEP MICROFINANCE LTD

First-Step Ltd is a not-for-profit organisation that provides loans of €5,000-€25,000 to new businesses experiencing difficulty in getting credit from other sources. First-Step will consider whether or not a business idea has the potential to create jobs and if the business owner can show an ability to repay the loan. For more information, please see the website [www.first-step.ie](http://www.first-step.ie).

### 3.4 CASE STUDY ON SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Busola set up her business in 2003, and she now runs a successful catering company called The Separate Chef. Busola was always interested in cooking, and when she lost her job in a factory, she decided to set up her own business doing private-party catering. She was motivated by the idea of being her own boss, and as a friend put it, 'If you can turn your hobby into a job, you will do well.'

Busola found lots of information on the Internet about her ideas for a new business, and when she saw an advert for a 'start your own business' training course being offered by Kildare County Enterprise Board, she jumped at the chance. The 10-week

evening course was very useful, and gave her an introduction to marketing, sales, tax, finance and business planning. Following the course, Busola completed an intensive 16-week accredited culinary skills course with Fáilte Ireland, which she found invaluable.

Busola finds that the best thing about having your own business is the flexibility it offers, in that she can manage her own time. This means that she can get a good balance between looking after her children and earning a living. As Busola said, 'It has given me time to be there for my kids.' Although she finds it hard going sometimes, particularly as the business can be a large burden on one person, she would not change her career choice now.

There are 35 County & City Enterprise Boards in Ireland. You can find your nearest one on [www.enterpriseboards.ie](http://www.enterpriseboards.ie).

Fáilte Ireland offers courses in culinary skills, bar skills, hospitality management and other skills associated with the tourism industry. For more information, contact Fáilte Ireland on 1850 256 256 or please see the website [www.picktourism.ie](http://www.picktourism.ie).

# 4. Volunteering, work placement and internships

There are many different types of volunteering and many different reasons why people want to volunteer. A person may want to volunteer because they want to give something back to society, meet new people or gain some work experience. The types of volunteering that can improve a person's CV include office administration work, youth work, community work and adult education.

## 4.1 VOLUNTEER CENTRES

Volunteer centres match people who want to volunteer with organisations that are looking for volunteers, and they offer information and support. There are over 20 volunteer centres in Ireland that assist people who wish to volunteer. For more information, you can contact Volunteer Centres Ireland on 01 799 4519, or please see the website [www.volunteer.ie](http://www.volunteer.ie).

## 4.2 FÁS WORK PLACEMENT PROGRAMME

If a person has been unable to find paid work, the Work Placement Programme offers an alternative to unemployment. If you secure a placement, you

have an opportunity to keep your skills fresh in a real work environment so that you will be better positioned when applying for your next paid job. If you are a recent graduate, you can gain valuable work experience, which you can then add to your CV.

Anyone who is unemployed is eligible to apply for the Work Placement Programme. If you are receiving a social welfare payment, you can keep it for the duration of the programme.

If you are a graduate with a Level 7 qualification, you can apply for both the graduate placements (WPP1) and the non-graduate placements (WPP2). Otherwise, you can apply for all non-graduate placements (WPP2).

To apply for placements, you must be registered with FÁS and record your 'expression of interest' in the Work Placement Programme. For more information, please contact your local FÁS office by looking at the website [www.fas.ie](http://www.fas.ie).

## 4.3 INTERNSHIPS

An internship will be offered by an organisation or a company for a set period of time with a set job description. The work is

unpaid, however, interns may receive expenses, like travel and lunch allowances. An internship gives a person the opportunity to gain relevant work experience in their chosen field.

Many organisations in the community and voluntary sector offer internships to people, and these are often advertised on the community exchange website [www.activelink.ie](http://www.activelink.ie). The Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) runs a graduate internship scheme, GradLink, linking companies looking for interns with graduates wishing to do an internship. For more information on IBEC GradLink, please see the website [www.ibec.ie](http://www.ibec.ie).

## 5. Employment rights

There is a lot of legislation covering employment rights in Ireland. The most important thing to remember is that these rights are for everyone, regardless of their nationality or immigration status.

General information about employment rights is available from the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA). They provide information to employees and employers about rights and responsibilities. For more information, please contact NERA by phone on 1890 80 80 90 or see the website [www.employmentrights.ie](http://www.employmentrights.ie).

### 5.1 EMPLOYMENT EQUALITY ACTS 1998-2008

The law in Ireland prohibits discrimination in the area of employment on nine grounds: race (which includes nationality, ethnicity and skin colour), religion, gender, family status, marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation and membership of the Travelling community. The Equality Authority was set up as an independent statutory agency to promote equality and to end discrimination in Ireland. A separate independent body, the Equality Tribunal, was set up to investigate or mediate complaints of discrimination.

If a person feels that they have been discriminated against in the area of employment, they can make a complaint to the Equality Tribunal, which will investigate it and make a legally binding recommendation. If the Equality Tribunal finds in favour of the employee, that person would usually receive financial compensation.

To find out more about equality legislation in Ireland, please see the Equality Authority's website, [www.equality.ie](http://www.equality.ie).

### 5.2 MATERNITY LEAVE AND PROTECTION

All pregnant women in employment are entitled to take maternity leave from work. The maximum amount of paid time that an employee can take is 26 weeks. There is also the option of taking a further 16 weeks of unpaid maternity leave. **Pregnant women in employment must stop working at least 2 weeks before their expected due date, but may begin maternity leave up to 16 weeks before their expected due date.**

There is no automatic right to be paid during maternity leave, but if a woman has made enough Pay-Related Social Insurance (PRSI) contributions

through work, she will be entitled to the State's weekly Maternity Benefit payment for the maximum amount of paid time, 26 weeks.

Women who take maternity leave from work are entitled to return to their job once their maternity leave is over. For more information on maternity leave, please see the Equality Authority's website, [www.equality.ie](http://www.equality.ie). For more information on Maternity Benefit, please visit your local Citizens' Information Centre or see [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie).

### **5.3 MINIMUM WAGE**

There is a national minimum wage in Ireland, which should be paid by employers to all employees aged 18 and over and who have had any kind of employment for a period of 2 years. Since July 2007, the minimum hourly rate has been set at €8.65. An employer may, of course, pay more than the minimum wage.

### **5.4 PAYMENT OF WAGES**

Everyone in paid employment is entitled to a payslip. This shows your gross pay and any deductions that are made. The main deductions that can be made are income tax and Pay-Related Social Insurance (PRSI). Other types of deductions may

be for pension contributions or trade union subscriptions.

### **5.5 HOLIDAYS**

You are entitled to holidays, also called annual leave. The minimum entitlement for a full-time worker is 4 working weeks per year, or 20 days. Employers may give more holidays, and if so, this will be laid out in your contract of employment. You must be paid during your annual leave.

### **5.6 ORGANISATION OF WORKING TIME**

Workers are not permitted to work, on average, more than 48 hours a week, and they are entitled to rest periods throughout the working day. Workers should have rest periods of at least 11 hours between one day's work and the next, and a rest period of at least 24 hours in a 7-day period.

### **5.7 TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT**

All workers are entitled to receive a written statement of their terms of employment, also known as a contract of employment, within 2 months of starting work. Details in the contract include the name of the employer, the nature of the job, the place and hours of work, the rate of pay and the number of days' annual leave.

## 5.8 UNFAIR DISMISSAL

An employer has the right to dismiss an employee from their job. However, the dismissal must be fair. If it is not, an employee can make a complaint to the authorities if they feel that they were unfairly dismissed. Examples of unfair dismissal include an employee being dismissed for joining a trade union or because of their religious beliefs.

## 5.9 REDUNDANCY

A person can lose their job by being made redundant if a company closes down or there is a reduction in the number of staff. If a person has worked for the company for at least 2 years, they will be entitled to a redundancy payment. Employers must give 2 weeks' notice to the worker, and the selection criteria for redundancy must be clear and fair. An example of clear and fair selection criteria is the duration for which an employee has been working for the company or the type of work that an employee is doing.

## 5.10 RIGHTS COMMISSIONER SERVICE

If a worker feels that their rights of employment have been breached, then they may make a complaint to the authorities and look for compensation. The Rights

Commissioner Service deals with complaints about unfair dismissal, payment of wages, organisation of working time and terms of employment. Complaints are heard in private, and the process is designed to be informal. **The Rights Commissioner is independent.** Decisions are binding, but either side can appeal the decision. For more information and to download complaints forms, please see [www.lrc.ie](http://www.lrc.ie).

## 5.11 EMPLOYMENT APPEALS TRIBUNAL

If a worker has a complaint against their employer about redundancy or unfair dismissal, they may take this to the Employment Appeals Tribunal. Other cases heard by the Employment Appeals Tribunal are following appeals from the Rights Commissioner Service. Appeals are held in public and decisions are legally binding. For more information and to download complaints forms, please see [www.eatribunal.ie](http://www.eatribunal.ie).

## 5.12 TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP

Any worker is free to join a trade union in Ireland. Trade unions can negotiate on a collective basis on behalf of workers to improve their terms and conditions of work. It is usually best to join the same trade union as your fellow workers, as bargaining with your employer is easier on a

collective basis. The umbrella group for trade unions is the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, and their website address is [www.ictu.ie](http://www.ictu.ie).

### **5.13 CASE STUDY ON EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS REDRESS**

Dhel worked as a domestic worker on a work permit in a private home for five years. The work was difficult, and often Dhel felt under pressure, due to the negative attitude of her employer. Although the employer did pay her holiday pay, it always came late, and often Dhel was left short. She did not receive a payslip, and unbeknownst to her, no tax or PRSI deductions were being made on her behalf.

Dhel felt that her working environment was deteriorating, and she decided to leave. She had become a member of the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland's (MRCI's) domestic workers' action group, and with their help, she wrote to her ex-employer requesting her outstanding pay and holiday pay. Her ex-employer did not pay. The MRCI then put Dhel into contact with SIPTU's domestic workers' support group. She joined the trade union, and her union representative then wrote on her behalf to her ex-employer, who still did not pay.

With the help of her union, Dhel made a complaint to the Rights Commissioner Service regarding her outstanding pay, her holiday pay and compensation that she felt was due to her for poor treatment by her employer.

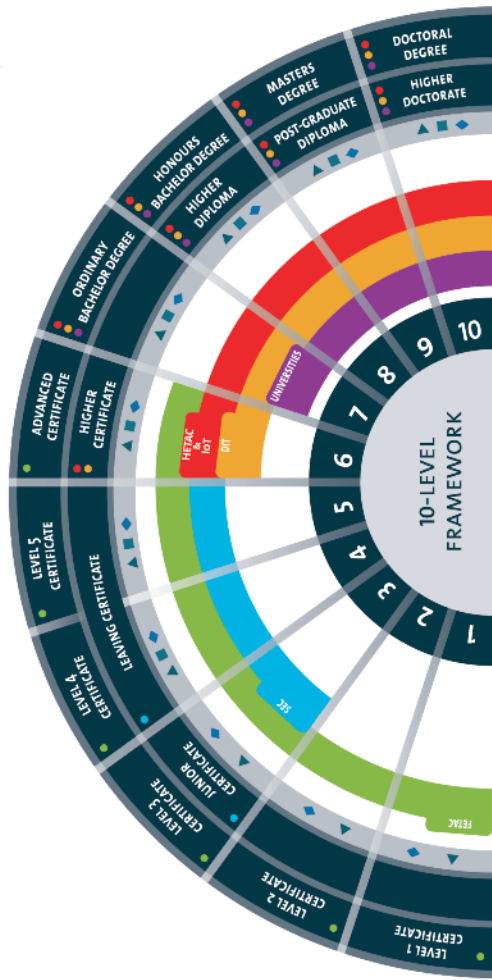
The Rights Commissioner Service case was heard in private, and on the day, Dhel's ex-employer did not attend. Two months later, the Rights Commissioner Service issued their decision and awarded Dhel over €5,000 in back pay, holiday pay and compensation for poor treatment. A month later, Dhel's ex-employer issued her a cheque for the full amount.

Dhel felt vindicated and happy to get the money that she was owed. A couple of years later, she still feels some hurt for her poor treatment and says, 'The MRCI and SIPTU gave me strength to go on, and without them, I couldn't have done what I did.'

MRCI, 55 Parnell Square West, Dublin 1; Tel. 01 889 7570; [www.mrci.ie](http://www.mrci.ie)

SIPTU Domestic Workers' Support Group, 35 Lower Gardiner Street, Dublin 1; Tel. 01 874 3662 or 087 290 9709

# NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS



## AWARDING BODIES

- FEIMC - Further Education and Training Awards Council
- SEC - State Examinations Commission (Department of Education & Science)
- HEIMC - Higher Education and Training Awards Council
- IOT - Institutes of Technology (with the name awards of the awarding body)
- DTI - Dublin Institute of Technology
- Universities

## AWARDS IN THE FRAMEWORK

There are four types of award in the National Framework of Qualifications:

- Major Awards are the principal class of awards made at a level
- Minor Awards are for partial completion of the outcomes for a Major Award
- Supplemental Awards are for learning that is additional to a Major Award
- Special Purpose Awards are for relatively narrow or purpose-specific achievement



Developed by the Department of Education and Skills in consultation with the Higher Education and Training Awards Council

For further information consult: [www.nqai.ie](http://www.nqai.ie) [www.nfq.ie](http://www.nfq.ie) [www.qualrec.ie](http://www.qualrec.ie)

# 6. Recognition of foreign qualifications in Ireland

## 6.1 THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS

The National Framework of Qualifications is a structure to which learners and employers can refer in order to establish what level of education a person has attained. There are 10 levels in the framework, represented by the 'fan diagram' reproduced in this booklet on page 22. Generally speaking, awards for further education are at Level 5 or 6, and degrees from a higher education institution are at Level 7 or 8.

## 6.2 QUALIFICATIONS RECOGNITION

If you have received a qualification from outside Ireland and you wish to have it recognised, then you can contact the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI). You will be asked to provide certified copies and translations (if appropriate) of your degree/diploma and your results transcripts. **The service is free.** Once the NQAI has

processed your application, you will receive a letter stating the comparability of your degree/diploma. If you are unhappy with the statement from the NQAI, then you can request a review.

The NQAI has also produced reports on EU and non-EU countries' educational systems (including Ireland) and a framework for the comparability of awards. Non-EU countries that are covered include China, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Ukraine and the USA.

For more information on qualifications recognition, please see the website [www.qualrec.ie](http://www.qualrec.ie).

## 6.3 QUALIFAX – THE NATIONAL LEARNERS' DATABASE

QualifaX is the national learners' database, giving learners information on further and higher education programmes. It has a comprehensive list of all courses offered in further and higher education, and information on career pathways. QualifaX gives tips and guidance to adult learners who are thinking about returning to education. For more information, please see the website [www.qualifax.ie](http://www.qualifax.ie).

#### 6.4 REGULATED PROFESSIONS

There are a number of professions that are regulated in Ireland, for example, teaching, law, medicine and nursing. In order to access these fields of employment, a qualified person must first get approval from the relevant competent authority, for example, for medicine, the Medical Council, and for nursing, An Bord Altranais.

A person will often be required to provide proof of English-language proficiency (if English is not their first language), and they may also be required to complete an adaptation period before receiving professional accreditation. For a list of authorities who will outline the procedures for professional recognition in different professions, please see the Department of Education and Skills' website, [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

# 7. Access to further education

## 7.1 FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING AWARDS COUNCIL (FETAC)

FETAC is the national awarding body for further education and training in Ireland. It makes awards at Levels 1-6 on the National Framework of Qualifications. Courses that lead to FETAC awards are offered throughout the country in different colleges, training centres and workplaces. When choosing a further education course, it is a good idea to look at the type of award given upon completion, and to see if the course is FETAC accredited. For more information on FETAC, please see the website [www.fetac.ie](http://www.fetac.ie).

## 7.2 FORAS ÁISEANNA SAOTHAIR (FÁS) – THE NATIONAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT AUTHORITY

FÁS is the national employment and training authority in Ireland. It offers training to jobseekers to assist them in entering or re-entering the workforce. Training is mostly vocational, in that it prepares a person for a job. FÁS's training is varied and covers

specific skills training, short courses and evening courses. Many FÁS courses lead to FETAC Level 4, 5 or 6 awards on the National Framework of Qualifications.

FÁS clients can view information on training programmes, search for a course or discuss training options with an employment services officer by contacting their local FÁS office, which can be found on the website [www.fas.ie](http://www.fas.ie).

## 7.3 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE (VEC)

VECs are colleges that provide vocational education to adults, thus preparing them for employment. Most of the courses lead to FETAC Level 4, 5 or 6 awards on the National Framework of Qualifications. **Full-time VEC courses, often known as Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses, do not charge tuition fees to EEA nationals or to non-EEA nationals with a Stamp 4.**

There is a VEC in every county in Ireland, and each VEC has a number of different colleges. For example, in Dublin, there is the City of Dublin VEC, by which Ballyfermot College of Further Education is managed.

#### **7.4 FASTRACK TO INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (FIT)**

Fastrack to IT offers a variety of information technology (IT) training courses to marginalised jobseekers, with a strong focus on employability. FIT is partnered with businesses and FÁS to develop courses that provide skills for the job market. These courses include IT business systems, IT customer care and IT maintenance.

#### **7.5 BACK TO EDUCATION INITIATIVE (BTEI)**

The Back to Education Initiative offers part-time courses to young people and adults who generally have not completed upper secondary level education. It is a route back to education, and courses are offered through VEC colleges or community education programmes.

# 8. Supports for accessing further education

## 8.1 VOCATIONAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES SCHEME (VTOS)

VTOS offers unemployed people a route back to education, where they can do full-time courses without losing their social welfare payments. Junior and Leaving Certificate courses are available, as are FETAC-accredited courses from Levels 3 to 5. In order to qualify for VTOS, a person must be receiving a social welfare payment for at least 6 months and, where required, have a Stamp 4. VTOS courses are delivered by VEC colleges, and each VEC has at least one VTOS coordinator, who can be contacted for further information.

## 8.2 VEC GRANT FOR POST-LEAVING CERTIFICATE (PLC) COURSES

The VEC grant is payable to students doing a Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) course at Level 5 or 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications. In order to qualify, a person's income (or that of their parents, if they are under 23) must be below certain limits.

**Non-EEA nationals who are eligible for the VEC grant must have one of the following types of immigration status:**

- > person with refugee status;
- > reunified family member of a refugee who has been granted permission to reside in Ireland;
- > person with subsidiary protection;
- > person with leave to remain granted, following the Minister's decision not to deport that person (Section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999);
- > person who has permission to remain based on marriage to an Irish national;
- > person who has permission to remain based on marriage to an EU national;
- > person who has been granted humanitarian leave to remain (prior to the enactment of the Immigration Act, 1999).

For more information on the VEC grant, please contact your local VEC or see the website [www.studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie).

## 8.3 STUDENT SUPPORT BILL 2008

Presently, there is a piece of legislation going through the Oireachtas to overhaul the grants system and introduce a single unified grant system to replace the existing schemes. The new grants system will be administered by the VEC, and the one-year residency rule for grant eligibility will be increased to 3 years' residency in the State.

# 9. Access to higher education

## 9.1 UNIVERSITIES

There are seven universities in the Republic of Ireland offering hundreds of undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes:

- > Dublin City University
- > National University of Ireland, Galway
- > National University of Ireland, Maynooth
- > Trinity College Dublin
- > University College Cork
- > University College Dublin
- > University of Limerick

Generally, an individual applies to a university for a degree programme through the Central Applications Office (CAO). The closing date for applications is 1 February of the year in which a person wishes to begin a course of study. There is a late closing date for most, but not all, courses (1 May of the year in which a person wishes to begin a course of study).

Mature applicants – that is, people who are over 23 years of age on 1 January of the year of entry to an approved course – may have different application

processes, depending on the course. Some must apply to the CAO, some must apply to the university directly, and some must apply to both the university and CAO directly. For more information on application procedures for mature applicants, please contact the Mature Student Office in the relevant university.

## 9.2 INSTITUTES OF TECHNOLOGY (IT)

In Ireland, there are 13 institutes of technology, as well as the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), which has 10 different locations across the city. Generally, an application to an institute of technology or DIT for a degree programme is done centrally, through the CAO. The same closing dates as those for universities apply, as well as the same procedures for mature students. Most mature students will have to apply directly to the CAO, and then may be called separately for interview by the relevant institute of technology.

## 9.3 OTHER HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Besides universities and institutes of technology, there are a number of other higher education institutions offering various undergraduate and

postgraduate degrees. Most applications for undergraduate degree programmes at these institutions are made directly through the CAO. Other higher education institutions include the National College of Ireland, St. Patrick's College (Drumcondra) and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

have to first pay the charge, and then, if the grant comes through, they will be refunded the charge. Non-payment of the Student Services Charge means that a student cannot register, and therefore, will not have a student card, thus preventing them from accessing student services, such as the library.

#### **9.4 TUITION FEES**

The free undergraduate fee initiative was introduced in 1995/96 to cover the cost of tuition fees for higher education, for full-time undergraduate courses. Tuition fees for full-time undergraduate courses are covered by the State for those who are eligible. For information on eligibility for the free undergraduate fee initiative, please see the subsection 10.1 Free Fees Initiative.

#### **9.5 STUDENT SERVICES CHARGE**

The Student Services Charge is levied against all students entering higher education, currently €1,500 per year. If a person produces confirmation of the award of a grant, then the grant will cover the Student Services Charge and the student will not have to pay the charge. If the grant has yet to be approved, then the person will

# 10. Supports for accessing higher education

There are different support schemes available for people who wish to access higher education. The schemes relate to the payment of tuition fees, the payment of maintenance grants, social welfare incentive schemes and hardship funds. All of the support schemes have rules and regulations that applicants must adhere to. **It is extremely important to inform yourself of the schemes and their rules before you start a course.**

## 10.1 FREE FEES INITIATIVE

The free undergraduate fee initiative was introduced in 1995/96 to cover the cost of tuition fees for higher education, for full-time undergraduate courses. Tuition fees for full-time undergraduate courses are covered by the State for those who are eligible.

**The following types of people are eligible for the Free Fees Initiative:**

- > Irish national;
- > EEA national;
- > person with refugee status;
- > reunified family member of a refugee who has been

granted permission to reside in Ireland under Section 18 of the Refugee Act, 1996.

In order to qualify, a person must also be resident in an EU member state (including Ireland) for 3 of the 5 years prior to starting a course. Time spent as an asylum seeker (for a person with refugee status) can count towards the 3-year residency rule. A person must also be pursuing a course of study for the first time, as the Free Fees Initiative does not extend to people undertaking a second undergraduate course.

## 10.2 EU AND NON-EU FEES

If a person does not qualify for the Free Fees Initiative, they will be assessed by the individual higher education institution as to what fees they are to be charged. There are two other levels of fees: EU fees and non-EU fees.

EU fees are much lower than non-EU fees. For example, EU tuition fees for an undergraduate nursing degree programme in Trinity College Dublin cost €5,752 per year in 2009/10. Non-EU fees for the same course cost €19,000 per year.

EU fees are charged to EU nationals who do not qualify

for the Free Fees Initiative. EU fees can also be charged to non-EU nationals who are 23 years of age and over who have been resident in an EU member state (including Ireland) for 3 of the last 5 years, prior to starting a course. A person will be required to produce evidence of residency, a Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) card, and P21 tax certificates or proof of social welfare payments for these 3 years. For a person under 23 years of age, the requirement is that their parent(s) must have been resident in an EU member state for these 3 years.

If a person does not qualify for the Free Fees Initiative or EU fees, they will be charged non-EU fees. **It is important to note that many higher education institutions will not allow a student to change from non-EU fees to EU fees during their course of study, and that once a fee level is set, that is what the student will be charged for the entire course.**

### 10.3 HIGHER EDUCATION GRANTS SCHEME

Financial assistance is provided to students whose income (or that of their parents) is below a certain level. This is usually referred to as 'the grant'. For honours bachelor degrees, the

Higher Education Grants Scheme is administered by the local authority in the area in which a person lives, for example, Fingal County Council for people living in North County Dublin, or Galway City Council for people living in Galway City.

The grant will cover the Student Services Charge and may cover a maintenance rate for the student. The maintenance rate for persons who are over 23 years of age on 1 January of the year of entry to an approved course (considered mature students) varies from a minimum of €810 per academic year to a maximum of €3,250, depending on a person's income. There is also a higher special rate, payable to people who have been on social welfare or a low income before they commence studying.

The qualifying conditions for the grant relate to income limits, residency, nationality/immigration status and type of course. A person must be pursuing a full-time course of at least 2 years in duration, and they must be pursuing a course for the first time. From the academic year 2010/2011 a person must be resident in the local authority area for 3 of the 5 years prior to

starting a course. **Non-EEA nationals who are eligible for the Higher Education Grants Scheme must have one of the following types of immigration status:**

- > person with refugee status;
- > reunified family member of a refugee who has been granted permission to reside in Ireland;
- > person with subsidiary protection;
- > person with leave to remain granted, following the Minister's decision not to deport that person (Section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999);
- > person who has permission to remain based on marriage to an Irish national;
- > person who has permission to remain based on marriage to an EU national;
- > person who has been granted humanitarian leave to remain (prior to the enactment of the Immigration Act, 1999).

**The grant can cover tuition fees for people who do not qualify for the Free Fees Initiative**, as long as they satisfy the other conditions of the grant, as already outlined: income limits, residency, nationality/immigration status and type of course. This means that a person who has been granted

leave to remain under Section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999, following the Minister's decision not to deport that person, can have their fees covered by the grant. The maximum amount available for fees under the grant is €6,270 per annum.

A person who may be eligible for the grant should apply to their city or county council as soon as the grant applications open, usually in June. **A person does not need to have a college offer in order to apply.** The closing date for grant applications is the end of August.

For more information on the higher education grants scheme, please see the website [www.studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie)

#### **10.4 VEC GRANT**

If a person is pursuing a higher certificate course or an ordinary bachelor degree course in an institute of technology, then they may apply to the local VEC for a maintenance grant. The rules and the grant amounts are the same as the Higher Education Grant. Eligibility criteria include income limits, residency, nationality /immigration status and type of course – please see subsection 10.3 Higher Education Grants Scheme.

## **10.5 POSTGRADUATE DEGREES**

A person pursuing a postgraduate degree programme can have their fees covered under the Higher Education Grants Scheme and also be paid a maintenance grant. The postgraduate degree programme must be full time and at least one year in duration. The rules and grant amounts are the same as the Higher Education Grant. Eligibility criteria include income limits, residency, nationality/immigration status and type of course – please see subsection 10.3 Higher Education Grants Scheme.

## **10.6 STUDENT SUPPORT BILL 2008**

Presently, there is a piece of legislation going through the Oireachtas to overhaul the grants system and introduce a single unified grant system to replace the existing schemes. The new grants system will be administered by the VEC, and the one-year residency rule for grant eligibility will be increased to 3 years' residency in the State.

## **10.7 BACK TO EDUCATION ALLOWANCE**

The Back to Education Allowance is a weekly payment paid to people aged 21 years and over who have been in

receipt of social welfare and wish to return to education. In order to qualify for the third-level option, a person must be receiving a qualifying social welfare payment for at least 12 months before the course commences. Qualifying payments include Jobseeker's Benefit/Allowance, One-Parent Family Payment (OPFP) and Carer's Allowance.

The course must be full time and the weekly payment is paid for the duration of the course. Recipients of the Back to Education Allowance also receive a Cost of Education Allowance, paid at the start of the academic year, which, in 2010, amounts to €500 per annum. From September 2010, recipients of the Back to Education Allowance will not be eligible for a maintenance grant. However, they will be able to have the Student Services Charge paid through the Higher Education Grant if they are eligible for the grant.

## **10.8 STUDENT ASSISTANCE FUND**

The Student Assistance Fund is a source of financial assistance provided by higher education institutions to students who are in financial difficulty. The fund is administered by each institution separately, and each

has its own qualifying criteria. The types of costs that it covers are books, childcare, living expenses and medical expenses. Tuition fees and the Student Services Charge cannot be covered by the fund.

Assistance from the fund is not guaranteed. The amount available depends on the number of applicants, and could be in the region of several hundred euro. Applicants must be registered as full-time students in their place of study.

### **10.9 BANK OF IRELAND UCD SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME**

The Bank of Ireland UCD Scholarship Scheme is a scholarship scheme for non-EU residents of an ethnic minority background living in Ireland. The scheme is open to people with refugee status, leave to remain, or naturalised Irish citizens. In 2010 the scheme will award two scholarships of €5,000 each to students who have serious financial difficulties and who, without this support, would find it extremely difficult to pursue a course of study in UCD. For more information, please see [www.ucd.ie/newirishscholarships](http://www.ucd.ie/newirishscholarships).

### **10.10 CASE STUDY ON ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION**

Catherine had always wanted to go to college so when it came to filling out the CAO form in sixth year in school she didn't hesitate. The Dublin Institute of Technology's (DIT) Access Service had visited her school and she found them to be really helpful. The Access Service helps students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds who are under represented in college to pursue higher education. They explained how they can offer access students extra academic and financial support throughout their studies.

Catherine was accepted as an access student onto a DIT higher certificate course in Pharmacy Technician Studies which gives her the option to progress to degree level after 2 years.

Catherine started her course and was immediately cut her social welfare payments. When she went looking for information about social welfare and full-time education she found out that she would not be entitled to a Back to Education Allowance as she was under 21. As Catherine had

come to Ireland as a separated child she has no financial support from her parents and must support herself. Being just 19 Catherine decided not to waste any time and to continue with her studies. Trying to balance college and part time work has been extremely difficult for Catherine and it is a daily struggle to pay her bills and rent. Catherine receives a VEC grant and as a refugee her tuition fees are paid. She feels that without the extra support from the Access Service she would not be able to manage. Despite the financial difficulties Catherine is really enjoying college and she finds her course very interesting and loves meeting new people from around the country. Catherine would say to other young people who may be in a similar situation, 'Don't be discouraged and do follow your dreams'.

For more information on access services and the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) for school leavers, please see [www.accesscollege.ie](http://www.accesscollege.ie) or contact the access office in each of the participating institutions.

To contact the DIT Access Service, please see their website [www.communitylinks.ie/accessservice](http://www.communitylinks.ie/accessservice).

# Appendix A: 2010 Social Welfare rates

## FAMILY INCOME SUPPLEMENT (FIS)

Family Income Supplement (FIS) is a weekly cash payment made to low-income families at work.

### Weekly Income Limits for Different Family Sizes (2010)

One Child	€506
Two Children	€602
Three Children	€703
Four Children	€824
Five Children	€950
Six Children	€1,066
Seven Children	€1,202
Eight Children	€1,298

### Example

A lone parent with three children works 25 hours a week and earns €250 per week. The set income limit for a family of her size is €703 per week. The difference between what this family earns and the set income limit is €453. This family would receive a Family Income Supplement of €271.80 per week (60% of the difference), bringing the total income up to €521.80 per week.

## ONE-PARENT FAMILY PAYMENT (OPFP) AND WORK

A lone parent receiving the One-Parent Family Payment can earn up to €146.50 per week and keep their full OPFP.

A lone parent receiving the One-Parent Family Payment and earning between €146.50 and €425 per week can keep a part of their OPFP.

### Example

A lone parent with two children works and earns €300 per week. Her OPFP will be reduced from the full rate of €255.60 to a reduced rate of €185.60, which, when combined with her wages, gives her a total weekly income of €485.60.

## USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS

### AkiDwa

9B Lower Abbey Street  
Dublin 1  
Tel: 01 814 8582  
Email: info@akidwa.ie  
Website: www.akidwa.ie

### Bank of Ireland UCD Scholarship Scheme

Tel: 01 716 8245  
Email: newirishscholarships@ucd.ie  
Website: www.ucd.ie/newirishscholarships

### Central Applications Office (CAO)

Tower House  
Eglinton Street  
Galway  
Tel: 091 509 800  
Website: www.cao.ie

### Citizens Information

Information on all public services in Ireland by phone, web or a network of Citizens Information Centres around the country.  
Tel: Lo-Call 1890 777 121  
Website: www.citizensinformation.ie

### County & City Enterprise Boards

Website: www.enterpriseboards.ie

### Department of Education and Skills

Tel: 01 889 6400  
Website: www.education.ie

### Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation

Employment Permits Call Centre  
Davitt House  
65a Adelaide Road  
Dublin 2  
Tel: 01 417 5333 or Lo-Call 1890 201 616  
Email: employmentpermits@entemp.ie  
Website: www.entemp.ie

### Department of Social Protection

Tel: 01 704 3000  
Website: www.welfare.ie

### Employment Appeals Tribunal

Davitt House  
65a Adelaide Road  
Dublin 2  
Tel: 01 631 3006 or Lo-Call 1890 220 222  
Website: www.eatribunal.ie

### Employment for People from Immigrant Communities (EPIC)

Business in the Community  
30/31 Lower O'Connell Street  
Dublin 1  
Tel: 01 874 3840  
Website: www.bitc.ie/epic

### Equality Authority

Tel: Lo-Call 1890 245 545  
Email: info@equality.ie  
Website: www.equality.ie

### Equality Tribunal

3 Clonmel Street  
Dublin 2  
Tel: 01 477 4100 or Lo-Call 1890 344 424  
Email: info@equalitytribunal.ie  
Website: www.equalitytribunal.ie

### Fáilte Ireland

88-95 Amiens Street  
Dublin 1  
Tel: 1850 256 256  
Website: www.picktourism.ie

### FÁS

Website: www.fas.ie

### Fastrack to Information Technology (FIT)

22 Tolka Valley Business Park  
Glasnevin  
Dublin 11  
Tel: 01 882 5570  
Email: info@fit.ie  
Website: www.fit.ie

### First-Step Microfinance Ltd

Jefferson House  
Eglinton Road  
Dublin 4  
Tel: 01 260 0988  
Email: info@first-step.ie  
Website: www.first-step.ie

### Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC)

East Point Plaza  
East Point Business Park  
Dublin 3  
Tel: 01 865 9500  
Website: www.fetac.ie

### Garda Central Vetting Unit

Racecourse Road  
Thurles  
Co. Tipperary  
Tel: 0504 27300

### Garda National Immigration Bureau

13-14 Burgh Quay  
Dublin 2  
Tel: 01 666 9100

### Higher Education Authority

Website: www.studentfinance.ie

**Immigrant Council of Ireland**

2 St. Andrew Street  
Dublin 2  
Tel: 01 674 0202  
Email: admin@immigrantcouncil.ie  
Website: www.immigrantcouncil.ie

**The Integration Centre**

1st and 2nd Floors  
18 Dame Street  
Dublin 2  
Tel: 01 645 3070  
Email: info@integrationcentre.ie  
Website: www.integrationcentre.ie

**Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)**

31/32 Parnell Square  
Dublin 1  
Tel: 01 889 7777  
Email: congress@ictu.ie  
Website: www.ictu.ie

**Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed**

Araby House  
8 North Richmond Street  
Dublin 1  
Tel: 01 856 0088  
Email: info@inou.ie  
Website: www.inou.ie

**Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS)**

13-14 Burgh Quay  
Dublin 2  
Tel: 01 616 7700 or Lo-Call 1890 551 500  
Website: www.inis.gov.ie

**Local Employment Service Network**

Website: www.localemploymentservices.ie

**Migrant Rights Centre Ireland**

55 Parnell Square West  
Dublin 1  
Tel: 01 889 7570  
Email: info@mrci.ie  
Website: www.mrci.ie

**National Employment Rights Authority**

Government Buildings  
O'Brien Road  
Carlow  
Tel: Information Service Lo-Call 1890 808 090  
Website: www.employmentrights.ie

**National Qualifications Authority of Ireland**

5th Floor  
Jervis House  
Jervis Street  
Dublin 1  
Tel: 01 887 1500  
Email: info@nqai.ie  
Website: www.nqai.ie

**Pobal**

Holbrook House  
Holles Street  
Dublin 2  
Tel: 01 240 0700  
Email: enquiries@pobal.ie  
Website: www.pobal.ie

**Private Security Authority**

Davis Street  
Tipperary Town  
Tel: 062 31588  
www.psa.gov.ie

**QualifaX – the National Learners' Database**

Website: www.qualifax.ie

**Revenue Commissioners**

Website: www.revenue.ie

**Rights Commissioner Service**

Labour Relations Commission  
Tom Johnson House  
Haddington Road  
Dublin 4  
Tel: 01 613 6700 or Lo-Call 1890 220 227  
Website: www.lrc.ie

**Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU)**

Head Office  
Liberty Hall  
Dublin 1  
Tel: 01 858 6300  
Website: www.siptu.ie

**Vocational Education Committees (VECs)**

Irish Vocational Education Association  
McCann House  
99 Marlborough Road  
Donnybrook  
Dublin 4  
Tel: 01 496 6033 or 01 496 6248  
Email: info@ivea.ie  
Website: www.ivea.ie

**Volunteer Centres Ireland**

DMG Business Centre  
9/13 Blackhall Place  
Dublin 7  
Tel: 01 799 4519  
Email: info@volunteer.ie  
Website: www.volunteer.ie

# information booklet on access to employment and education for migrants

**AkiDwA**  
9B Lower Abbey Street  
Dublin 1  
Ireland  
e: [info@akidwa.ie](mailto:info@akidwa.ie)  
t: 01 814 8582  
w: [www.akidwa.ie](http://www.akidwa.ie)