



PRESS RELEASE

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PROMOTING MIGRANT RIGHTS IN BREXIT TIMES NEW CROSS-BORDER PROJECT LAUNCHED

'Crossing Borders, Breaking Boundaries' was launched today (Tuesday 23rd January) in Craigavon by Councillor Darren Crosby of Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council. This project is in receipt of €1m of funding under the EU's PEACE IV Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body.

Match-funding has also been provided by the Executive Office in Northern Ireland and the Department of Rural and Community Development in Ireland.

A cross-border collaboration between the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI), Community Intercultural Programme (CIP), Irish Congress of Trade Unions Northern Ireland (NIC ICTU) and Ulster University (UU), the project comes at a pivotal moment when Brexit has led to greater uncertainty, risks and increases in racism for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) workers.

The project will support the labour market integration of BME workers in the agricultural, food processing and services sectors in Donegal/Derry, Cavan/Armagh and Monaghan/Newry-Down, securing their rights and conducting research.

MRCI Director Edel McGinley said: **"This is a new and innovative approach to cross-border cooperation that puts workers' rights at its heart. This project will tackle sectarianism, discrimination, racism and exploitation experienced by EU and non-EU migrants in precarious and insecure sectors of the labour market along the border region."**

Speaking at the launch Gina McIntyre, CEO of the SEUPB said: **"This project will help meet some of the core objectives of the EU's PEACE IV Programme by encouraging members of all the communities represented in the region to understand, appreciate and interact with each other."**



“It will tackle the sectarianism, racism and exploitation experienced by both EU and non-EU migrants and encourage greater levels of positive cross-community and cross-border engagement across the region,” she continued.

Dr Nat O’ Connor of Ulster University said: **“The research will fill a significant gap in our current knowledge and provide insight into the profile, cross-border dynamics, and employment barriers migrant’s face. It will provide real-time information and enhance our understanding of the dynamics emerging in the border region. The results will provide a firm evidence base to guide policies in this area.’**

Stephen Smith, CEO of CIP said: **“This is a timely development given the British exit from the EU and the potential implications for cross-border relations. It is vital that BME workers’ rights are upheld and we do not see a race to the bottom. BME workers are experiencing increased racism in the environment of fear created by the discourse around Brexit. Our project will counteract this.”**

Owen Reidy, NIC ICTU Assistant General Secretary said, **“The partners will develop a new model of labour market integration in the border counties to uphold and protect BME workers’ rights and build relationships across all communities to combat discrimination, racism and sectarian. It is imperative that we combat discrimination, racism and sectarianism in all its forms and this project will provide the tools we need.”**

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Notes to Editor:

SEUPB

- The Special EU Programmes Body is a North/South Implementation Body sponsored by the Department of Finance in Northern Ireland and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in Ireland. It is responsible for managing two EU Structural Funds Programmes, PEACE IV and INTERREG VA which are designed to enhance cross-border co-operation, promote reconciliation and create a more peaceful and prosperous society.



- The Programmes operate within a clearly defined area including Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and in the case of INTERREG VA, Western Scotland.
- The PEACE IV Programme has a value of €270 million and aims to address the economic and social problems which result from the existence of borders.
- For more information on the SEUPB please visit www.seupb.eu