

Demand for foreign qualifications recognition increases 800%

~ a key issue for migrant workers in Ireland ~

Demand from migrant workers for official recognition of their foreign qualifications has grown 800% in the past three years and is expected to increase a further 100% in 2006, delegates at the National Qualifications Recognition Conference held in Dublin Castle heard today (25 April 2006).

Organised by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) to highlight the increasingly important issue of foreign qualifications recognition and its links to economic growth and social integration, the conference was attended by over 180 representatives from organisations including FAS, IBEC, SIPTU, ICTU, educational institutions and migrant bodies.

“If migrant workers are to secure jobs in Ireland that match their experience and qualifications and continue to contribute positively to the Irish economy, it is essential that their foreign qualifications can be verified and recognised by Irish employers,” said Claire Byrne, Director of Corporate Affairs at the NQAI, the body responsible for Ireland’s recognition programme.

“The NQAI received applications for qualification recognition from over 70 nationalities in 2005, with 47% of such applications originating from new EU Member States and the Russian Federation. In the absence of an EU-wide recognition programme, it is vital that Irish employers, educational institutions and migrant bodies all work together to further develop the recognition system in Ireland and ensure that Ireland is benefiting from the skills of migrant workers.”

Other speakers at the conference included FAS economist Brian McCormick, who discussed the links between skilled migrants working in appropriate jobs and Ireland’s ability to continue to attract foreign direct investment, and Niall Crowley, Chief Executive of the Equality Authority, who focused on the need for social cohesion in the workplace.

The NQAI is currently conducting research on the education systems and qualifications of those countries from which the majority of migrants to Ireland come from. Once completed, the findings will be made freely available to employers and

educational institutions to assist them to make decisions about the validity and relevance of foreign qualifications.

~ **ends** ~