

Frequently Asked Questions for Employers Hiring People from Immigrant Communities

This document is for employers who are considering hiring someone from an immigrant community and aims to address any questions or concerns they may have. It has been prepared by Business in the Community's EPIC Programme. The EPIC Programme works with people from immigrant communities by helping them to access appropriate training, education, and employment here in Ireland. The EPIC Programme was established in 2006, as a pilot project funded by the Office of the Minister for Integration. It is managed by [Business in the Community Ireland](#), supported by [Spirasi](#) as training partner, [BT](#), [CPL](#), and [FAS](#). To date, the programme has placed more than 190 people in further training, education, or employment.

1. What are the obstacles faced by people from immigrant communities trying to find employment in Ireland?

Response:

- No previous Irish experience.
- No Irish references.
- For refugees: Gaps in CV due to time going through asylum process (in extreme cases, this can take up to 7 years) or time out for resettlement in Ireland.
- Qualifications often are not recognized in Ireland or not recognized at the expected level by [NQAI](#), the agency which has responsibility for developing and maintaining the National Framework of Qualifications.
- Lack of self-confidence, often due to being out of the workforce for a period of time, being in a new country, cultural differences, or having their qualifications and experience undervalued.
- Discrimination.

2. Why get involved?

Response:

- There are a large number of highly skilled and educated people from immigrant communities looking for employment in Ireland.
- Diversity – the benefits of a diverse workforce include:
 - Helps the company to understand and meet the diverse needs of the population.
 - Better staff morale.
 - Improved team effectiveness.
 - Recruitment and retention of skilled and dedicated staff.
- Corporate Social Responsibility: A lifestyle cycle of poverty and social exclusion affects not only the target immigrant groups and their children, but Irish society as a whole. Success now will have a ripple effect on future generations. Employment is a key cornerstone of integration into

society. Thus, being open to employing suitably qualified candidates from immigrant communities, especially former asylum seekers, provides an extremely valuable service to the community.

3. Which foreign nationals do not need work permits to work in Ireland?

Response:

- **All EEA/Swiss citizens** except those from Bulgaria or Romania who still need work permits to work in Ireland, (except in [certain circumstances](#). For more information about permit guidelines for citizens of Bulgaria and Romania, please see <http://www.entemp.ie/labour/workpermits/index.htm>).
- **Stamp 4 holders**. These are issued to people on work visas, refugees, people with Leave to Remain status, and spouses of Irish and EU citizens.
- **Stamp 2 holders**. International Students who are on full-time courses can work part-time during the academic year and full-time during the summer holidays
- **People on Working Holiday Visas**

4. Who does require a work permit?

All other categories of foreign nationals require some kind of work permit or green card to work in Ireland. Unfortunately, many employers will not consider hiring qualified candidates who need work permits, perhaps assuming the process is difficult or expensive. The process is not the same for all categories of people who need work permits:

- a) **Spousal Work Permits:** For spouses of non-EEA/Swiss nationals, the process is *free and quick* - taking only a couple of weeks. The candidate will take care of the application; all he or she will need from you is a job offer letter. No labour market test is required. This process couldn't be simpler and should not be a barrier to employment for spouses of immigrants employed in Ireland.
- b) **Green cards:** For all jobs with salaries of €60,000 or higher and at least 2 year's duration. Either the employer or the employee can make the application. It costs €1,000, payable by the applicant, for a 2-year period, and is renewable. It does not require a labour market needs test (e.g. newspaper and FAS/EURES advertising). Work permits are also available for certain job categories paying between €30,000 and €59,999 (see Appendix A of [Guide to Green Card Permits](#) on the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment website).
- c) **Work Permits:** For all jobs with salaries over €30,000. Either the employee or the employer can apply for a Work Permit. Work permits will not be issued for any of the [ineligible job categories](#), as specified on the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment website, at <http://www.entemp.ie/labour/workpermits/elements/ineligible.htm>. The position being filled must pass a labour market needs test.

5. Some of these restrictions are confusing, where can I turn to verify whether someone can legally work here?

Response:

There are several agencies which will be happy to answer your questions regarding work permits and green cards, such as the Immigrant Council of Ireland, www.immigrantcouncil.ie and the Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland, www.mrci.ie, while the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment is easy to contact by phone and also has very [user-friendly booklets](#) on their website which can be downloaded. Finally, the staff at EPIC are always happy to help with any questions you may have.

6. What is EPIC? What does the EPIC Programme offer me?

Response:

Managed by [Business in the Community Ireland \(BITCI\)](#), in partnership with [Spirasi](#), the EPIC Programme provides a 6-week training module including English for Employment, Inter-Cultural Awareness, Social Welfare Benefits Entitlements, Interview Skills, CV Preparation, and IT Skills. Candidates are assessed to ensure they meet the legal requirements to work in Ireland, and are given an English test to ensure they meet the standard necessary to participate in the training module. Those who score above the required level have the option to skip the English for Employment part of the course. Clients are then assigned to a Training and Employment Officer (TEO) who will work with them to create a career plan and to then find appropriate training or education courses and/or employment.

EPIC offers:

- Committed, hard-working candidates looking for an opportunity to create a successful future for themselves and their families in Ireland. They also have a high level of English.
- Many EPIC candidates are highly qualified – over two thirds have a university degree or higher – and come from a broad range of occupations.
- Training and Employment Officers who you can call on for support if you have any concerns about cultural differences, stamps or visas, etc.
- A training programme for candidates which will equip them for the possible cultural differences an Irish work environment might present as well as advising them on such areas as social welfare benefits, the Irish taxation system, and having their qualifications recognized in Ireland.
- A reference from the TEO – by telephone or in writing – who will have been working closely with the candidate for several weeks.

7. What can I do to get involved?

Response:

Let the EPIC team know when you are hiring, and they will work with you to provide excellent CVs from some of our suitably-qualified clients. Working with EPIC is similar to working with a recruitment agency, except that our Training and Employment Officers will have a thorough understanding of each client's skills, background, experience, and ambitions, having worked closely with them throughout the 6-week training programme and beyond. We can therefore provide a more focused service to meet your individual recruitment needs.

For more information about the EPIC Programme, please contact Patti McCann, BITCI's Information Officer, at 086 609-5460, or pmccann@bitc.ie, or check out our website www.bitc.ie and click on EPIC.