culturaldiversity

strategy
and
Implementation
plan

Fáilte Ireland

Context

Actions to Support Human Resource (People) Capability

Strategic Success Driver 7 The People in Tourism

Objective To ensure that the people working in tourism in Ireland operate to the highest international standards of professionalism and that the generally highly positive experience of tourists with the people they meet in Ireland, well-documented in successive surveys over the years, is maintained and enhanced.

Rationale Tourism is an industry in which the attitudes, competence, enterprise, innovation, hospitality and friendliness of the people in it are an intrinsic part of the product itself. The people in tourism are at the heart of the tourist experience in Ireland and the ultimate determinant of the quality of that experience.

Action

Managing Cultural Diversity Develop and implement a strategy and detailed implementation programme to provide for the integration of non-national* employees within the work-place and more widely in our society in a way that recognises and supports cultural diversity and enhances their personal and professional development and their potential to add a new and valuable dimension to traditional Irish tourism values.

This report summarises the progress made by the working group on Cultural Diversity in carrying out this action.

* see glossary on page 5.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the international staff who contributed to this work. Located in a range of establishments nationally they and their employers facilitated our visits and many of them came to meet with us on their days off. Whilst we would love to acknowledge the international staff members individually and also their employers confidentiality prevents us from doing so.

In preparing a report of this nature help was needed from many sources. Not only was help freely given but there was an energy about those who contributed. Be they the Irish employees, employers or their representatives or members of staff from the professional organizations or academic institutions all wanted to contribute to ensure that our much needed international staff now and in the future have positive experiences whilst living and working in Ireland.

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Executive Summary

This report provides the Irish Tourism and Hospitality Industry with a comprehensive approach to the effective management of a culturally diverse workforce and to the successful integration of employees from different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds into this working environment and into wider society.

In response to a directive of the Tourism Policy Review Group, a working group of members of the Irish Tourism and Hospitality Industry was established to develop and implement a strategy and implementation programme for the integration of international employees into the Irish workforce and, more widely, into Irish society.

The Irish Tourism Industry continues to grow and prosper, and so has its demand for appropriately qualified staff. Estimates suggest that 35,000 new staff will be needed by 2010. Traditional sources of employees will not fill this gap. Instead, this gap will in part be filled by people from other countries, which guarantees that tourism industry workplaces will comprise people of diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds.

The Irish Tourism Industry already employs 25,000 international workers – in fact it is the leading employer of international workers in Ireland by a large margin. Since the expansion of the EU in 2004, more than 50,000 new workers have arrived in Ireland seeking employment. These new residents will fill some of the demand, but not all. The question of recruiting qualified employees from non-EU countries is still a current issue for the industry at large.

Regardless of nationality, the integration of current and future international employees into the Irish tourism experience is essential, since people are an integral part of the tourism product. This report provides clear recommendations for creating positive culturally diverse workplaces, and describes the implementation of those recommendations that are already underway.

This report summarises the research undertaken in the development of the strategy and implementation plan. This research included holding focus groups with international employees, reviewing published reports from a variety of sources, holding meetings with HR professionals in the industry and conducting interviews with intercultural experts, language trainers, industry employers, guidance counsellors, parents and students.

This extensive research forms the basis for the comprehensive implementation plan that is presented in this report. The implementation plan summarises actions to be taken to meet each strategy and goal, allocates responsibility for implementation and projects and the timelines for such actions. A number of actions have already been completed or have commenced project planning/discussions with stakeholders.

The report also includes practical materials for use by members of the Irish Tourism and Hospitality Industry, including sample training materials, tips for overcoming language barriers and examples of communications products.

Irish society and the workplace in general, are becoming increasingly diverse. This report hopes to further develop the discussion and action that will facilitate the existence of an inclusive, tolerant and dynamic Tourism and Hospitality industry to the benefit of all concerned – guests, employees and employers.

Glossary

Non-National / International

The term 'non-national' means without nationality, without people, without an ethnic group. It is a negative term that does not describe employees who contribute to the success of the Irish economy and who come from countries as diverse as Burundi, the United Kingdom and Spain. Instead, this report uses the term 'international' to describe non-Irish employees.

Culture

The term 'culture' may be associated with behaviours and symbols. It is a combination of ideals, beliefs, values and knowledge learned from birth, as well as moral codes about day to day interactions at a personal and professional level that influence how we choose to live. These beliefs influence the way in which people communicate with each other. Culture is defined as "the abstract, learned, shared rules and standards for interpreting experience and organising behaviour in a society, including the behaviours and material possessions that are produced by those rules and standards" .

Cultural Diversity

The term 'cultural diversity' may be interpreted in many ways. For the purposes of this strategy document, cultural diversity will be understood to encompass language, culture, race, nationality and religion. A positive culturally diverse workplace is a workplace that celebrates its employees' cultures, that values and explores differences and that actively seeks to learn from other cultures in an inclusive and respectful manner. It is concerned with individuals, their inherent differences and needs and their successful inclusion in the workplace and society.

Diversity recognises and nurtures differences between human kind. A diverse community demonstrates tolerance, respects difference, identifies similarities and strives for inclusiveness.

Traditional Irish Tourism Values

What are 'traditional Irish tourism values'? The Tourism Policy Review alludes to a culturally diverse workforce and the "implication for training in the maintenance and enhancement of the traditional Irish welcome". The review also alludes to the friendliness and hospitality of the Irish people. Within the context of this review document, traditional Irish tourism values equate to the welcome, friendliness and hospitality experienced by holidaymakers.

Chapter I

Introduction & Background
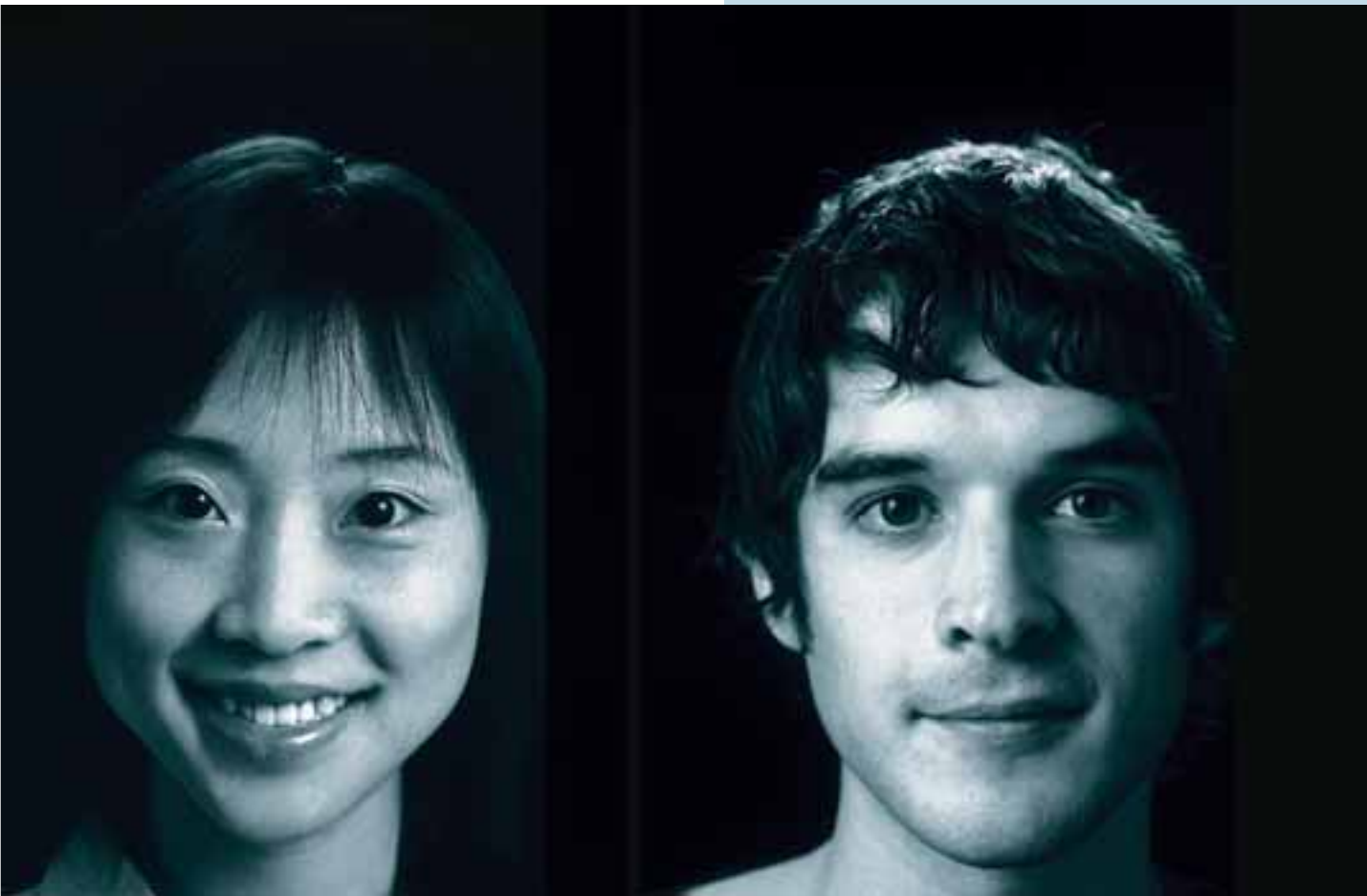
Tourism Policy Review Group

In December 2002, the Tourism Policy Review Group was announced by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism. In September 2003, the Tourism Policy Review Group published their report "New Horizons for Irish Tourism – An Agenda for Action". This report requires Fáilte Ireland, in consultation with the professional representative bodies, to develop and implement a strategy and detailed implementation programme to provide for the integration of culturally diverse employees within the workforce and more widely, into Irish society.

Tourism Targets and Staff Shortages

The Tourism Policy Review Group has set targets to double overseas visitor spend to €6 billion over the ten year period to 2012 and grow visitor numbers from 6 million to 10 million. Integral to achieving these challenging targets is the attraction and recruitment of skilled staff. The 2003 Tourism and Employment Survey conducted by CERT found that 24% of businesses surveyed had, among them, a total of 8,000 vacancies. In Ireland the demand for appropriately qualified staff has been increasing with an estimated total increase in demand of 35,000 staff in the period 2001 – 2010. This skills shortage is, and will continue to be, exacerbated by the fact that between 1998 and 2010 there would be a decrease of approximately 22,500 in the number of 18 year olds - a traditional source of new industry employees. This shortage of Irish staff has been partially addressed by the increasing number of staff drawn from diverse ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds now working in the industry.

Growth of International Staff

Ireland has long attracted tourism staff from abroad in specialist areas such as food and beverage and kitchen. There has also been a long tradition of international entrepreneurship in the small tourism business sector, notably restaurants, retail and similar operations. In some cases, for example ethnic restaurants, businesses attracted employees with the skills and cultural profile to enable them to assimilate relatively easily into the business environment within which they worked. Historically, however, the numerical impact of multiculturalism has been small.

In recent years, this situation has changed. According to the Central Statistics Office there were just under 20,000 international workers employed in hotels, restaurants and bars at the end of May 2004. Of these, just under six and half thousand were from the European Union, three thousand were from non EU European countries and the remainder, just under eight and half thousand, were from the rest of the world. These figures, reflecting multiculturalism in the sector, do not include employees from minority communities in Ireland who are citizens or permanent residents here. Never before have Irish businesses and their customers encountered such a international workforce and as the industry becomes more dependent on a culturally diverse workforce, the necessity, to develop successful integration models becomes more acute.

Culturally Diverse Groups

It is important to recognise that cultural diversity in the workplace is complex and is not just a reflection of international staff recruitment. Ireland no longer has the homogeneous population that it might once have done. In addition, staff from the diverse backgrounds that characterise Irish tourism are, themselves, heterogeneous, both in terms of their backgrounds and their motivations for working in Irish tourism.

In terms of their needs and requirements within the tourism workplace, each of these culturally diverse groups exhibits distinct differences, but they all contribute to the multicultural workforce that exists in Irish tourism. Two very important points must be made about generalisations:

1. There is much diversity which exists between groups that belong to differing cultural and religious traditions (even if they are all considered 'minority' groups in Ireland). Assuming common values and purpose between differing groups can be dangerous and can create rather than diffuse tensions within the workplace.

2. No group is homogeneous, including cultural groups. There are likely to be as many differences among members of a similar culture as there are among members of different cultures. People who share a common language, religion or background are not automatically alike or have the same needs, and to assume such is stereotyping.

Development of the Strategy and Implementation Plan

In May 2004 a working group for the strategy and implementation plan began a series of meetings. Members include representatives from:

- The Irish Hotel and Catering Institute
- The Irish Hotels Federation
- Restaurant Association of Ireland
- Vintners Federation of Ireland
- Licensed Vintners Association
- Fáilte Ireland

The contribution of the industry bodies was fundamental to the development and implementation of the strategy and the commitment of their key personnel paramount to success. The expertise of Dublin City University (DCU) in relation to their research into the intercultural workplace was also represented within the working group.

The strategy and implementation plan incorporates recognition of and support for cultural diversity within the tourism workplace. Within this, the need was recognised to enhance international employees' personal and professional development and their potential to add a new and valuable dimension to traditional Irish tourism values.

The terminology of cultural diversity is challenging in both practical and academic senses. A Glossary of key terms used in this report is included on page 5.

Strategy and Development Process

Ireland has changed dramatically in recent years from a nearly homogenous population pre-Celtic Tiger to a multicultural society post-Celtic Tiger. The number of work permit applications rose from 6250 in 1999 to 47,551 in 2003 , and, in 2004, 23,000 new people arrived in the first three months following EU enlargement. It is reported that by the end of 2004 up to 50,000 people arrived in Ireland from the EU accession countries. Irish society is facing new challenges that require careful, innovative and structured planning to maintain its unique competitive advantage - the friendliness and hospitality of its people who are now from diverse cultures.

Research Review

The working group began by identifying and reviewing current research on the integration of international employees into the workplace. Research included:

- Published research and documents by the IHCI, DCU and the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI)
- Unpublished research dissertations on pertinent themes
- International academic papers, as well as initiatives undertaken by numerous organisations
- A review of Government websites to determine accessibility of information for international staff speaking a variety of languages
- A study of the range and availability of English language schools and teaching methodologies and the most appropriate delivery mechanisms.

- Meetings held with Human Resource managers in a number of the larger 5* hotels to learn of successful best practice initiatives.
- Consultation with experts in the field of anti-racism awareness training with a view to developing bespoke anti-racism awareness programmes for the Irish tourism industry.

Members of the working group also met with a variety of organizations specializing in the wider area of cultural diversity and anti–racism awareness.

The review highlighted that most of the research had been conducted with indigenous management and that little account has been taken of the perceptions of workers from diverse backgrounds themselves. It also demonstrated that a strong business case exists for embracing diversity and points to improved productivity, stronger customer relations, improved innovation and enhanced access to a wider talent pool.

Advantages of an Integrated Culturally Diverse Workforce Environment

The study began by identifying the advantages and disadvantages of operating within a culturally diverse workforce environment. Advantages include:

- Improved innovation based on the concept that differences will provide new and different ideas. Problem-solving is aided by staff with different perspectives, backgrounds and training. The more ideas on the table, the more likely the big winner is to emerge.
- Different perspectives offered by a workforce that is more representative of global demographics. These perspectives are better able to support the development of new and varying product offerings for a diverse client base.
- Improved staff retention and the ability to attract and recruit the best staff. Employees will give of their best and are more in tune with the customer base. Enhanced problem solving, creativity and innovation. Other benefits can include competitive edge, better public image, increased productivity, job satisfaction and morale, as well as improved inter-staff relations and a satisfying work environment.
- Drawing from the full talent pool, both domestic and international. A diverse workforce means that employers are recruiting from as wide a talent pool as possible and enhancing prospects of recruiting the

best employee for each available position, particularly when traditional labour pools are unable to deliver the required skills and numbers.
- There is a pool of native speakers of many different languages to interact with guests and staff.

Challenges of a Culturally Diverse Workforce Environment

The challenges posed by a culturally diverse workforce include:

- Increased training costs. For example, a culturally diverse workforce may require English Language and cultural awareness training to facilitate integration into the workplace and local society. Also training for indigenous employees, managers and directors.
- Increased incidents of conflict. Conflicts arise when two or more individuals differ or disagree on a particular situation. In multicultural workplaces, the most common conflicts arise from feelings of superiority, ignorance or fear on either side, and result in derogatory comments or gestures. If management ignores such incidents, productivity suffers.
- Mismanaged diversity, which can cause employee dissatisfaction and affect productivity, leading to lower job performance.
- The need to accommodate a variety of religious and cultural expectations such as holy days and dietary needs.
- Reverse discrimination. Reverse discrimination is a claim by a member of the majority that a member of a minority received preferential treatment because of their minority status and not their ability or qualification
- How to influence stakeholders to buy into the integration process?
- How to accomodate conflicting needs of the various stakeholders?

International Employees – Their Views

Based on these findings, the working group recognised that to create a credible, relevant and practical strategy, it was necessary to meet with international employees working in a variety of hospitality establishments and to gather first-hand their experiences of working in Ireland. This category could not possibly represent the full range of international employees in Irish tourism, but allowed the working group to consider some of the key practical

dimensions of integration (workwise and socially) facing incoming employees in Irish tourism.

It was decided to use focus groups of international employees as the most efficient, practical method of gathering information in a non- threatening or non-intimidating way as there was a concern that the target group might be reluctant to complete questionnaires due to potential language difficulties or other issues.

Nine focus groups, involving almost 70 employees from 29 countries, were held in hotels, restaurants and bars across Ireland. The enterprises in which the focus group participants were employed were selected primarily based on the number of work permits issued to international employees by enterprise and by county and the fact that they were representative of the Irish industry. The enterprises were regionally dispersed, both urban and rural, and in the main small to medium in size and primarily family owned.

The focus groups were designed to provide a snapshot of the experiences and views of international staff working in the hospitality industry. Although the size of the group does not allow for a representative sample, it does permit us to look at the issue of cultural diversity through the eyes of a number of randomly selected international employees.

Main Issues arising from Focus Groups

The issues arising from the focus groups have been grouped into eight sections as follows:

1. Pre Arrival Information
2. Training – induction, language
3. Diversity Policies and Structures
4. Administration & Bureaucracy
5. Career Development
6. Working with Irish Colleagues
7. Adhoc Recognition of Cultural Differences
8. Work Permits

1. Pre Arrival Information

The focus group participants highlighted that in most cases new employees knew little about working or living in Ireland prior to their arrival. In the majority of cases the employee had arranged the job from overseas and

had received no information on travel arrangements and appropriate travel routes, transportation to the enterprise or accommodation arrangement before their arrival.

This is an area of significant concern for international employees. These issues seem difficult to overcome for those with little knowledge about Ireland however it is a simple issue to address by the employer. It is recommended that a pack of information be assembled and sent before departure to the candidate giving all the relevant information, along with general information on touristic attractions in the area. This will ease the employee's assimilation into Irish life.

2. Training

1. **Induction** – The experience of the majority of employees in the focus groups was that little or no specific, structured induction training had been received. This is vital for the new employee as it gives information about working and living in Ireland and makes finding details on tax, pay slips and deductions, setting up bank accounts, working ethos etc much easier.

2. **English Language Training** – one of the greatest difficulties for international staff is communication. Many of those met during the focus groups felt they had sufficient English to integrate prior to coming to Ireland. However on their arrival they often found the accents, terminologies and slang words difficult to understand. The need for English language training is seen as a priority but this needs to be industry specific, include words and terms used in the hospitality industry and abbreviations. (See section 5 Language Training).

Other Training – (to include Food Hygiene, Customer Care, Basic Skills, Fire, Health & Safety, Tourist Information, Cultural Differences & Manual Handling). These are additional areas of training which would be either very useful or indeed legislatively required to be carried out in the industry. It is imperative that international employees be involved and participate fully in these types of training. The focus groups showed that this is not happening to the extent which would benefit employers and employees.

By involving international employees it may reduce stress for them particularly if they know local tourist information and understand cultural differences both between people but also with work practices.

Training required by law should be delivered where possible in languages understood by the participants.

3. Diversity Policies

During the focus groups it became evident that many of the issues which caused concern for international employees could be overcome if appropriate HR policies and procedures were in operation and communicated to all to deal with cultural diversity.

An example of this omission was cited as the difficulty in dealing with guest's racist comments or indeed comments made from one employee to another. International staff in these premises feel vulnerable if comments are made to them and there seems to be no support or system in place to back them up or address the issue, such as training for Irish employees in dealing with an international staff and clientele.

4. Administration & Bureaucracy

For many focus group participants, officialdom was a source of much stress as it was difficult to acquire accurate and understandable information. For individuals with work permits, securing accurate information concerning their entitlements and the rights of their spouses and children who may already be in Ireland or wishing to come to Ireland appears fraught with difficulties, as they are being passed from one department to another and receiving conflicting information from staff. The difficulty in securing a PPS number is particularly stressful, especially for those who are not provided with staff accommodation. Focus group participants who are renting or sharing accommodation experienced particular difficulties as they are unable to produce the requisite household bill in their own names. Similarly, opening bank accounts was complex and for some it took up to a month.

5. Career Development

There appeared to be a lack of career development opportunities for those contributing to the focus group. All, bar one, were working in the technical and operational areas. It's not certain whether the lack of career development and progression was due to lack of knowledge of opportunities and access by the employee or the lack of opportunities provided by the employer, or the limitations imposed through the work permit process. Of the remaining focus group members, none had been offered career development opportunities or promotion. This is possibly due to the guidelines relating to the issue of work permits. There is a perception that international employees are temporary and may not be included in the normal career development initiatives. This is despite the fact that approximately 40% of the focus group participants had been with the same employer for two years or more.

6. Working with Irish Colleagues

The majority of participants in focus groups were happy working with Irish staff. Most groups indicated that Irish people were nice to work with and they found people helpful at work, but they agreed that "Irish people are friendly but not welcoming". One group of staff, resident in Ireland for three years, found it difficult to understand why they had never being invited to an Irish home either at Christmas, Easter or St. Patrick's Day. In their country, they explained, it is impolite to leave visitors alone during special feast days and festivals. Others agreed, stating "Irish people are very tight, they stick together". All groups commented on the pub culture and the level of alcohol consumption and found they were excluded unless they socialized in the pub.

7. Adhoc Recognition of Cultural Differences

About a third of the focus groups related that their employers organized special intercultural events or initiatives. In some organisations a variety of social activities had occurred. These ranged from go-karting to family barbeques to pub quizzes. For some focus group participants, these events were an ordeal, whilst others did not attend because alcohol was involved. Although these events were organised for all staff, they were mainly attended by the international staff who said "we are like a big family". In other organizations they had themed staff menus every month serving the national cuisine of an international staff member. This was a particularly popular initiative because many of the international staff found the food in Ireland very different and requiring a difficult adjustment from their native cuisine.

8. Work Permits

Staff, from outside the European Union require a permit to work in Ireland. The employer applies and pays for the work permit, which is valid for one year. At the end of the year, the employer may choose to renew the permit. As of 30 September 2004,* it is now possible for an employee to change from one employer to another on the same work permit, unless they are moving into the areas of Reception or Bar which are ineligible categories for work permits. If an employee remains with the same employer for six years, they are entitled to apply for a work permit with no expiry date. An employee who has worked continuously on a valid work permit for five years is entitled to apply for an Irish passport.

Issues in this category included the employee feeling very dependent on their employer and afraid to openly express concerns in case their permits were not renewed. The difficulty of transferring from one employer to another was also raised.

In addition, it is very difficult for employees working here for a number of years to bring partners and children to Ireland as the partner is not entitled to work here and it is not financially viable otherwise.

*See appendix 2 on page 52

Work Permits are job specific and there are issues around promotion as the permit would need to be changed as well as the difficulty in the hospitality industry of not getting new work permits issued.

Renewal of the work permits also causes particular stress to the employee as they are taking such a long time to process and the employee cannot leave the country in the interim.

Summary of Key Findings

International employees and their cultural identity are acknowledged in a minority of establishments where their cultural differences are tolerated but not embraced. In the majority of establishments, the positive potential of international staff and their cultural identities remains untapped.

The focus group results point to benefits associated with living in Ireland and working in its tourism industry. These include

- Ireland is a friendly place in which to live and work once initial cultural and social rules have been learned

- The tourism workplace offers challenges and opportunities that are appreciated by international employees

- Opportunities to learn, especially to improve English language skills, are particularly valued

At the same time, the research study undertaken in support of this report points to a number of practices which employers of a diverse workforce can implement to the benefit of both employees and the organisation.

Steps to Integration

At one level, it is evident that the needs of international staff who have recently arrived in this country are different from those of the Irish staff (or those who have lived here for an extended period of time) as they may be unfamiliar with Ireland, its people, culture, world of work and administrative systems. Therefore our study points strongly to the value of steps which employers can take to integrate international employees:

- In-depth induction, designed to provide practical help with matters such as opening bank accounts and acquiring a PPS number in addition to organizational and job specific information.

- A focus on understanding individual employee needs, aspirations, concerns and problems – good practice with respect to all new employees but of particular value in the context of people who may be unfamiliar with the country and with the tourism industry. There is a role here for both departmental supervisory and specialist human resource staff within organisations.

- Initial training in support of the technical work area to which employees are attached. Operating systems and standards can be very different in Ireland to those elsewhere and it is of value to both employees and employers to ensure that new employees are clear about what is expected of them in their jobs.

- Many new entrants to the tourism industry have adequate or, indeed, excellent English language skills. However, for those who do not, providing access to local English language training is valued and helps with assimilation into the workforce. Such training could be offered in the context of wider access to language skills development for all employees, covering a range of languages including those of main visitor groups and significant employee communities.

- The research points to the value of training for all staff, especially management, on cultural diversity and the practical implications of working with a diverse colleague team. New international staff value training with respect to Irish culture and traditions while Irish staff are unfamiliar with the culture and traditions of their international colleagues. All staff will benefit from a better understanding of each others cultures and traditions.

- Racism awareness training is linked to wider understanding of cultural diversity but applies across the workforce and not just in terms of staff who have just arrived in Ireland. In part, issues of racism in the workplace and wider community are enshrined in law and, therefore, there is a clear responsibility on employers to ensure that their human resource practices, both formal and informal, are compliant. Good employers institute a "zero tolerance" environment with respect to racism in the workplace.

- The effective management of cultural diversity, creating an ethos of inclusion and respect for difference, was identified as a key element in excellent organisations from an employee perspective. There is a clear indicator here of the important leadership role which senior management play in shaping the culture and ethos in an organisation in terms of cultural diversity.

- Good human resource policies and procedures, which are fully compliant with both legal and good practice requirements, address such issues as feedback, appraisal, promotion, personal and professional development and the roles and functions of staff and supervisors.

- The research points to the value of support for the integration and socialisation of international staff with their local colleagues and the wider community. Employees who are helped to feel comfortable and at home in the workplace (including staff accommodation where provided) and the wider community (leisure, culture, religion, learning) are more likely to settle quickly and are less likely to leave the employment during the initial period.

Chapter 2

Good Practice

In preparing a strategy and implementation plan it is helpful to identify organisations who are delivering good practice in integrating international staff into their workforce and who recognise the wealth of cultural experiences and differing perspectives that are brought to the workplace as a result. The challenges and opportunities of multiculturalism in the tourism industry are by no means unique to Ireland and to Irish organisations. Indeed, the history of tourism as a multicultural industry is as long as the industry itself. Therefore, it is useful to reflect on the experience of major international organisations and the ways in which they approach the management of their diverse workforces.

This chapter identifies a range of concepts, practical initiatives and ideas that may be useful to Irish tourism in attempting to develop cultural diversity strategies with our own organisations.

Examples of International Good Practice

The Intercontinental Hotel Group is the world's most global hotel company and largest by number of rooms. With over 3,500 hotels and 535,000 guest rooms across 100 countries and territories, diversity is well understood and applied throughout the organisation. Defined in the organisation's values are *"the principals of trust, integrity, respect, service and our determination to function as one team. These values define how we approach all that we do"*.

Starwood is the parent company to some well-known brands such as Westin, St Regis and Sheraton Hotels. Barry S. Sternlicht, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Starwood, states, *"exceeding expectations, improving our communities and celebrating diversity are all principles on which Starwood was built"*.

Sternlicht, in particular, identifies the Minority Business Enterprise programme which is aimed at stimulating opportunities for minority-owned businesses and states that "by fostering lasting relationships with minority businesses, we strive to provide opportunities that are mutually beneficial to both parties.

Starwood also believe that if diversity initiatives are to be successful, then commitment from the top is paramount to success. For Starwood, diversity is core to business success and competitiveness. In 2002, they developed initiatives like linking compensation to achieving diversity goals and introduced inclusion training for senior managers which helped participants to uncover their inner biases.

Hyatt Hotels has won several diversity awards and, as an example, the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Houston, USA, has carved out a niche market by specializing in South Asian weddings. Hosting such events gives properties a competitive edge in obtaining future business and confirms to employees, guests and the community that Hyatt values diversity.

Irish Good Practice

The culturally diverse workplace in Ireland is in its nascent phase. For many businesses, the integration of international employees is at an embryonic stage. However, there are already some examples of good practice both in general industry and in the Irish tourism industry.

Good Practice: The Irish Hotel Industry

Without doubt, the demographic composition of Irish organizations is changing and none as rapidly as in the hospitality industry. Some organisations see this as a threat, but if it is well managed, diversity is an opportunity for growth and development. In order to attract and retain a highly motivated and productive workforce, organisations today benefit from workplaces that value and respect the individual needs of their employees. Some examples of Irish workplaces that manage diversity well are provided below.

At the **Four Seasons Hotel**, Dublin, where 400 staff from 43 countries form 75% of the workforce, the commitment to staff comes right from the top and is fundamental to the hotel's philosophy. Staff are important and their needs are identified and met. Diversity training commenced in Autumn 2004, and an Employee Assistance Programme for all staff is currently being examined. Other initiatives are already in place. Strong policies exist to deal with guests who interact inappropriately with staff. Where diversity or racism issues arise amongst employees, the offending employee may face disciplinary procedures.

Social events are extensive and are designed to include staff from all backgrounds. They feature

- Nights at dog/horse racing
- Volleyball Teams
- Softball Teams
- Bowling
- Movie outings
- Treasure Hunts
- Pub Quizzes
- Family barbeques

Diversity days are held every month in the staff restaurant to showcase a different country. The restaurant is decorated with posters, photographs and brochures obtained from the relevant embassy and native costumes are obtained. The employees being honoured make short presentations on their home countries. Native foods and beverages are served.

All new members of the international staff team, upon arrival in Ireland, are met at the airport and brought to a host family. It is hotel policy that new staff members from overseas reside with an Irish family for two weeks to experience Irish life, cultures and norms. During this period,

they are allocated a buddy who will bring them to open a bank account and sort out tax details. Language is not a huge problem as staff are only interviewed in English. However English language training is available on site at basic, intermediate and advanced levels. The cost of this training is shared between the hotel and the staff member.

At the **Westin Hotel**, Dublin, 130 employees or 50% of the workforce come from 20 different countries. The hotel has a range of initiatives, including social events and theme days in the staff restaurant. Diversity training is delivered to all staff and has successfully aided managers to become aware of cultural differences and consequently to support their staff more fully.

When joining **Jury's**, international staff are given an information pack on *Living and Working in Ireland*. The pack includes maps, timetables, facts about Ireland, practical information on accommodation, a guide to the tax system, and how to access social and other services. Jury's Doyle have also designed posters to raise cultural diversity awareness.

Good Practice from the wider Irish economy

Dublin Bus has developed a Cultural Awareness Programme and Action Plan in recognition of their increasingly diverse customer and staff base with the latter drawn from 38 countries (including 30 countries outside the European Union). As part of the Programme, Dublin Bus has introduced a **Cultural Awareness Plan** that includes:

- **World maps displayed in all canteens in the workplace**
- **Consultation with employees from different cultures**
- **Dialogue encouraged between different cultures**
- **Development of cultural-awareness training for staff.**
- **Promotion of cultural awareness through different mediums, brochures, posters, internal magazine etc.**

Dairygold translates all safety-related documents, Contracts of Employment, quality statements, and similar documents, into the language of their non-native English speaking workers. In addition, an interpreter calls three days a week at prearranged times, and is on call at other times, to discuss issues arising with Dairygold's

significant community of Brazilian staff. The interpreter also attends all training courses. A number of recruits have obtained a good level of English since their arrival and are involved in assisting their colleagues. Dairygold is now considering a full-time interpreter position.

Swiftcall, a telecommunications service provider, offers international employees three to four week blocks of annual leave to facilitate extended visits home. The company also receives an order of Japanese and Chinese newspapers every morning for distribution among Japanese and Chinese staff.

In the **Mater Hospital**, Dublin, a local bank manager talks through setting up a bank account and gives information on how to send money home electronically. **Tallaght Hospital** invites the Community Garda in to discuss issues that might arise in relation to crime and racism.

Sheelin Mushrooms, a mushroom producer based in County Cavan, organises workgroups so that each one has an English speaker to act as a bridge between English speaking and other workers, as well as to improve the quality of work.

ABS Pumps and **Sola Lenses** have worked closely with the Wexford Area Partnership to raise awareness of racism amongst workers in an imaginative way. A local band, Buibolg, teamed up with African drummers and performed a lunchtime music show consecutively in their two workplaces. It was timed, in terms of work-shifts, to allow maximum participation, and was held in the canteen. Before the performance, a few words on racism and on respecting the dignity of all were delivered by a couple of workers who themselves had undertaken an awareness-raising programme on racism organised by the Partnership.

The **Resource Centre**, working with **Fáilte Drogheda** (which comprises St. Vincent de Paul, local teachers and Centre staff members), has organised a classroom in the local VEC college in which people from minority ethnic groups in the area are given a chance to learn English and interact together.

Along with other initiatives, the **Garda Síochána** has developed booklets for its members about cultural and religious differences and how these might impact on practical policing. Both Dublin Bus and the Gardaí have designed posters in order to raise awareness.

In cooperation with Counteract in Belfast, **City Bridges**, a trade union project to support interculturalism at work, has developed diversity training courses for tutors. The aim of these courses is to enhance participants' knowledge, skills and understanding of how to deal with issues arising in an ethnically diverse workplace.

The **Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs** has delivered diversity training to 2,500 staff who deal with the public.

The **Food Safety Authority of Ireland** have produced a range of information packs and fact sheets in a diverse range of languages and dialects.

In some outlets, **Marks and Spencer** has produced a calendar detailing all the main religious festivals to educate staff about different events and their significance. Other initiatives at Marks and Spencer include

- altering uniforms so women can wear trousers and head scarves
- setting up prayer rooms so that staff can pray during break times
- organising special lunches to celebrate special feast or festivals.
- allowing staff extra time off if they wish to travel long distances home on holidays

Summary of Good Practice in Ireland

Good practice from a range of large and small companies in Ireland shows that even simple steps may be taken to improve the integration of international employees. These steps include induction practices, workplace modifications, social events, language accommodations, buddy/mentoring support to new employees, and flexible working/holiday arrangements.

Regardless of the size of the steps taken to include everyone in the workplace, the effort is welcome, because it demonstrates awareness of different needs within the workforce. The examples above demonstrate that there is something that every employer could do to encourage diversity and acceptance in the workplace.

Chapter 3

Statements of Strategy

This chapter provides a series of strategy statements developed to provide direction to employers and business managers for the successful integration of international employees.

These strategy statements respond to the Managing Cultural Diversity action point of the Tourism Policy Review Group (T.P.R.G.) action plan, which tasked Fáilte Ireland to:

Develop and implement a strategy and detailed implementation programme to provide for the integration of non-national* employees within the workplace and more widely in our society in a way that recognises and supports cultural diversity and enhances their personal and professional development and their potential to add a new and valuable dimension to traditional Irish tourism values.

The strategy statements were developed based on the research conducted for this report. Each strategy is addressed to stakeholders in the tourism industry, including individual tourism enterprises, tourism industry representative bodies, education and training providers, and public sector bodies with a role in tourism education and training. The strategies are intended as guidelines for managing cultural diversity in all of these contexts.

* See glossary on page 5

There are eight strategy statements:

Strategy 1 Encourage Corporate Strategy and Commitment

Strategy 2 Increase Management Capability

Strategy 3 Support Human Resource Management and Integration

Strategy 4 Develop Visionary Managers and Employees

Strategy 5 Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity

Strategy 6 Enhance Personal Development

Strategy 7 Facilitate Professional Development

Strategy 8 Enhance Traditional Irish Tourism Values

Strategy 1

Encourage Corporate Strategy and Commitment

Create awareness amongst directors, owners and senior managers that embracing cultural diversity makes sound business sense, has legal compliance implications and therefore requires commitment and resources

The commitment of owners, directors and/or senior managers is fundamental to the successful integration of international employees in the workplace. Research has shown that when managed properly, a culturally diverse workforce enhances the corporate bottom-line. In forward planning, directors, owners and senior managers need to rethink their corporate strategies and place cultural diversity centre stage in all business activities. Recognising that management of diversity in the workplace has legal ramifications is also important. Making a culture of inclusion requires a rethink where diversity is a guiding principle of company philosophy and consequently influences all policies and procedures.

Desired Outcome:

To ensure that management, directors and owners are aware that enlightened organisations prioritise cultural understanding, integration and inclusiveness by

- making diversity part of an organisation's strategic business objective by linking diversity goals to business goals
- ensuring compliance to match legal and moral requirements
- ensuring managerial accountability for achieving diversity and business goals and setting performance indicators and accountability tools
- creating evaluation mechanisms to determine achievement of goals.
- Committing resources to achieving diversity goals.

Strategy 2

Develop Managers' Capability in Managing Cultural Diversity

Support senior management in developing competencies to drive successful diversity initiatives

Support senior management in developing competencies to drive successful diversity initiatives

Managing diversity in the workforce requires managers who can manage. In many cases, managerial lack of knowledge or incompetence rather than racism may be the cause of managers' inability to manage diverse groups of people. Therefore, managing diversity is very much a managerial capability. Managers are leaders empowered to lead and influence change. The successful integration of diverse staff and their development is fully dependent on managerial capability and managerial support.

Desired Outcome:

To empower senior management to develop policies and procedures for the successful integration of staff from diverse cultural and national backgrounds. These policies should promote staff's personal and professional development to the overall advantage of the individual and the organisation by

- Encouraging managers to develop new skills to address the challenges of a diverse workforce.
- Establishing diversity goals linked to business goals.
- Reviewing organisational mission and vision statements, goals and organisational strategy and include results in quarterly and annual reports.
- Committing resources to initiatives to managing cultural diversity in the workplace.

Strategy 3

Support Human Resource Management and Integration

Support the Human Resource function with adequate resources to develop effective, efficient policies and appropriate diversity-orientated procedures which are continually reviewed and evaluated

Many of the issues identified as problematic in this study could be seen to be the result of limitations with respect to people management practices, including induction, job appraisal, feedback, acknowledgement and advancement. Regardless of size, all enterprises can benefit from engagement in various forms of people management whether this is the responsibility of the proprietor, the manager, a function of duty management or a combination of all.

The successful integration of international staff is not dependent on the existence of a HR manager or department but on demonstrating a fundamental respect and understanding of cultural differences and extending a traditional Irish welcome which is a core value of the Irish tourism product.

Desired Outcome:

To develop policies that promote the personal and professional development of all employees in a multicultural environment to the overall advantage of the individual and of the organization.

Strategy 4

Develop Visionary Managers and Employees

Acknowledge and respect cultural differences by becoming acquainted with different protocols, customs and traditions

The more diverse our workforce and customers become the more necessity there is for management to understand the varying customs, traditions and religions and their implications. Many people are heavily influenced by religious practices such as fasts, festivals, and beliefs that include a wide range of food and beverage restrictions and dietary laws. It is important to take time to learn the different protocols themselves and who better to impart such knowledge than staff members from the cultures in question themselves. As an example, Irish people tend to be very informal with one another and frequently greet others with little regard for age, rank or social status. Such informality may be seen as disrespectful to people of other cultures. It is valuable therefore to understand and observe the proper formalities associated with different cultures and to become aware of one's own unquestioned assumptions of what constitutes appropriate behaviour.

Different languages, different customs and different cultures demand a different way of doing business and the visionary manager will adapt to these differences.

At the same time, significant diversity exists between different ethnic and religious communities and effective management is responsive to the sensitivities of such diversity.

Desired Outcome:

Management and staff understand and implement the appropriate formalities associated with different cultures so as to enhance the effectiveness of the workforce and benefit the organisation's business goals.

Strategy 5

Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity

Embrace diversity as a long-term benefit to Irish tourism and recognise that availing of it makes strong business sense

Creating opportunities and environments in which people can be successful makes sound business sense. Diversity in the workforce provides long-term benefits to the tourism industry and provides managerial challenges that need to be addressed. Organisations visited during the research stage of this project had anything from 5 to 44 different nationalities in their employment, not to mention their client base. Managing such human complexities requires great skill, understanding and tolerance. Failure to do so may result in conflict, lack of integration and communication difficulties ultimately impeding growth, competitiveness, performance and the corporate bottom line.

Developing and using the potential of a diverse workforce makes sound business sense given the changing profile of the client base. Enterprises must be in a position to identify and meet the needs of this diverse client base and this can be effectively achieved through reference to the business' diverse workforce.

Desired Outcome:

- Promote attitudes that focus on the benefits of a diverse workforce rather than accepting it as a "necessary evil".

- Challenge mindsets to create a new company culture with new structures, policies and procedures that promote diversity.

- Build internal harmony through inclusiveness to improve viability and profitability.

Strategy 6

Enhance Personal Development

Enhance personal development by identifying and removing barriers so as to actively encourage integration.

International staff, and especially those subject to work permit restrictions, frequently remain marginalised as a result of often unfounded concern that their work permits could be denied or voided. Creating an open workplace environment, where all staff feel free to speak and contribute from their own cultural perspectives, ideas and style, is a challenge.

A supportive environment which seeks and respects contributions made by all staff ultimately benefits from the loyalty and commitment of those same staff and contributes to overall business objectives. Therefore, it is in the interests of the employer to aid the personal development of all staff by recognizing their potential and facilitating their integration into the workplace and local community.

Desired Outcome:

- Encourage a culture of inclusion by appointing staff of all backgrounds to house committees, interview panels, marketing teams or cultural diversity teams.

- Survey workplace perceptions within the culturally diverse workforce and encourage formal constructive conflict resolution where differing opinions emerge. This will remove barriers and facilitate better decision making, higher creativity and group cohesion.

- Put in place formal procedures to handle intercultural tensions within the workplace.

- Provide interpretation and translation services when needed.

Strategy 7

Facilitate Professional Development

Recognise the varied training needs of staff of different backgrounds and facilitate access to mainstream vocational and educational full-time or part-time programmes where appropriate.

The initial training needs of staff from different backgrounds (national, international) may be quite different as a result of experiential, training and cultural differences. However, managers frequently do not differentiate between various groups and may believe that it would be discriminatory to do so. Most staff, particularly those new to the Irish environment and systems, place considerable value on the training available to them. Bearing in mind the cost of recruiting new staff it seems appropriate to develop existing staff members who have the potential and institutional memory to contribute to corporate success.

Desired Outcome:

To aid and facilitate the professional development of all staff working in the tourism and hospitality industry, irrespective of ethnic, religious or cultural background.

Strategy 8

Enhance Traditional Irish Tourism Values

Develop a culture of engagement with guests whilst maximising the mosaic of ideas, perspectives and influences of a diverse workforce.

There is little doubt that what might be styled "traditional Irish tourism values" can benefit from an infusion of multicultural influences. The mosaic of ideas, perspectives and influences that a skilled, professional, diverse workforce offers can make a valuable contribution to a more internationally competitive tourism sector in Ireland.
The profile of people in Ireland is changing as homogeneity gives way to heterogeneity. An ethnically diverse Irish nation will be well positioned to welcome international visitors to the country in the future.

The ongoing provision of customer care programmes and training in cultural differences will support staff in meeting customer needs

Desired Outcome:

An appropriate welcome which draws on all cultural traits will be offered to customers participating in the Irish tourism product.

Chapter 4

Cultural Diversity Implementation Plan and Schedule

This chapter delivers a detailed implementation plan for the Irish Tourism and Hospitality Industry, including Tourism Industry Representative Bodies (TIRB), Fáilte Ireland and employers. This implementation plan identifies actions designed to remove barriers to the successful integration of international staff into the workplace and society whilst benefiting all staff, their organisations and the Irish tourism product.

The implementation plan is broken down into four categories:

- **Awareness**
- **Education and Training**
- **Supports to Industry Employers and Employees**
- **Advocacy and Communications**

For each category, relevant key action points; the strategies addressed; the desired outcomes; and the target dates for completion of the action points are described.

A number of actions have already been implemented and are in progress as a result of the work carried out by the Cultural Diversity Working Group.

Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity

Action	Strategy/Strategies	Lead	Schedule
(a) Develop an awareness brochure and poster with core information for employers, employees and schools (b) Distribute through the TIRB a series of posters and brochures highlighting the contemporary face of Irish society and the culturally diverse workplace	• Encourage corporate strategy and commitment (S1) • Increase management capability (S2) • Develop visionary managers and employees (S4) • Enhance traditional Irish Tourism Values (S8)	Fáilte Ireland (FI) Tourism Industry Representative Bodies (TIRB)	(a) Completed (b) April 2005
Organise and deliver a series of Gold Star Seminars on the bottom line benefits of organizational multiculturalism and methods of developing and introducing best practice policies and procedures	• Encourage corporate strategy and commitment (S1)	FI in conjunction with TIRB IHCI and Skillsnet	June 2005
Develop a National Award for the organization that best champions and demonstrates policies and practices in workplace multiculturalism	• Encourage corporate strategy and commitment (S1)	FI in conjunction with TIRB	September 2005
Mail-shot of poster and flyer to all second and third level schools	• Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5) • Facilitate Professional Development (S7)	FI	Completed
Use poster and flyer campaign as a basis for a competition on the international workplace open to students in the secondary and tertiary educational establishments	• Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5)	FI conjunction with Irish Guidance Counsellors	May 2005
Communicate benefits of employing a culturally diverse workforce (such as offering better/more appropriate guest services). Share good news stories.	• Develop visionary managers and employees (S4) • Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5) • Enhance Traditional Irish Tourism Values (S8)	Employers Trade Magazines	On-going
Ensure that good cultural diversity practices are included or referred to in industry and Fáilte Ireland standards such as Quality Employers, Restaurant Charter and Optimus Programme	• Encourage corporate strategy and commitment (S1) • Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5) • Enhance Traditional Irish Tourism Values (S8)	FI TIRB	On-going
Promote and ensure access to Level 3 FETAC Training Centre Courses to international workers for entry-level training and highlight careers opportunities.	• Support Human Resource management and integration (S3) • Facilitate Professional Development (S7)	FI	On-going

Education and Training

Action	Strategy/Strategies	Lead	Schedule
Encourage employers to audit professional development needs of their staff	• Support Human Resource management and integration (S3) • Facilitate Professional Development (S7)	TIRB	May 2005
Develop induction programme for recently-arrived international workers outlining the opportunities for career development.	• Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5) • Enhance Personal Development (S6)	FI	Completed
Develop and translate Skills Training manuals into 13 languages: French, German, Spanish, Irish, Polish, Slovakian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Romanian, Russian, Chinese, Malaysian, Arabic.	• Facilitate Professional Development (S7)	FI	Completed
Create simple guide to understanding Irish cultural cues for use by employers and employees	• Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5) • Enhance Personal Development (S6)	FI	Completed
Ensure service excellence programme translated into several languages and distributed at course venues.	• Facilitate Professional Development (S7)	FI	Completed
Adapt and deliver the NCCRI programmes to industry, secondary and tertiary educational establishments	• Encourage corporate strategy and commitment (S1) • Increase management capability (S2) • Support Human Resource management and integration (S3) • Develop visionary managers and employees (S4)	FI ITs in assoc with NCCRI	August 2005
Develop short, sharp training sessions open to all industry employees on integration/teamwork and cultural diversity	• Support Human Resource management and integration (S3) • Develop visionary managers and employees (S4) • Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5) • Enhance Personal Development (S6)	FI	Programme developed
Run a workshop for IT lecturers on cultural diversity and integrating aspects of Cultural Diversity into the delivery of training and education programmes	• Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5) • Enhance Personal Development (S6) • Facilitate Professional Development (S7)	FI I.T.s	September 2005
Adapt induction procedures to relate to international employees using template (pg 45)	• Support Human Resource management and integration (S3) • Develop visionary managers and employees (S4) • Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5)	Employers	On-going

Education and Training (continued)

Action	Strategy/Strategies	Lead	Schedule
Develop and pilot an introductory 'Welcome Workshop' (part-time – evenings or afternoons) open to all international employees on Irish culture, customer service, health, safety and hygiene and teamwork to be run through the Fáilte Ireland training centre network	• Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5) • Enhance Personal Development (S6) • Facilitate Professional Development (S7) • Enhance Traditional Irish Tourism Values (S8)	FI training centres	Programme developed Pilot to run May/June 2005
Introduce and run a cultural diversity awareness training programme for instructors in Fáilte Ireland Training Centres	• Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5) • Facilitate Professional Development (S7)	FI	Completed
Ensure access to training and education opportunities are available to all international employees in Ireland through provision of information in appropriate languages and job/ training centres.	• Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5) • Facilitate Professional Development (S7)	FI	Work commenced – On-going

Supports to Industry Employers and Employees

Action	Strategy/Strategies	Lead	Schedule
Develop online self-assessment checklists to identify and quantify the attitudes of senior management towards an international work force and provide responsive links if appropriate	• Encourage corporate strategy and commitment (S1) • Increase management capability (S2) • Support Human Resource management and integration (S3) • Develop visionary managers and employees (S4)	TIRB FI	June 2005
Ensure "Managing Equality and Diversity in the Workplace" is available through TIRB to all Tourism Industry Members	• Encourage corporate strategy and commitment (S1) • Increase management capability (S2) • Support Human Resource management and integration (S3)	FI in assoc with TRED	May 2005
Develop policies and procedures to enhance and protect diversity in the workplace. Use strategy statements as a basis for implementing cultural diversity practices at work	• Support Human Resource management and integration (S3) • Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5)	Employers	On-going
Set diversity goals and link them to business goals	• Encourage corporate strategy and commitment (S1) • Support Human Resource management and integration (S3) • Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5)	Employers	On-going

Supports to Industry Employers and Employees (continued)

Action	Strategy/Strategies	Lead	Schedule
Create atmosphere of inclusiveness through HR practices.	• Support Human Resource management and integration (S3) • Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5)	Employers	On-going
Survey staff on diversity and workplace satisfaction matters and identify change needed	• Support Human Resource management and integration (S3) • Develop visionary managers and employees (S4) • Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5)	Employers	On-going 2005
Develop industry-specific diversity guidelines and performance evaluation	• Encourage corporate strategy and commitment (S1) • Increase management capability (S2) • Support Human Resource management and integration (S3) • Develop visionary managers and employees (S4) • Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5) • Enhance Personal Development (S6) • Facilitate Professional Development (S7)	TIRB	On-going 2005
Develop Induction Training Templates to incorporate modules on organisational, monetary, health and safety, tourism and generic modules on Customer Care and Cultural Differences	• Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5) • Enhance Personal Development (S6)	FI in assoc. with Diversity at Work Network	May 2005
Adapt the Induction Training Templates and generic modules to produce a comprehensive bespoke Induction Training Programme for all employees	• Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5) • Enhance Personal Development (S6)	Employers	On-going 2005
Develop a cultural diversity action plan to guide employers in their management of cultural diversity	• Encourage corporate strategy and commitment (S1) • Support Human Resource management and integration (S3) • Develop visionary managers and employees (S4) • Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5)	FI	Completed
Provide advice to organizations on effective English-language training based on current research and provide examples of best practice	• Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5) • Enhance Personal Development (S6) • Facilitate Professional Development (S7)	FI in assoc with DCU	2005

Supports to Industry Employers and Employees (continued)

Action	Strategy/Strategies	Lead	Schedule
Address the need for conflict/resolution training and research most appropriate delivery mechanisms	• Increase management capability (S2) • Support Human Resource management and integration (S3) • Enhance Personal Development (S6)	IHCI	April 2005
Develop a Business Case for the successful integration of diverse staff into the workplace	• Encourage corporate strategy and commitment (S1) • Develop visionary managers and employees (S4) • Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5) • Enhance Traditional Irish Tourism Values (S8)	IHCI	April 2005
Encourage managers to harness the ideas and perspectives of their diverse staff in developing in-house customer care policies, procedures and training	• Increase management capability (S2) • Develop visionary managers and employees (S4) • Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5) • Enhance Traditional Irish Tourism Values (S8)	Employers	April 2005
Consider the provision of grant aid towards full language training for international employees	• Encourage corporate strategy and commitment (S1) • Support Human Resource management and integration (S3) • Facilitate Professional Development (S7)	FI	2006

Advocacy and Communications/Research

Action	Strategy/Strategies	Lead	Schedule
Influence training providers such as Institutes of Technology and IHCI to include diverse staff on programme development committees	• Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5)	FI	Commenced through college liaison
Influence marketers (particularly those representing Irish tourism) to be more inclusive and representative in their portrayal of contemporary Ireland and its ethnically diverse population	• Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5) • Enhance Traditional Irish Tourism Values (S8)	TIRB FI TI	Commenced and on-going
Adapt career and professional promotion material to target staff from diverse backgrounds in Ireland	• Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5) • Facilitate Professional Development (S7) • Enhance Traditional Irish Tourism Values (S8)	FI	Commenced

Advocacy and Communications/Research (continued)

Action	Strategy/Strategies	Lead	Schedule
Plan a research programme on international employees to ensure close monitoring and response to on-going challenges and issues	• Encourage corporate strategy and commitment (S1) • Increase management capability (S2) • Support Human Resource management and integration (S3) • Recognise and Support Cultural Diversity (S5) • Facilitate Professional Development (S7) • Enhance Traditional Irish Tourism Values (S8)	FI Employers	Annual programme commence September 2005
Work Permits – Fáilte Ireland with TIRB to work in identifying numbers of international workers (EU and non-EU) gaining employment in industry, the skills requirements of industry and the issues surrounding application and renewal of work permits and visas for spouses and children.	• Encourage corporate strategy and commitment (S1)	FI TIRB DETE CSO	2005

Chapter 5

Cultural Diversity Support Materials

This chapter includes a range of useful tools for developing culturally diverse workplaces. These tools were developed as part of the cultural diversity strategy implementation as outlined in the action plan (Chapter 4).

The tools include:

- Sample diversity action plan for businesses
- Sample induction programme
- Language training advice
- Suggestions for overcoming language barriers
- Cultural Cues advice for employers and employees
- Awareness campaign materials
- Welcome Way information

Sample Diversity Action Plan for Businesses

Following the initial research carried out by the groups and the observation of good practice in cultural diversity activities, a comprehensive diversity action plan has been formulated.

This plan is designed for consideration by the management of tourism organisations in Ireland, both large and small and can be used as a framework for implementing good cultural diversity practices. It is divided into seven sections.

Senior Management

- ☑ Create Awareness of the 'business case for diversity management
- ☑ Focus on the benefits of diversity recruitment rather than accepting it as an unwanted necessity
- ☑ Allocate resources to diversity management initiatives
- ☑ Develop a diversity vision
- ☑ Set diversity goals
- ☑ Link diversity goals to strategic and business goals

Audit

- ☑ Audit compliance with the letter and spirit of anti-discrimination legislation
- ☑ Investigate current diversity profile and behaviour - identify cultures, policies and procedures
- ☑ Recognise diversity between minority communities and avoid assumptions of common values and culture
- ☑ Identify cultural differences within workforce
- ☑ Survey staff on diversity and workplace satisfaction matters and identify change needed
- ☑ Identify action requirements and implement
- ☑ Establish inclusive diversity committee
- ☑ Develop inclusive policies, processes and procedures
- ☑ Encourage and reward positive behaviour
- ☑ Build new inclusive culture within the workplace

Training and Awareness

- ☑ Invest in cultural diversity awareness training at all levels
- ☑ Tailor training to specific community and individual employee needs
- ☑ Discuss language training requirements and develop solutions – English, minority languages
- ☑ Develop detailed induction programme for new international staff and engage existing international staff in the development process.
- ☑ Translate all necessary working documents and signage into the required languages

Attract, Retain, Motivate

- ☑ Develop retention strategies for all staff
- ☑ Improve the reward function
- ☑ Review the recruitment and selection procedures
- ☑ Target all local communities for staff recruitment and create access information for minority communities in the neighbourhood
- ☑ Review appraisal procedures to accommodate needs of all groups within the workforce
- ☑ Review the promotion criteria to ensure equal access for all members of staff

Integration

- ☑ Encourage social integration through diversity initiatives
- ☑ Identify integration and cohesion problems
- ☑ Identify and celebrate feasts and festivals
- ☑ Establish policies and procedures to address problems
- ☑ Create reward mechanisms for inclusive behaviour

Racism Policies

- ☑ Make racism in the workplace subject to "zero tolerance"
- ☑ Using diversity teams develop policies to deal with customers and staff engaging in racist comments
- ☑ Communicate policies to staff
- ☑ Inform customers of policies through literature/posters
- ☑ Empower staff to deal with customers engaging in racist comments

Metrics

- ☑ Measure performance against goals
- ☑ Survey staff on diversity goals and their achievement
- ☑ Chart and communicate success to all staff and potential recruits
- ☑ Publish good news stories

Sample Induction Programme

A comprehensive induction programme, that covers every aspect of a new person joining the team is essential. It will not only provide the new team member with the skills and knowledge to do their job effectively, but will also make them feel welcome and impressed by the professionalism of the organisation they have chosen to join. For international staff arriving from another country commencing a new job can be daunting. Therefore induction training is critically important for the new team member but also for the employer as it provides a valuable opportunity to exchange information that will facilitate the successful integration of the new team member into the workforce.

Probably the most welcoming and respectful way to complete induction is to use the native language of the new team member if possible. Many government departments provide documentation in a range of languages and computers have the facility to translate documents into the more common European languages. Why not use an existing staff member to translate information as appropriate. Remember the new staff member is not only integrating into new employment but also into a new country.

The following template is intended as a sample to help you design the perfect induction programme for your organisation. Delete or add aspects as necessary:

Induction Programme

Name: _____ Start Date: _____

Job Title: _____ Department: _____

Line Manager _____

Points to be covered	Action Required	By Whom	Timescale	✓
Documentation				
Personal Record Sheet	Complete form		Day 1	
Bank Details	Complete form or provide practical help with opening a bank account		Day 1	
Taxation Forms	Explain Taxation system including deductions and provide practical help in securing appropriate documentation		Day 1	
PRSI	Explain system and explain entitlements and check understanding		Day 1	
Staff Handbook	Issue		Day 1	
Pension	Check entitlement and arrange meeting with pension advisor if appropriate		Day 1	
Dietary Requirements	Identify and make appropriate arrangements		Day 1	
Accommodation Arrangements	Identify and provide assistance if required		Day 1	
Conditions of Employment				
Employment Contract	Confirm receipt and check understanding		Day 1	
Payment Date and Method	Inform		Day 1	
Hours of Work/Breaks	Explain and check understanding		Day 1	
Sickness Absence Procedure	Explain and check understanding		Day 1	
Discipline and Grievance Procedures	Explain and check understanding		Day 1	
Holiday Entitlement/Procedure	Explain and check understanding and seek special needs		Day 1	
Public/Floating Holidays	Explain and check understanding		Day 1	
Overtime/Deductions Arrangements	Explain and check understanding		Week 1	
Clocking in and out	Explain and check understanding		Day 1	
Organisation				
Vision and Values	Explain organisation's vision and/or values statement(s) and how these apply in your team		Weeks 1-4	
Future Developments	Explain business plan, show copy, explain/check understanding		Weeks 1-4	

Induction Programme (continued)

Points to be covered	Action Required	By Whom	Timescale	✓
Structure and Culture	Explain background and structure of the organisation/team. Explain how things are done, i.e. customer care ethos, quality systems and team working ethic and policy for guest/staff making racist comments		Weeks 1-4	
Key people	Introduce to CEO, MD, directors, department heads, managers as appropriate		Weeks 1-4	
Mentor/Buddy	Introduce mentor/buddy and explain role		Day 1	
The Job				
Job and Purpose	Outline role and key priorities		Day 1	
Training Needs	Identify skills training needs		Days 1-2	
Language Training	Identify needs and provide solutions. Explain jargon and technical language		Week 1	
Cultural Difference	Identify cultural difference and provide solution		Week 2	
Operational Standards	Explain and provide manual		Week 1	
Telephone System	Instruct		Day 2	
Internal/External Mail System	Explain and check understanding		Week 1	
Uniform and Laundry	Explain procedure		Day 1	
Cash-Handling Procedures	Explain procedures/check understanding/instruct		Weeks 1-4	
Health and Safety				
Fire: Emergency Exits, Evacuation Procedures	Explain and check understanding		Day 1	
Smoking Policy	Explain and check understanding		Day 1	
H & S Policy	Explain and check understanding		Week 1	
Accident Prevention/Reporting/First Aid	Explain and check understanding		Week 1	
Security	Explain and check understanding		Week 1	
Communication Systems				
Internal and external communication policies, i.e. letter-writing, email, newsletter, bulletin boards, etc.	Explain and check understanding		Week 1	
Meetings	Schedule those to attend		Week 1	
Cultural Awareness Days	Explain and schedule		Week 4	
Local, regional and national tourist information	Explain e.g. videos, promotional material & local tourist office & check understanding		Week 4-8	

Induction Programme (continued)

Points to be covered	Action Required	By Whom	Timescale	✓
Local Amenities, Schools, Health Care And Transportation Systems	Explain and provide assistance where necessary		Week 2-4	
Social Activities and clubs	Explain		Week 2-4	
Training and Development				
Training and Development Policy	Issue and explain training and development and further education opportunities policies		Weeks 1-4	
Performance Management Procedure	Explain performance review/appraisal system.		Weeks 1-4	
Personal Development Plan	Draft and agree		By end of probation	
Performance Agreement	Set objectives for remainder of year		By end of probation	
Review Induction	Discuss progress and assess suitability for continued employment – weekly for the first month, then monthly for the first six months		Regularly	
Awards and Incentives	Explain		After Probation	
Advancement and career paths	Discuss promotion policies and opportunities		Regularly	

Date Induction Completed:	Signature of Employee:	Signature of Manager:

Language Training Advice

Adult language training falls into two general categories:

1. **Classroom training**

2. **Self-tutoring using books, audio-visual aids or online resources**

Classroom Training: Language Schools

Classroom training can be delivered intensively via an essentially full-time course at various language schools around the country. Intensive language classroom training involves up to six hours of training a day – generally four hours of general English followed by two hours of Business English. The number of weeks someone might need training depends on their starting ability, their effort and their motivation. It is impossible to predict how long it might take for someone to achieve their language goals, but it could take as few as several weeks or it could take a year or more.

Language schools generally offer training that leads towards certain proficiency tests. The most common are **Cambridge Examinations** and the **International English Language Testing System** (IELTS). The Cambridge Examinations test students at four levels of English proficiency, while the IELTS is a single level.

Language School Organisations in Ireland

Ireland boasts a huge number of language schools. Most of them are in Dublin but there are others scattered around the country. Two organisations govern English language teaching in Ireland: **ACELS** (Advisory Council for English Language Schools) and **MEI-RELSA** (Marketing English in Ireland – Recognised English Language Schools in Ireland).

ACELS, under the auspices of the Irish Department of Education & Science, controls "standards in EFL schools and organisations through an inspection/recognition scheme. ACELS administers the scheme which leads to School Recognition by the Department of Education & Science" (www.acels.ie). Its website lists all the English language schools recognised by the Department of Education and Science - currently over 100 schools.

MEI-RELSA is a "coherent industry body representing the majority of Quality Recognised English Language Schools in Ireland" (www.mei.ie). Their website lists over 50 recognised schools.

Classroom Training: Other Sources

Aside from recognised language schools, English classes are also offered on a less intensive basis by many sources, including libraries, local community groups, and private tutors. These options are limited to a few hours per week but cost much less than intensive training. While a few hours a week might mean slower progress, it can be ideal for someone who simply needs to increase their confidence by talking to other learners in a supportive environment.

Ideally, classroom training should be provided by a teacher who not only is certified to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL), but also one who has at least basic intercultural training as well. Although the obvious issue that might face international staff in the tourism industry is a limited knowledge of English, the cultural context in which they are living and working also has a tremendous impact on their ability to communicate appropriately with others. Even small signals such as smiling while serving someone might need to be explained, and a teacher who is sensitive to such differences is more likely to understand the training needs of the student.

Regardless of its intensity, classroom training is recommended because of the live interaction between teachers and students, as well as between students.

Self-Tutoring Options: Books and Tapes

In situations where limits related to time, geography, or finances rule out classroom learning of English, the other option is self-tutoring. There are hundreds of books and tapes for teaching yourself English, and all large bookstores in Ireland carry at least a few options. Resources can also be ordered online. For example, Amazon.co.uk has an entire section devoted to learning English as a Foreign Language that is updated regularly with new material. Students can select material in different categories, including ESP, and have items delivered directly to their door.

For most international staff, the greatest need will be to build vocabulary, listening and speaking skills. Pronunciation is very important, and tapes might assist in practicing this aspect of language.

Self-Tutoring Options: Online Options

Another source of self-tutoring choices is the internet. There are thousands of sites offering English as a Foreign Language lessons, vocabulary, quizzes and support. Many of these sites offer specific courses for a fee, but others provide free resources and links to other sites. One well-known site, **Dave's ESL Café** (www.eslcafe.com), includes an interactive forum where students can ask specific language questions and get an answer from a teacher. However, there is no audio on this site. Another excellent source of online training is offered by **Learning English section of the BBC World Service** website (www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/index.shtml). This site has 'watch and listen' segments, grammar and vocabulary, quizzes etc., and the material is updated regularly. Although much of it is oriented to people in the UK, it can still be a valuable resource for Irish-based workers.

The advantage of internet-based materials is their 24 hour availability, their ability to include mixed medium materials such as audio and video, and the potential they have to link isolated learners with others. However, not every site is reputable, so potential learners should be wary, particularly if fees are charged. For free sites, the regularity with which the material is updated or modified suggests a certain reliability, as will recommendations made by other users.

Suggestions for Overcoming Language Barriers

1. Support formal language training opportunities for your international staff:

- Establish, as much as possible, regular work schedules so that staff can count on having a particular day off every week. Many international employees are unable to register for language courses because they cannot be sure the classes won't conflict with their work schedules.

- Subsidise the costs of courses for your staff. For example, offer to reimburse 50% of the cost of the course upon successful completion.

- Make a room or area available for lessons on site, perhaps before the restaurant opens or when a staff lounge can be reserved for an hour. Learning is more effective when it takes place in an authentic environment, instead of in the artificial environment of the classroom. Making the space available for learning will also assist those who work in more isolated areas or who don't own their own transport.

- Hire a qualified English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher to provide regular lessons to your staff. If staff numbers don't warrant this option, consider partnering with other local establishments to pool resources and share in the benefits.

- Provide access to the internet or other resources to staff who are off duty, so they can avail of online learning resources or use videos or audio tapes to improve their abilities on their own. Keeping dictionaries and other tools available on site is also helpful.

- Make it clear that you support efforts to learn or improve English, and try to accommodate staff who choose to do so. Be open to suggestions and be flexible when looking for solutions.

2. Use visuals (pictures, pictograms, diagrams) wherever possible to supplement or replace written materials. For example, create a room service order sheet that includes pictures of the different ways to serve eggs, and put a check box beside each option. This will help the international employee to learn the correct terminology and make fewer mistakes, and may also help your guest to order exactly what they want!

3. Use buddy systems at work, particularly while training new employees. Pair international employee with an experienced employee (English speaking) 'buddy' who is responsible for answering questions, demonstrating tasks etc. This will make the new employee feel welcome and will provide at least one definite point of contact for questions. The Irish buddy will find this to be a rewarding and interesting experience as well.

4. Create and stick to routines for each task. This helps someone with limited language skills to learn their job methodically, including the words and phrases associated with each task. Remember to demonstrate tasks, instead of just describing them.

5. Create a short list of useful words and phrases for your establishment. Leave room for the international employee to write in their own notes or translations. Phrases might include, "Would you like to wait in the bar until your table is ready?" or "The toilets are down the stairs on the left". It is helpful to establish with international employees precisely what they should say and do if they find themselves in a situation where they do not understand what is being said to them. For example, explain to the employee that they should tell the guest, "Please wait a moment and I will find someone to help you" and that they should then go immediately to their buddy or manager for assistance.

6. If possible, access videos for common training or induction materials. Enable your staff to watch these videos more than once so they can practice associating the language on the video with the actions on the video.

7. Make the benefits of improving language skills clear: better tips, happier customers, increased chances for promotion.

8. Understand that language is not the only barrier to effective communication. For example, Irish people tend to smile much more when serving food than some cultures, where service is expected to be quite solemn. Don't assume that your international staff know these cultural rules. If you see repeated behaviour that seems out of place in Ireland, talk to the person about it in private and, if necessary, explain how they can modify their actions to respond to their Irish environment.

9. Remember that people learn better and improve faster in a supportive and friendly environment. Lead by example and treat all employees with respect. Speak slowly and clearly (and often!) to your international employees. Ask for opinions. Be open to questions. Reward your international staff for their efforts to learn English, and reward your Irish staff for their patience and helpfulness to their colleagues as they improve their language skills. Small rewards such as movie passes or book tokens can have a big impact on morale and motivation.

10. Make it fun! Consider establishing a "word of the week" on notice boards in the staff areas. Invite international staff to teach a few words and phrases of their own language to Irish staff. Create social opportunities where all staff can mingle and talk to each other in a stress-free environment, such as football games, bowling or other events. Be sure at least some of these events are alcohol-free to guarantee the widest possible participation.

11. Role plays enacted by training managers or supervisors.

Cultural Cues Advice for Employers and Employees

No one can describe an entire culture accurately, because no group is entirely the same - there are always variations to consider. The Irish population, like any other national group, is made up of individuals, each of whom possesses different characteristics. To suggest that every single Irish person possesses the same characteristics would be stereotyping: a destructive attitude which denies individual uniqueness.

However, there are some general habits that occur in many Irish contexts that might be described as representative of Irish culture. These cultural habits determine what behaviour is considered acceptable or unacceptable, what is "normal" and not "normal".

For someone who has been taught the unspoken guidelines about Irish culture since they were born, these 'rules' seem straightforward and instinctive. But for someone who was raised in a different culture with different cultural 'rules', every day presents the challenge of understanding how to live and work within the Irish culture.

For this reason, it is important for Irish employers and employees to recognise some common cultural traits about themselves, just as it is important for international employees to understand and respect what these cultural traits are. Every individual has a part to play in embracing cultural diversity – and self-awareness is the first step towards building tolerance and understanding.

Cultural Trait #1	The Irish are fairly informal at work. This informality is exhibited in various ways in different environments: routines might be somewhat flexible, punctuality requirements might be less rigid, etc.
Handling Hints	Recognise that different cultures have different rules in the work environment. Make it clear what is acceptable in the individual workplace, and ask questions if you are unsure. If you are used to more formal environments, try to appreciate the flexibility that might be part of working in Ireland. If you are comfortable being informal, try to appreciate that a lack of structure can be quite disconcerting for someone who is used to rigid routines.
Cultural Trait #2	The Irish tend to call each other by their first names, even in the workplace, and to use people's names often in conversation. Often, even employees call their employers by their first names.
Handling Hints	Recognise that the protocol for using people's names varies from culture to culture. If someone you work with does not seem to be aware of the protocol, explain it to them. If you are not sure what the protocol is, ask!
Cultural Trait #3	Social hierarchies in Irish society are not always clearly defined, but they do exist, at work as well as in wider society.
Handling Hints	Remember that different cultures accord status differently – sometimes based on age, length of service, or rank. To avoid giving offence, value each person's individual contribution, treat your colleagues at all levels with esteem, and show every customer respect.
Cultural Trait #4	Irish people tend to have a good sense of humour and enjoy a bit of fun, even at work.
Handling Hints	Do not make judgments about someone based on their attitude to fun in the workplace. Someone who joins in the fun may still take their job very seriously, and someone who does not join in the fun may have a wonderful sense of humour or play in another context. Make sure that everyone knows what is considered acceptable behaviour in your workplace.
Cultural Trait #5	Irish customer service almost always includes a smile and direct eye contact.
Handling Hints	Be aware that different cultures expect service to be delivered in different ways. In general, the Irish hospitality industry is known for being welcoming, which includes smiling and looking customers in the eye, even in formal environments such as fine dining. However, other cultures expect good service to be delivered quite solemnly. If you're not sure how to serve a customer appropriately, observe your colleagues' behaviour and ask questions. Remember, put the customer's needs first!
Cultural Trait #6	For many Irish people, eating at a restaurant is not the main social event of the evening (see Cultural Trait #7).
Handling Hints	Recognise that for some cultures, quick service is seen as good service, but that for other cultures, an unhurried meal with discreet service is ideal. Pace your service based on your customer's and colleagues' cues, and adapt your speed accordingly.
Cultural Trait #7	The pub tends to be the social heart of many Irish communities, where people meet their friends and family to drink, socialise, listen to music and relax.

Handling Hints	Accept that people from different cultures spend their leisure time in different ways. Some cultures do not allow alcohol, which can make going to the pub or serving intoxicated patrons an uncomfortable experience. Try to be flexible about different people's comfort zones when extending or refusing invitations.
Cultural Trait #8	Irish people tend to like to get to know the people around them, particularly in smaller communities or workplaces.
Handling Hints	Remember that not everyone is used to mixing their personal lives and their professional lives. Only ask questions that you would be comfortable answering, and remember that sharing information puts some people at ease but makes other people uncomfortable. Try to find a balance and respect other people's boundaries.
Cultural Trait #9	Ireland has a complicated relationship with religion, which in general has been the Catholic faith.
Handling Hints	Understand that the influence of religion on a person's life varies enormously. Many religions have strict dietary requirements, for example, that must be considered when preparing, serving and offering food. Regardless of your own religious beliefs, allow everyone the right to celebrate theirs.
Cultural Trait #10	The Irish tend to use a lot of slang and colloquialisms when expressing themselves. Pauses in conversations are short and talking over someone else is not considered particularly rude.
Handling Hints	Be aware of the language barriers that exist in Ireland. Try to adapt your speech to your audience, and to ask questions if a meaning is not clear. Observe your colleagues in conversation for cues about pausing, interrupting and turn-taking.

Awareness Campaign

NEW FACES
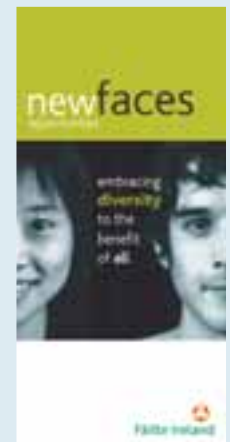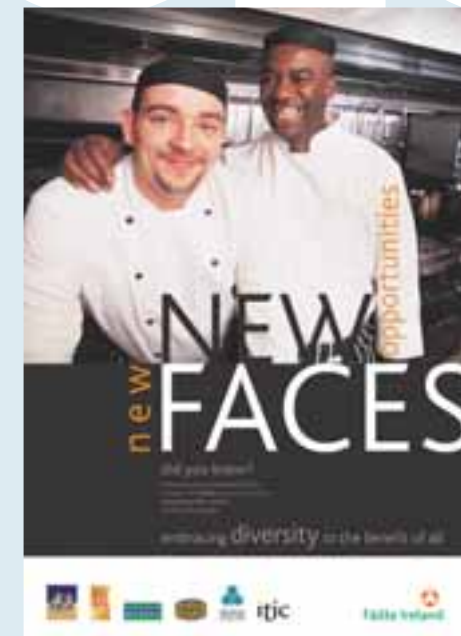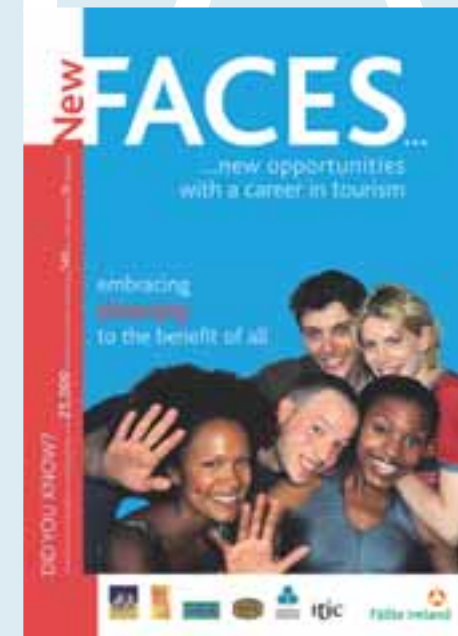
The Welcome Way

Translated into 13 languages: French, German, Spanish, Irish, Polish, Slovakian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Romanian, Russian, Chinese, Malaysian, Arabic.

Appendix 1

Useful Contacts

Educater
www.educater.ie

Department Enterprise, Trade and Employment
www.entemp.ie

www.europeanmovement.ie/ECFReport.htm

**Department of Social, Community
and Family Affairs**
www.welfare.ie

Employment Equality Authority
www.equality.ie

European Intercultural Workplace
www.EIWorkplace.net
The EIW project (2004-7) is a pan-European project led by DCU, investigating cultural diversity at workplaces in 10 different countries in the EU - it will identify issues, challenges and best practice across the EU and produce National and Trans-national Reports, a Database of relevant information and sources, and Sector Specific Training Materials for the intercultural workplace within EU (by 2007). Information may also be got by contacting

info@eiworkplace.net

Failte Ireland
www.failteireland.ie

IBEC
www.ibec.ie

Irish Hotel and Catering Institute
www.ihci.ie

Irish Hotels Federation
www.ihf.ie

Licensed Vintners Association
www.lva.ie

Managing Diversity – What's in it for business?
www.stop-discrimination.info
www.globesmart.com
www.executiveplanet.com

National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism
www.nccri.com

Restaurants Association of Ireland
www.rai.ie

Pearn Kandola
www.pearnkandola.com

Tred
www.tred.ie

Appendix 2

Work permit update to members
Source: Irish Hotels Federation

30th September 2004

Reception and Bar staff are still ineligible categories. An employee on a current work permit for the Restaurant is ineligible to be transferred to either of the above areas when work permit is being renewed.

An employer who wishes to apply for a work permit for a candidate currently working in another premise (on a valid work permit) must go through FÁS before applying to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. However, it is now possible for an applicant to change from one employer to another unless they are moving into one of the ineligible areas of Bar or Reception.

An employee on a current work permit who must leave work through no fault of their own i.e. redundancy is entitled to a new work permit provided the new employer is willing to apply for the new permit. The employer is not obliged to go through FÁS.

An employee who has worked in Ireland continuously for 6 years with the same employer is entitled to apply for a work permit with no expiry date.

An employee who has worked in Ireland continuously for the last 5 years on a valid work permit is entitled to apply for an Irish passport. (Department of Justice)

If a non EU National is married to an EU national for the last 3 years they are entitled to work in Ireland without a work permit.

An employee must have at least 15 months before expiry date on their passport in order to have a work permit application accepted. This applies to renewals and new applications.