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**HARNESSING THE
POTENTIAL**



**KEY FINDING AND
RECOMMENDATIONS**

HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL - KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2004, a number of organisations came together to explore how best to assist ethnic minority entrepreneurs to identify and overcome the barriers they were encountering in setting up their own businesses in Ireland. With funding from the EU EQUAL Programme, EMERGE developed a series of specific initiatives aimed at potential and existing ethnic minority entrepreneurs.

To date, the programme has assisted over 200 people from ethnic minority communities. EMERGE has provided training, mentoring and networking opportunities for participants, as well as, liaising extensively with policy makers, service providers and financial institutions.

Our experience in the Emerge Programme has reinforced our belief in the massive, but largely untapped, potential for entrepreneurial activity among the immigrant population of Ireland.

Key Findings

The following key findings have emerged from the programme:

- ◆ **Ireland Needs More Entrepreneurs.** The future success of the Irish economy rests with the development of small-to-medium sized businesses, including those established by ethnic minority entrepreneurs
- ◆ **Entrepreneurship Opportunities Should Be Highlighted.** This should be introduced at an early stage in the reception and integration process
- ◆ **Business Permission for Non-EEA Nationals needs to be Less Restrictive**

- ◆ **Specific Early Stage Training is Required** particularly by ethnic minority business people who are unfamiliar with the Irish business environment
- ◆ **Availability of Finance.** Application criteria for loans and grants should be proofed to the needs of ethnic minority entrepreneurs
- ◆ **Co-Ethnic Networks have a Vital Role to Play.** Ethnic minority business people should be supported to engage in a wide variety of business networks as a mechanism to drive growth

Key recommendations

We would encourage government to take the following proactive steps:

- ◆ **Mobilise State Agencies.** Ensure that outreach activities are developed to engage ethnic minority communities
- ◆ **Promote Ethnic Entrepreneurship.** A national information campaign should be launched to promote the enterprise option for members of ethnic minorities
- ◆ **Deliver Targeted Pre-Enterprise Training & Mentoring.** The EMERGE pre-enterprise programme should be mainstreamed through the CEB network
- ◆ **Support Stepping Stone Networks.** Ethnic minority entrepreneurs should be encouraged to engage in ethnic, local and national business networks. The FÁS One Step Up Programme could have a potential role
- ◆ **Review the Availability of Micro-Finance in Ireland** through an internationally-benchmarked best-practice report
- ◆ **Revisit Business Permission Regulations** which we currently believe to be unduly burdensome