



'Emerge' programme is aimed at budding ethnic entrepreneurs

Leah McLennan

OVER 200 ethnic entrepreneurs have attended start-up programmes since the establishment of Irish Business and Employers Confederation's (IBEC) special programme at the end of 2005.

The 'Emerge' programme, which is funded by the EQUAL Community Initiative through the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, focuses

on developing and expanding ethnic minority businesses in Ireland and helping non-Irish entrepreneurs to take their businesses to "the next level".

Patricia Callan, the director of the Small Firms Association, said yesterday that "the need for 'Emerge' is clear — there is currently no specifically designed mainstream programme that targets the particular problems encountered by ethnic minority entrepreneurs, such as cultural difference,

racism, language problems and social exclusion".

Chinedu Onyejelem, editor of Metro Eireann, added that some of the challenges currently faced by non-Irish entrepreneurs like himself, include the lack of an overall Government policy to deal with ethnic entrepreneurship in Ireland and lack of proper business and management skills.

One recent masterclass held by 'Emerge' in Athlone focused on assisted a group of non-Irish entrepreneurs

with their business skills by improving their networking skills, business development strategy, finance strategy and helping them to re-evaluate their businesses and assess their business opportunities.

Ms Callan said that a firm commitment from the Government to provide mainstream funding is now needed in line with the Small Business Forum Report.

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Rita Shah from Kenya, director and founder of Shabra Plastics, a Monaghan-based plastics manufacturing and recycling company, was the recent winner of the inaugural permanent tsb Ethnic Entrepreneur of the Year Award



Patricia Callan of the SFA