

Discussion Paper for AIAC

Safety Considerations in Landbase Employment of Non-English Speaking Migrant Workers

1. The extension of the European Community has resulted in an influx of migrant workers from new members states, attracted by higher wage rates and a perceived higher standard of living. A high proportion avail themselves to landbase industries where their previously acquired skills may be best used.
2. However, they are unaware of the generally higher safety standards in the UK and different emphasis on standard working practices, evolved to meet climate and topographical conditions. Without competence in the English language, there is an immediate barrier, coupled with a complete absence of safety information in the migrants' native tongue.
3. Competent and reputable employers understand these difficulties, resulting in risk assessments removing migrants from certain tasks but at the same time failing to allow them to carry out work which, if they could have procedures explained in their own language, would enable them to work more fruitfully, to the benefit of both employer and employee. Also removed is any prospect of the government's wish to upskill the workforce.
4. Lack of verbal communication results in the indigenous workforce feeling vulnerable to the unintended or misconstrued actions of migrants as "other people at work", unable to give or comprehend, the warning shout or report defects.
5. The solution is for government to be reminded that there is an opportunity with immigration to fill skills shortages but this is being frustrated by lack of funds to employ interpreters to –
 - translate training materials, be available during courses and tests, bearing in mind that certain tests need a separate interpreter to achieve standards :
 - translate safety guides,
 - advise employers and HSC/HSE if necessary.
6. It is therefore suggested that the AIAC remit this to HSC to bring this matter to the attention of government ministers.

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