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### Warning of rise in racism

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IRISH ATTITUDES towards immigrants are hardening as people search for someone to blame for their worsening economic situation, a leading NGO has warned.

Crosscare Migrant Project, which provides information to migrants, has also appealed to the Government to maintain funding for projects to assist immigrants to integrate into Irish life.

Conor Hickey, director of the Crosscare Migrant Project, said yesterday people “rolled out the red carpet for migrants” willing to do the jobs they were not willing to do a few years ago. This carpet is being “rolled back” against a backdrop of rising unemployment and the threat of racism, he said.

Mr Hickey said a poll published in The Irish Times this week, which showed 72 per cent of people want to see the number of non-Irish immigrants here reduced, demonstrated there is a danger of racism rising as people feel the pinch from the recession.

“We have very little to show from the years of the Celtic Tiger. Our roads, transport system and banks are all in a mess but the one thing we have achieved is a vibrant multicultural society that has enriched our society,” he said.

At the launch of a new Crosscare Migrant Project Living in Ireland booklet to help migrants integrate into society, guest speaker Dil Wickremasinghe, who presents the Global Village show on Newstalk, cited a recent example of racism in Ireland.

She said she received a large amount of abusive text messages during a programme dealing with immigration. About 60 per cent of the texts received during a show discussing the call by Mayor of Limerick, Fine Gael councillor Kevin Kiely, for the deportation of EU nationals who fail to secure employment in Ireland, were abusive.

Crosscare Migrant Project is appealing to the Government ahead of next month’s budget to maintain funding for projects aimed at assisting immigrants to integrate into Irish life. The McCarthy report proposed cuts in the area of social integration, including the abolition of the Office of the Minister for Integration and a reduction of 1,000 in the number of language support teachers.

Joe O’Brien, policy officer of Crosscare Migrant Project, said the NGO was very concerned about the proposed cutbacks.

The Crosscare Migrant Project booklet Living in Ireland provides practical information on education, healthcare, accommodation, culture and society in Ireland. It is available in several languages and is online at [www.livinginireland.ie](http://www.livinginireland.ie)

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2009/1126/1224259488680.html>