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Association of Labour Providers Press Release

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Government deceives migrant workers into paying £90 for something they will get for nothing

From 1 May this year the Government will be deceiving migrant workers from the European Union into paying £90 to register under the Accession States Worker Registration Scheme. The Home Office website sets out the benefit to workers of registering as: "Once you have been working legally in the United Kingdom for 12 months without a break you will have full rights of free movement and will no longer need to register on the WRS."

However, the WRS will automatically end on 30 April 2009 and from that date workers from the eight Accession States will have full rights of free movement. Under European law the WRS cannot be extended unless the government could demonstrate that failure to do so would disrupt the labour market. As the scheme is merely a registration scheme it could not have this effect.

Mark Boleat, Chairman of the Association of Labour Providers, said:

"The government should abolish the scheme immediately. It has served little useful purpose, merely counting those workers who choose to register while ignoring those who do not. The resultant statistics are of very limited value as the figures recorded are gross, taking no account of workers who leave the country. The government already has access to much better information on the effect on the labour market through national insurance records.

If the scheme continues after 1 May this year the government will be misleading low paid workers into paying £90 for full rights of free movement in a year's time, which they will enjoy in any event.

The position has been explained to the government but it seems unwilling to acknowledge let alone discuss the issue. The government's Illegal Working Group, the forum in which the scheme is discussed with relevant stakeholders, has not met for nearly a year notwithstanding the Home Office website saying that it "meets approximately three times per year, [and] provides members with an opportunity to contribute to and improve Government policy". Letters to ministers and questions to officials have gone unanswered.

The scheme should be an embarrassment to the government, levying a £90 charge to workers, often on minimum wage, for a form filling exercise."

**Representing and supporting labour providers in the agriculture, fresh produce
food manufacturing and packing sectors**

Wiktor Moszczynski of The Federation of Poles in Great Britain adds:

“The Federation of Poles in Great Britain fully supports the statement of the Association of Labour Providers concerning the early abolition of the Worker Registration Scheme for A8 citizens not only for the reasons stated by the Association but also because it places many employers and workers in an invidious position where they are advised by Home Office officials that it is no longer necessary to join the WRS but then find that if they have failed to register then they are not eligible for Job Seekers Allowance and other benefits once they find themselves redundant. Also the statistics emanating from the Worker Registration Scheme have proved highly unreliable as has been reported by the Federation on a number of occasions.

Once the scheme is abolished it will be necessary to ensure that A8 country citizens will now be available for benefits in line with benefits available to all EU citizens.”

ENDS

Notes:

The Association of Labour Providers (ALP) is the specialist trade association for organisations that provide and use temporary, contract and seasonal workers within the food, agricultural and other GLA regulated sectors.

The ALP is a centre of expertise and good practice on temporary labour issues for both labour providers and labour users alike. The ALP's goal is to help improve the standard of labour provision in the food supply chain whilst supporting the need for an ethically managed, cost effective, flexible labour force within the sector.

A list of members and further information can be found at www.labourproviders.org.uk.

The Federation of Poles in Great Britain contact is Wiktor Moszczynski, Press Officer, Federation of Poles in Great Britain, 238-246 King Street, London W6 0RF, tel 0207 456 9931; 07711 912 188