

## FLAC College Societies: Flying the student flag for access to justice



*Pictured at the launch of NUIM FLAC are (front row, L-R) Sinéad Finnerty, Peter O Loughlin, Dr Louise Kennefick, Sé Sweeney McCabe (back row, L-R) Liam Sunner, Deirdre McGowan, Kevin Clarke, Matt McDermott, Patrick Cagney and Zsé Varga, FLAC Volunteer and Centres Manager.*

**F**riday 24 February saw the launch of the latest addition to the FLAC College Societies family at NUI Maynooth. Speaking at the event, Zsé Varga, Volunteer & Centres Manager of FLAC, commented on how the centre will benefit both the students who run the clinics and those seeking legal information.

NUI Maynooth FLAC joins the four current student societies at University College Cork, Trinity College Dublin, NUI Galway and Dublin City University.

NUI Maynooth FLAC will hold clinics on campus at 7pm every Tuesday in the Iontas Building. The clinics will provide basic legal information to the NUI Maynooth students via 8 law students supervised by a legal practitioner. Spokesperson for NUIM FLAC Sinead Finnerty said the group was looking forward to using its knowledge and training in helping the community in any way it could.

The FLAC student societies play a very important role in the work that FLAC does. They operate independently of FLAC's head office but work closely with the organisation to further the aims of access to justice. They have

held campaigns in conjunction with FLAC on many issues. FLAC college societies are the first introduction for many law students to Public Interest Law. Students benefit from the practical experience gained from attending clinics and working with qualified solicitors and barristers as well as getting the opportunity to apply the legal knowledge and skills they learn in the lecture hall to real life legal problems.

FLAC college societies provide a very important service to the students they assist. The main issues include landlord and tenant law, minor public order offences and employment law.

The student FLAC societies also provide training for members to ensure they are able to assist students with legal problems. Training seminars typically include issues like landlord and tenant law, employment law and the law around public order offences.

The societies are a fantastic opportunity for people studying law to get involved with law's practical side from the very start of their careers.

*Eoin Coffey is Convenor of UCC FLAC and a former Legal Intern at FLAC HQ.*

## Work permit success for Bulgarian and Romanian nationals

FLAC welcomes the recent decision by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation to amend their work permit policy in relation to Romanian and Bulgarian nationals.

In a case initiated by Nasc, the Irish Immigrant Support Centre, assisted by Brophy Solicitors and Michael Lynn BL, the State was asked to reconsider their position on the work permit requirement for Romanian and Bulgarian citizens.

Originally, the Irish state was of the opinion that Romanian and Bulgarian nationals with Irish citizen children would not be entitled to work permits here (unless they had already fulfilled other requirements granting access upon accession). The basis for this opinion was that they believed that the ruling in the *Ruis Zambrano v Office National de l'emploi (ONEm)* case did not apply to individuals from Romania and Bulgaria respectively.

PILA, the public law interest project of FLAC, facilitated legal advice on this issue for NASC through its *pro bono* referral scheme. On foot of the legal advice, PILA organised a working group bringing together the NGOs and practitioners who resolved this important issue which will help certain Romanian and Bulgarian nationals realise their employment rights.

In March 2011, the Court of Justice of the European Union handed down its ruling in the *Zambrano* case. The Court held that an EU member state could not refuse the third country national parent of a dependent EU citizen child the right to live and work in the member state of which the child is a citizen.

The Irish Government has since indicated that Romanian and Bulgarian parents of Irish citizen children will be granted access to the Irish labour market without need of work permits.

□ The Dept of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation website has been updated: [bit.ly/djei\\_change](http://bit.ly/djei_change)