

'I've been asked to return to my home country by one of my lecturers'

- **an exploration of discrimination experienced by Eastern European women in Tyne and Wear**

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We are currently involved in a research project with the International Community Organisation of Sunderland, looking at the experiences of Eastern European (EE) women living in Tyne and Wear. The research involves a two-step process; firstly an anonymous online survey asking EE women about their experiences of discrimination and access to services, and secondly a series of focus groups with EE women and interviews with service providers.

Previous research in this area has identified that, since the Brexit referendum in 2016, EE migrants have experienced an increase in both objective and subjective vulnerability (Lahuerta & Iusmen, 2021), verbal abuse (Lumsden et al, 2019; Rzepnikowska, 2020), and psychological distress as a consequence of discrimination at work (Martynowska et al, 2020).

Initial responses to our survey include references to discrimination experienced at university, including the quote in the title. Another respondent identifies herself as a recent graduate, and writes about her belief that it is the EE surname on her CV that prevents her from obtaining employment.

The University of Sunderland's own Inclusion, Diversity and Social Responsibility annual report 2020-21 (UoS, 2021) notes that 6.4% of our students come from the EU, but does not identify whether this group is classified as white or BAME. Rzepnikowska (2020) identifies that racism or xenophobia can be underestimated or hidden where the victims are 'white'. We hope to prompt a conversation about how we might mitigate this experience for our students, both at university and in preparation for the workplace.

References;

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