

Introduction

Ireland has only recently become a country of immigration, but changes have been quite rapid and have changed the country significantly. The lack of a long history of immigration is reflected in how immigration and integration policies are made, but it also has affected the collection of immigration related data and research on this topic in Ireland. Policy making has frequently been ad-hoc, concerned primarily with dealing with problems as they arose (MacÉinri, 2001). A more coherent strategy has emerged in recent years since the establishment of the Ministry for Integration in 2007, largely as a response to the very high levels of migration from the new EU member states after accession. Immigrants before this were largely considered necessary to address shortages in the Irish economy (ICI, 2003b), but the current discourse emphasises diversity and the changing nature of Irish society (OMI, 2008). “Interculturalism” has become the term of choice, referring to the idea that different cultural groups should not only live side by side, but interact with each other (NCCA, 2005). Whilst this does suggest that integration is not a one-sided process, it is not clear how successfully this concept is implemented in reality.

Data collection on immigration equally reflects the relatively recent nature of migration in the country. There are no large-scale immigrant specific surveys, and existing data sources such as the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) or the Census all have severe limitations. The definition of an immigrant is often based on nationality, and even though place of birth is recorded in the QNHS, this information is often missing for the non-Irish born, so that official statistics are often based on nationality rather than birthplace (O’Connell and McGinnity, 2008). The QNHS furthermore does not generally include ethnicity questions, with the exception of the equality module. Moreover, data from this source only give figures for New Member State (NMS) migrants, not for individual countries of origin. The Census also records nationality and place of birth, but the Central Statistics Office (CSO), as well as other official accounts, define immigrants as non-Irish nationals. The term therefore is not linked to ‘ethnicity’ or ‘ethnic origin’ (Wickham et al., 2008). Whilst this is not ideal, using nationality to indicate migration background is not as problematic in Ireland as it would perhaps be in other countries, where naturalization rates are likely to be much higher than in a country where immigration is such a recent phenomenon. When figures are cited below, these refer to nationality, unless otherwise stated.

Academic research on immigrants in Ireland has changed in line with the different immigrant groups that arrived to the country, and focuses largely on asylum seekers, specific ethnic groups and natives’ attitudes towards immigrants. Whilst previously relatively little research existed on migration to Ireland, the field has been growing in recent years, but despite a large number of studies emerging, this has largely happened in an ad hoc rather than a systematic fashion (MacÉinri and White, 2008). Reflecting the arrival of NMS immigrants after 2004, research on Polish immigrants is only now emerging, and is largely comprised of small scale qualitative studies. Below, available sources are summarized and discussed, but it will become clear that there are large gaps in the current knowledge about Poles in Ireland that need to be addressed.

Immigration in Ireland

1.1 Migration history

(a) General immigration patterns

Overview

Before the Second World War, less than 3,000 non-Irish national resided in the country (ICI, 2003b). Whilst most of Europe was experiencing net inward migration after the war (Garson and Loizillon, 2003), Ireland has for a long time been associated with high levels of emigration, particularly to Great Britain, the United States and Australia (Ruhs, 2009). Even in the late 1980s the country was losing up to 40,000 of its population per year (Barret and Duffy, 2008). Non-Irish nationals, with the exception of those born in the United Kingdom who had gained this right previously, were permitted to reside and work in Ireland for the first time when the country joined the EU (ICI, 2003b). Yet numbers remained very low for several decades. With the rapid economic growth from the 1990s onwards and job creation on a large scale, the Republic of Ireland, also called the 'Celtic Tiger', saw a change to net immigration by the early 2000s. Also, there was a large increase of asylum applications (Quinn, 2009; Ruhs, 2009). Ireland became one of the countries with the highest level of inward migration in the OECD (OECD, 2008). This was first driven by return migration, which made up around half of the immigrant inflows, but by the mid-90s an increasingly diverse population entered the country (Barret and Duffy, 2008). Between 2002 and 2004 new peaks were reached in immigration flows from non-EEA countries (Quinn, 2009: 15). The biggest shift occurred with the accession of the ten New Member States (NMS) in 2004. Ireland was one out of only three countries to allow new EU citizens full access to the labour market (Barret and Duffy, 2008), although this was not the case for the most recent accession countries Romania and Bulgaria. Overall immigration levels peaked between 2004 and 2007 due to the substantial inflow of NMS immigrants which were still high levelling off in 2007 and 2008 (Quinn, 2009: 15). With the severe impact of the global economic crisis in Ireland, immigrant levels have dropped significantly in recent years (Krings, 2010) although this decrease had already begun before the onset of the crisis (Ruhs, 2009).

The most recent Census from 2006 shows that around 10 percent of residents in Ireland were non-Irish nationals (CSO, 2007). Numbers of foreign-born are even higher, with almost 15 percent having been born outside of the Republic (1.2 percent are born in Northern Ireland), compared to 6 percent in 1991 and just over 10 percent in 2002 (Ruhs, 2008). The percentage of non-Irish nationals in the labour force is higher than in most other EU countries (OECD, 2004). Also the timeframe over which this change occurred is remarkably short compared to other countries, where similar percentages were only reached after several decades of more or less steady immigration flows (Turner, 2009). With the economic downturn, some immigrants are certainly returning home or moving elsewhere to find better opportunities, and indeed Irish people are emigrating again on an increasing scale (Ruhs, 2009). Overall, however, many immigrants are staying, and it can be expected that Ireland will remain an immigration country (MCA, 2008).

Countries of origin

In the 1990s the majority of immigrants came from the United Kingdom, with the rest originating in roughly equal amounts from the rest of the European Union, the United States and the rest of the world respectively. Figures for the United States declined in the 2000s, whereas numbers from the rest of the EU and other parts of the world became similar and eventually even overtook those from the UK (ICI, 2003a).

The high numbers of British immigrants are unsurprising considering the historical links between the countries. Out of the UK immigrants living in Ireland, 17 percent indicated 'Irish' ethnic background in the 2006 Census, and almost half were Catholic. Many lived in households of mixed Irish and UK nationality (CSO, 2008). A significant proportion of these immigrants therefore have Irish roots, and close family connections, frequently having migrated together with an Irish return migrant. Linguistic similarity is also likely to be a factor in the migration decision and, together with the establishment of large US owned multinationals in Ireland, goes some way in explaining the relatively notable presence of Americans.

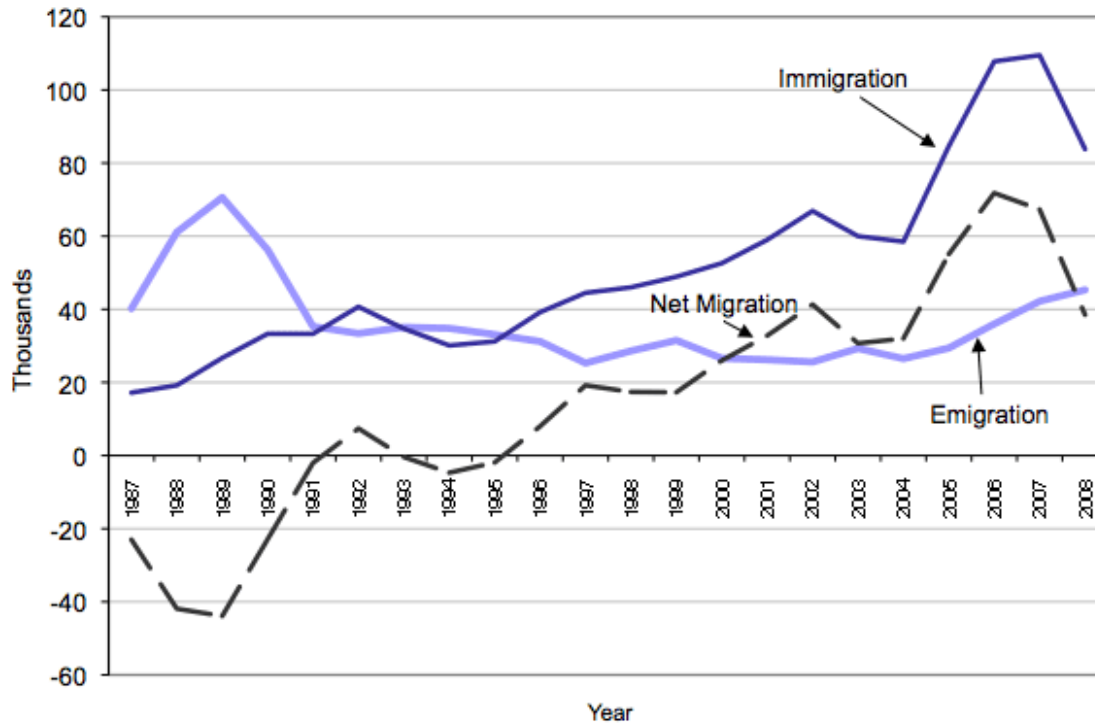
Other countries of origin of immigrants in Ireland have no notable historical links to the country, and migration is determined by other factors (Fahey and Fanning, 2010). Programme refugees from Hungary, Chile, Vietnam, Iran, Bosnia and Kosovo were admitted to the country after the WWII (Galvin, 2006). Furthermore there was an increase in asylum seekers from various countries in recent years (Ruhs, 2009). The largest increase in numbers has been in the EU nationality category, which is largely due to the arrival of NMS migrants. There is no historic link as such between these countries and Ireland specifically, and recent migratory flows are largely the outcome of the opening up of the labour market.

The relatively active recruitment of non-EEA students explains the high numbers of Chinese students in the country. Ireland is also quite popular for English language learning amongst both EU and non-EU students, who come to study and work in the country for a limited amount of time either on exchange programmes, specific language courses or to complete a degree. They often fill low skill and low paid positions to finance their stay. The presence of other nationalities is often the result of availability of particular skills in a country, which is exemplified by the recruitment of Philippine nurses and Indian IT specialists. Refugees and asylum seekers, the other important group of non-EEA migrants, largely come from Nigeria and Romania (Watson et al., 2007).

Numbers of immigrants over time

The change from net emigration to net immigration occurred during the 1990s, as Figure 1 illustrates, and inward migration flows peaked in 2006 and 2007 after the accession of the NMS.

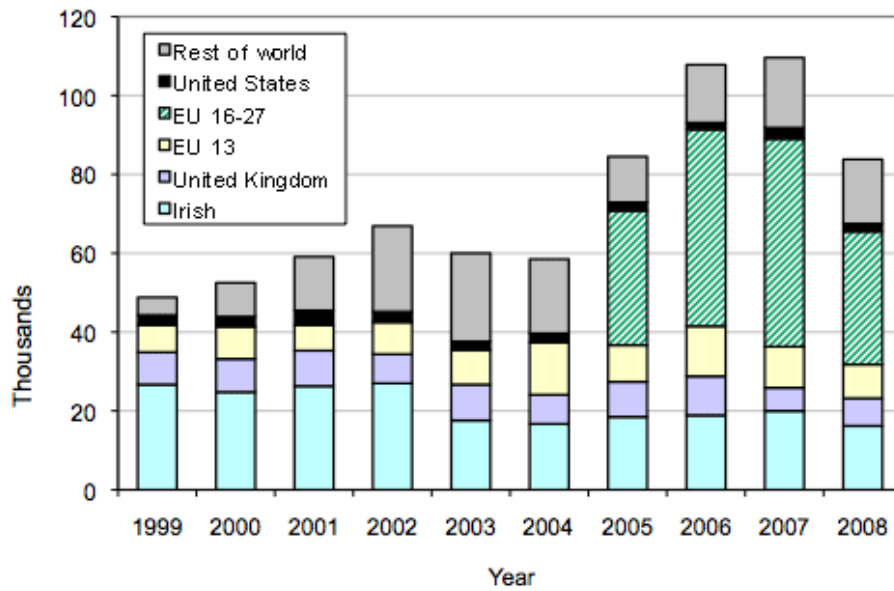
Figure 1 – Immigration and emigration in Ireland



Source: Ruhs, 2009. CSO data. Immigrants are defined as residents of Ireland who did not reside in the country on April 30th of the previous year

In Figure 2, immigration flows are broken up by immigrant groups based on the region of origin. NMS were included into the 'rest of world' category prior to 2005. It is evident that numbers of Irish return immigrant fell over time, whereas increasing numbers of immigrant came from other countries outside the EU and the United States. The massive influx of NMS migrants after EU accession is well illustrated in this graph. In addition to this, the number of asylum seekers rose steadily with a peak of 11,634 in 2002, and has been falling since. The majority of applications come from Nigerians and Romanians, although the latter can no longer apply after their country joined the EU (Ruhs, 2009). In 2008, 26.1 percent of applications were from Nigerians, 6.1 percent from Pakistanis, 5.3 percent from Iraqis and 4.7 percent from Georgian and Chinese nationals respectively. The remaining applications came from a diverse range of nationalities (Ruhs, 2009).

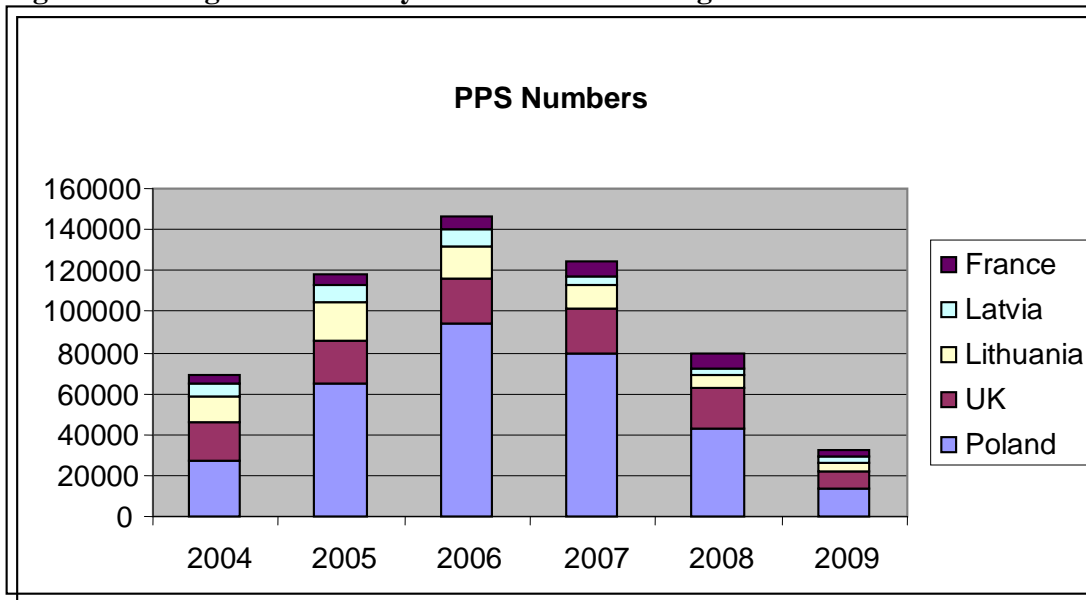
Figure 2 – Immigration flows by origin region



Source: Ruhs, 2009. CSO data.

Focusing on the main origin countries of recent migrant flows, based on the PPS (Personal Public Service) numbers issued in Figure 3, illustrates that the largest group was from Poland, followed by immigrants from the UK, Lithuania, Latvia and France. Numbers increased most strongly for NMS migrants, peaking in 2006, and falling steadily since.

Figure 3: Immigration flows by main countries of origin



Source: Krings, 2010..

Current Immigrant Population in Ireland

The most complete date comes from the Census 2006, but is now outdated, as flows continued to remain high after this date. Table 1 illustrates numbers recorded in the Census, which are likely to be an underestimation even at the time, as immigrants may be less likely to participate. The 2006 Census also for the first time collected information on ethnicity. ‘White’ ethnicity made up almost 95 percent of the population, with 1.3 percent indicating ‘Asian’, and just over 1 percent indicating ‘Black’ (O’Connell and McGinnity, 2008).

Table 1: Top Ten Migrant Groups by Nationality and Sex (2006)

	Total	Male	Female
UK	112,548	56,210	56,338
Poland	63,276	40,288	22,988
Lithuania	24,628	13,764	10,864
Nigeria	16,300	7,371	8,929
Latvia	13,319	7,170	6,149
USA	12,475	5,572	6,903
China	11,161	6,018	5,143
Germany	10,289	4,676	5,613
Philippines	9,548	3,933	5,615
France	9,046	4,493	4,553

Source: CSO (2008).

Figures for the years following the Census are presented in Table 2, and are based on the Quarterly National Household Survey. As Barrett and Kelly (2008) note, the QNHS is a relatively reliable source of migration data, although it may to some extent undercount immigrants. It is clear that NMS migrants are the largest group of immigrants in Ireland. The amount of work permit holders, largely in the EU category, on the other hand, has declined as a result of more restrictive policies, as low skilled migration was increasingly sourced from within an enlarged EU, as well as a consequence of the recession (Krings, 2010).

Table 2: Estimated Number of Persons Aged 15 Years and Over Classified By Nationality (thousands) (2006-2009 Quarter 2)

	2006	2007	2008	2009
<i>UK</i>	89.5	90.6	99.4	93.8
<i>Rest of EU15</i>	47.2	48.1	42	45.7
<i>NMS</i>	121.1	180.9	207.4	182.6
<i>Non-EU</i>	131.9	119.5	130.5	122.7
Total non-Irish nationals	371.7	439	479.3	444.8

Source: Krings (2010) CSO data.

Full-time foreign students from non-EEA countries amount to almost 35,000. About one third of these are English language students, whereas the majority is in higher or further education (MacCormaic 2009). There are no reliable estimates regarding the number of irregular immigrants, and they vary between 15,000 and 50,000 (IOM, 2006). Most of these are likely to have been legally resident but may have become illegal after the expiration of work permits or the rejection of their asylum application (Krings, 2010).

Migration History of Poles in Ireland

Few Poles lived in Ireland before their country gained EU membership in 2004, but this rapidly changed, with increasing numbers moving to Ireland soon after accession. Inflows peaked in 2006 (Krings, 2010), but remained relatively high until the recession. Within only a few years, Polish immigrants became an important presence in Ireland, and are likely to remain so even if some may choose to return or move elsewhere as the economic situation in Ireland worsens (MCA, 2008). As a result, first research findings have been emerging in recent years focusing on Poles living in Ireland, but these studies are largely limited to small scale qualitative studies that can only provide some general insights into Polish migration. This should change in the near future, as various researchers have studied Polish migration and are beginning to publish findings that will address some of these shortcomings.

Various factors have been cited to motivate Polish people to come to Ireland. The main push factors are linked to the process of economic and political transition in Poland that was accompanied by falling living standards and rising unemployment (Grabowska, 2003). The goal of Polish migrants was earning and saving money to provide better futures for them and their families back in Poland (Kropiwek, 2006). These push and pull factors of a mainly economic nature were the main motivation to come to Ireland, but these often went beyond simply earning a certain amount, and included gathering work experience that could be beneficial for their future career (King-O'Riain, 2008). Many saw no opportunities for professional developments and improvements, and university leavers in particular were often quite disillusioned about the opportunities available for them in Poland (Grabowska, 2003).

Pull factors that led to Ireland becoming a popular destination for Poles who were willing to migrate are largely due to the fact that Ireland was one of the few countries to allow immediate access to its labour market after Poland's EU accession. Immigrants are well aware of their rights as European citizens, and legal status is certainly a key aspect (MCA, 2010b). In a survey conducted before accession, Polish people indicated a high willingness to migrate to Western European countries for work, but Ireland did not feature significantly as a destination country (Grabowska, 2003). Ireland's decision to open its labour market must therefore be considered as a decisive factor. A further important pull factor was the favourable economic climate in Ireland with relatively high wages and easy availability of work, as well as the better conditions within workplaces, although the latter seemed to primarily emerge as a reason for staying rather than moving in the first place (Grabowska, 2003). English language is a further factor in favour of Ireland as a destination, as it is widely taught in Poland, and many migrants see spending time in Ireland as an opportunity to improve their level of English as well as gaining other occupational skills (Kropiwek, 2006). Whilst Polish immigrants are largely Catholic, which may attract them to a majority Catholic country like Ireland, this was not cited as a motivation by immigrants who were interviewed by Kropiwek (2006). Bushin (2009) also notes that the small population, environment and friendliness of Irish people attracted them to Ireland, and that quality of life was an important concern. Also, social networks with friends and family who have already migrated are important, as many immigrants needed immediate access to a job (Kropiwek, 2006). These networks are relatively new, due to the recent nature of migration, but developed rapidly after accession. The importance of these factors is likely to shift over time, with economic motives potentially becoming less important for decisions to stay than other concerns.

Numbers of Polish Immigrants

Before EU accession, Polish people required work permits to legally take up employment in Ireland. Numbers were quite low, but growing from 188 work permits in 1999 to 3142 in 2002 (Irish Department of Social and Family Affairs, 2008). Applications for social insurance numbers were also quite low until 2004, remaining below 4,000 per year (CSO, 2009). Nowadays, immigrants from Poland are by far the largest group of immigrants from the NMS in Ireland, with a figure of 63,276 in the 2006 Census (CSO, 2008), which is likely to be an underestimation. The inflow of NMS migrants peaked in 2006 and has declined since then due to the improvement of

the Polish labour market and the already diminished pool of potential migrants (MCA, 2008; see also Figure 3). PPS (social insurance) numbers are the only relatively reliable source of immigration data divided by origin country between Census years. PPS numbers are required to work, and for some other purposes, but they do not represent all immigrants. They remain valid so that a return migrant would not have to reapply for one. Anecdotal evidence does suggest that many Poles register and work for some months before returning (McÉinri and White, 2008). Also, dependents, such as children, will not always be required to have such a number, as it is only required for certain purposes. Furthermore, the issuing of these numbers cannot in any way inform us of individuals who have left the country, which is a severe limitation. In 2004, 27,291 Polish nationals applied for one, 64,612 in 2005, 93,606 in 2006 and 79,678 in 2007 and 42,476 in 2008 (CSO, 2009).

The above figures show that around half a million NMS migrants came to Ireland since 2004, the majority of whom is Polish, but currently around 200,000 actually live there, emphasising the more transient nature of the new East-West migration. Indeed, it also seems to be the case that going abroad to one of the Anglophone emigration countries like Australia or the United States is an alternative to returning to Poland for immigrants planning to leave the country (MCA, 2010b). Similarly, King-O'Riain (2008) observes that a certain number of Polish migrants in Ireland see the country as a 'trampoline' that can provide them with more opportunities as they move along to other countries, clearly exhibiting a much more global orientation.

Polish immigrants have a higher level of education on average than the Polish population overall, so that emigration is certainly selective (Barrett and Duffy, 2008). Also, Polish immigrants are relatively young and more likely to be male (CSO, 2008). Out of all immigrant groups, Poles had the most one sided gender distribution, with only 36 percent being female in 2006 (CSO, 2008). This, however, has changed more recently with the gender balance becoming more equal (Krings, 2010). Women are likely to join male partners who went to Ireland first in order to get established there, particularly if there are children present, as migrating together is often perceived as too risky (Bushin, 2009).

Regional Concentration

Immigrants live in every town in Ireland, but the majority are concentrated in cities and large towns. Whilst in 2006 58.4 percent of Irish citizens lived in urban areas, 76 percent of non-Irish did (CSO, 2008). Overall, most immigrants live in or near the capital, with over one third of the total non-Irish national population living in Dublin city or country, and well over half living in the Munster region according to Census 2006 figures (OMI, 2008). Polish people, together with UK born, are the only nationality that is represented in every town in Ireland (CSO, 2008). As with other immigrants, most Poles live in Dublin and surrounding areas, but are also present in smaller towns and more rural locations, which is largely due to the type of employment they engage in (CSO, 2008). The Polish Embassy in Dublin estimates that around 100,000 Poles live in Dublin, which is roughly half of the current Polish population in the country (Zelazowska, 2009).

Dublin is therefore the location of choice for data collection of Polish immigrants, as they are most concentrated there. Furthermore, in the current economic climate, new arrivals are more likely to attempt to find employment in the Greater Dublin area, as sectors such as construction and manufacturing, the main employers outside of bigger cities, are suffering most from the economic downturn.

1.2. Immigration policies

(a) General policies

Early Immigration Policies

Much of the early immigration policy in Ireland had been based on British legislation, and had to be changed gradually. Ireland, in contrast to the UK, was a young state and had to legitimise its claim to nationhood, making its approach to immigration policy quite tentative (Shanahan, 1999). Immigrant policies in Ireland have been characterised as ‘ad-hoc’ (MacEinri, 2001), but have become more ‘managed’ in the last decade (Quinn, 2007). Most of the legislative and institutional framework linked to asylum seekers has only been in development for the last ten to fifteen years, and policies dealing with other immigrants are generally of even later date. Immigration policy in Ireland is largely the responsibility of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment is in charge of labour market policy and running the employment permit scheme, whilst the Minister for Foreign Affairs has responsibility for issuing visas (Quinn, 2009).

The government prioritised the regulation of asylum seekers due to increased numbers from the late 1990s onwards, whilst other immigration policy was developed when the need arose (Quinn, 2009). As Ireland largely experienced emigration rather than immigration before 1990, little legislation was in place to deal with it. Furthermore, the first wave of inward flows was dominated by returning Irish expatriates, thus requiring little efforts in this area (Quinn, 2009: 16). Labour immigration was also for a long time seen to be temporary, so that the government did not perceive a need for integration policies (Boucher, 2008).

As a result, immigration law continues to be quite disparate and based on various pieces of legislation, including the ‘Aliens Act’ 1935 (Quinn, 2009). It granted wide ranging powers to the Minister for Justice to regulate all aspects of the lives of non-Irish nationals present in the country (ICI, 2003b). An alien is defined as a person ‘who is not a citizen of Saorstát Éireann’ (quoted in ICI, 2003b: 16). Ireland does not have to follow EU legislation in the area of immigration, and can choose to opt-in, so that European legislation only has a limited impact on immigration policy in the country (Quinn, 2009). When the ‘Handbook on Immigrants’ Rights and Entitlements in Ireland’ was published in 2003, it recognised that there was ‘no comprehensive legislation dealing with immigration’ to date (ICI, 2003b: xii).

As the immigration system continues to be mainly on an administrative footing, there can be lack of clarity regarding entitlements and procedures. NGOs working with immigrants have reported delays and inconsistent decision-making (Quinn, 2009: 50). According to Boucher (2008) Ireland has failed to create a systematic integration policy. The new ‘Immigration, Residence and Protection’ legislation has not yet been ratified, but aims to bring together immigration legislation, which should at least partly address these issues (Quinn, 2009).

Recruitment Policies

Before the economic boom, non-EU workers largely came with multinational corporations, but with the growing labour shortages, more efforts were made to recruit skilled workers. Government officials travelled to potential source countries, the country presented itself at job fairs, and various agencies attempted to recruit workers (Wickham et al., 2008). As it is illegal for many nationalities to enter the country and then change their status and seek work, most recruitment is done outside of the country, and hence outside to jurisdiction of Irish law. In some instances fees are charged by recruitment agencies, and inadequate or even misleading information may be given (Conroy and Brennan, 2003).

In the “Programme for Prosperity and Fairness” the government states in 2000 that immigration policy will be developed in line with the needs of the labour market and after consultation with the social partners (Department of the Taoiseach, 2000). A public consultation process was set up together with the establishment of an inter-departmental group on immigration

(ICI, 2003b). More recently, most labour market needs, however, were addressed by immigrants from within the EU (Krings, 2010).

Entry and Residence

The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform is in charge of immigration policies, with the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS), established in 2005, carrying out the administrative and statutory functions in the area of asylum, immigration and citizenship (Quinn, 2009). In 2007, the Junior Ministry for Integration was created, with the aim of addressing immigrant integration across government departments, agencies and services (Quinn, 2009). The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment is responsible for labour market policies, including the Employment Permits system (Quinn, 2009).

Entry into Ireland does not require a visa for EEA nationals and some other specified countries, whereas all other nationalities need to specify their reason for travel and apply for the relevant visa type. An Immigration Officer can refuse permission to land on various grounds for non-EEA nationals, such as having insufficient funds to support themselves, intention to take up employment without permission or lack of necessary documents. Under the Immigration Act 2003, carriers are responsible for ensuring that passengers have appropriate documentation; if this is not the case, the carrier is responsible for the return of the person (Quinn, 2009).

Residency rights are largely determined by country of origin and by the job a migrant worker performs, and whether an immigrant applies for refugee status (ICI, 2003b: 23). Ireland, as an EU member state, allows EU nationals to live and take up work, although access to the labour market is restricted for the most recent member states Bulgaria and Romania. It is notable that Ireland was one of the few countries that allowed NMS migrants access to its labour market without restriction after accession in the Irish Employment Permits Bill 2003. Access to welfare benefits, however, is restricted to people residing in the country for at least two years (Ruhs, 2009), which is discussed in more detail below. Bulgarians and Romanians need to apply for employment permits, but are treated preferentially to non-EEA applicants (Citizens Information, 2010). EEA nationals as well as Swiss nationals are also allowed to live and work in Ireland without restrictions, but any other nationals are not. If they are given permission, they receive a Certificate of Registration on their passport. Depending on their status, they receive a different type of immigration stamp that specifies whether they are allowed to take up employment, and if so with or without work permit and whether they are students (Quinn, 2009).

For immigrants from outside the EU, the Work Visa/Work Authorisation scheme came into place in 2000 to handle non-EEA nationals' migration and facilitate high skilled migration (Ruhs, 2005). It fast tracked the work permit applications for certain types of workers, whereas the state was somewhat more restrictive regarding less skilled migration, where labour market tests had to be carried out (Quinn, 2009). Between 1998 and 2008, numbers of work permits rose dramatically, and around 280,000 work permits were issued in total, largely in low skilled occupations (Ruhs, 2009). The numbers permitted under this system have fallen since the early 2000s as a result of the government attempting to balance the opening of the labour market to New Member State migrants (Barret and Duffy, 2008; Krings, 2010; Ruhs, 2009). The focus now is on recruiting EEA nationals primarily, as well as highly skilled immigrants from non-EEA countries to fill labour market shortages, as low skilled occupations are now largely being filled by NMS migrants. In 2007 new legislation came into place governing this, and certain occupational categories became ineligible for work permits. Most work permits since the new restrictions were put in place have been for Indian and Philippine nationals, who largely work in catering and nursing/medical occupations (Ruhs, 2009). In June 2009 rules were further tightened and jobs have to be advertised for longer than previously before employers can claim that they cannot fill a position with an EEA citizen. It is also important to note that fees for work permits are quite significant (Citizens Information, 2010).

Despite policies to limit the number of employment permit holders, some initiatives have helped improve the situation of current permit holders that were a reaction to the economic

downturn. Permit holders now have longer to look for a job before losing residency permission, and are not subject to a labour market means test. Also, immigrants who have stayed for five years on an employment permit do not need to reapply to continue working (Krings, 2010).

For certain high skilled professions a 'green card' system was introduced at the same time as the work permit system was restricted in 2007, where procedures are simplified and fast-tracked. Individuals either have to earn an annual salary of 60,000 Euros or work in particular sectors where skill shortages have been identified and earn at least 30,000 Euros (Ruhs, 2009). In addition to this, an intra-company transfer scheme allows temporary management transfers (Ruhs, 2009). As a result of the recession, the work permit scheme was further tightened, with no further permits being issued for jobs with a salary below 30,000 Euros. Spouses of work permit holders can now only work if they apply for their own work permit (Ruhs, 2009). If a person on a work permit becomes unemployed, they are entitled to stay and seek another job if they have worked for over 5 years. If they have worked for less than 5 years, they get 6 months to find a new position and then lose their right to reside in the state (Citizens Information, 2010).

Refugees make up the third notable group of immigrants in Ireland. Once they have been given refugee status, they enjoy full access to the labour market without the need for work permits. They also receive full social rights, but not whilst the cases of asylum seekers are being processed, where they are excluded from the labour market and placed in direct provision centres (Fanning, 2002). In 1999 the ban on working was lifted for asylum seekers who had lived in the country for over one year, but only about one third found work subsequently (Watson et al., 2007). Between 1992 and 2008, almost 10,000 applicants received refugee status, but the numbers of applications have fallen in recent years from a peak in 2002 (Ruhs, 2009). The rising numbers in the early 2000s prompted a range of policy changes as the government was not prepared for dealing with the increasing workload. The Refugee Applications Commissioner, a statutorily independent body, was established to consider applications. Decisions could be appealed at the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. Individuals from so called 'safe countries' where assumed not to be in need of protection unless they could prove otherwise (Ruhs, 2009).

A further group of largely temporary migrants are students, particularly from China. As non-European students have to pay higher fees than EU students, they are considered as an attractive source of revenue (ICI, 2003). In 2008, for example, almost 45,000 immigration stamps were issued to non-EEA students, which represents the stock figures of these students as they are required to register yearly (Ruhs, 2009). Regulation of English language schools was tightened after it emerged that certain schools were largely interested in selling visas to non-EEA nationals who were intent to work in Ireland rather than study. Currently, full-time students in a recognised course are allowed to work for up to 20 hours per week during term time and full time during holiday periods (ICI, 2003b: 82). There are plans to introduce a work permit scheme for non-EU students if they wish to access the labour market (Ruhs, 2009). The concern is that some students use enrolment in courses as a means of remaining in Ireland primarily to work (Krings, 2010), which mirrors earlier concerns. Students who graduated with a degree may remain in the country for six months under the Graduate Scheme, when they may work, with the idea of eventually applying for a work permit or green card (Citizens Information, 2010).

Illegal immigration is estimated to be fairly low due to the absence of land borders with immigrant sending countries (Ruhs, 2009). It is more likely that non-EEA nationals work illegally after having entered the country legally, either with a work permit that subsequently expired, or on a tourist visa. Also it is known that students frequently work more than the 20 hours they are allowed to (Ruhs, 2009). A number of laws have been passed to combat illegal immigration, providing the legal basis for deportation of individuals who violate the country's immigration laws, banning the smuggling of illegal immigrants, carrying of passengers without proper documentation and penalizing employers of illegal immigrants (Ruhs, 2009). The Immigration Act 1999 gave the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the power to deport illegally resident immigrants (Quinn, 2009). The number of deportations has risen somewhat since 2000, and it appears that the government is making renewed efforts to combat illegal immigration,

although there is not firm evidence of this due to the lack of reliable data (Ruhs, 2009). On the other hand, the government has introduced a 'Bridging Visa' that allows immigrants who became undocumented without fault of their own to gain legal residence to re-enter the work permit system (Krings, 2010).

Family reunification

Family members of EEA and Swiss nationals can join an immigrant worker in Ireland, even if they do not hold EEA/Swiss citizenship. Non-EEA immigrants can apply for family reunification if they are able to support their family without relying on public funds (ICI, 2003b: 50). Family members can reside in Ireland as long as the worker is in the country and is able to support them. They are not entitled to work unless they have their own work permit, which is a change from previous years, where this was less restrictive (Citizens Information, 2010).

Deportation and Assisted Return

Attempts are made to avoid the illegal trafficking of immigrants into the country, which is prohibited by the 'Illegal Immigrants Trafficking Act 2000'. As the section of the 'Aliens Act' dealing with the deportation of non-Irish nationals was found to be unconstitutional, the 'Immigration Act' came into place in 1999 to address this. Under certain conditions, illegally resident immigrants can be removed from the country. There are few avenues for individuals who reside in Ireland illegally to regularise their status. Under very rare circumstances leave to remain may be granted (ICI, 2003b: 206).

Ireland has introduced schemes to help immigrant workers return to their countries of origin. Voluntary assisted return is available to asylum seekers or irregular migrants from non-EEA countries operated by the International Organization for Migration. Since 2001, over 2,300 migrants received assistance to return home from Ireland (Krings, 2010). For immigrants from the NMS who lose their jobs and who do not qualify for the habitual residency condition for social assistance payments and who find themselves destitute a repatriation scheme operates (Citizens Information, 2010).

Citizenship and Naturalization

Ireland uses the *jus soli* principle, meaning that anyone born in Ireland is given citizenship, although this has been amended after the citizenship referendum in 2004, as discussed below. The same applies to anyone with one Irish parent or at least one Irish-born grandparent. Also, since the Good Friday agreement in 1998, automatic citizenship acquisition was extended to anyone born on the 'island of Ireland', this including Northern Irish-born individuals (Watson et al., 2007; Honohan 2010).

For others, the rules for naturalisation are laid down by the 'Irish Nationality and Citizenship Acts'. A non-Irish national can apply for citizenship and can be granted this at the discretion of the Minister for Justice, Equality & Law Reform. The individual has to be of full age, of good character, have resided in Ireland for at least one year prior to making an application, and in the eight years preceding that period, lived in Ireland for at least four years, intends to reside in Ireland after naturalisation and has made a declaration of loyalty to the State (ICI, 2003b: 17). Residence requirements are shorter for individuals who are married to an Irish citizen (ICI, 2003b: 51). Numbers of applications for naturalization have increased sharply, from just over 1000 in the year 2000 to over 7000 in 2006 (Quinn, 2009: 25). Individuals who have resided in Ireland legally for ten years but have not applied for naturalisation can receive a residence stamp that allows them to remain without a time limit (ICI, 2003b: 51).

Previously, non-Irish parents of Irish-born children could apply for residency based on the Irish citizenship of their child, which was implemented for around 11,000 families prior to 2003 (Ruhs, 2009). This was widely used, and maternity hospitals reported an increase of pregnant non-Irish citizens who availed of the opportunity to get an EU passport for their child (Watson et al., 2007). A referendum in 2004 led to the constitution being amended, so that from 2005 onwards, non-Irish parents are only entitled to Irish citizenship if one of the parents was

already lawfully resident for at least three out of four years preceding the birth or the child, excluding time spent as a student of asylum seeker (Ruhs, 2009). In 2005, however, non-Irish parents of Irish-born children could apply to remain under the Irish Born Child 2005 Scheme, which allowed them to remain for two years, with the opportunity to reapply after this time to renew this for up to three years, by when those that qualify could apply for citizenship status (Ruhs, 2009). Most of the 18,000 applications received were approved, and most of the renewals were also granted (Ruhs, 2009).

2. Integration in Ireland

2.1. General conditions

(a) State policies

Integration Philosophies

In government policy, immigrants were for a long time primarily seen as useful for addressing labour market shortages that arose from rapid economic growth. In the economic downturn in 2001, the government reassured the public that migrant workers were temporary, a ‘safety valve’ as the Tánaiste remarked (ICI, 2003b). The aim of recently introduced legislation and regulation of immigration is|:

“... intended to provide for the entry into the country of non-nationals with a view of supporting the social and economic goals of Irish society and the needs of Irish citizens, having regard for the protection of national security and public order, and the capacity of the state to integrate non-nationals.”
(Quinn and Hughes, 2005:1)

More recently, however, an integration discourse has emerged that emphasises the Irish emigration history, the more diverse nature of Irish society, and the need to learn from older migration countries to avoid some of the mistakes that were made. The establishment of a Minister for Integration was a clear step in this direction. In ‘Migration Nation’, published by the Office of the Minister of Integration (OMI) in 2008 it is stated that ‘Irish life as we know it from our history and experience as a people has been very much defined by migration’ and ‘that Ireland has a unique moral, intellectual and practical capability to adapt to the experience of inward migration’ (OMI, 2008: 7). Still one of the key aims continues to be to ‘control and facilitate access to Ireland for skilled migrant with a contribution to make’ (OMI, 2008: 9). ‘Interculturalism’ rather than ‘multiculturalism’ is the term referred to, referring to the aim of different cultures not simply living side by side, but engaging with each other (NCCA, 2006).

The Immigrant Council of Ireland (2003a) argued that migration policy has largely focused on controlling and excluding, and treats immigrants largely as economic units, rather than emphasising their rights and entitlements. The more recent efforts and more integration driven rhetoric have also been criticised. Some commentators argue that Ireland has developed an ‘anti-racist industry’ that co-opts anti-racism movements into a racial state thus stripping it of its critical potential. Indeed the notion of celebrating diversity is frequently cited by state bodies, whilst at the same time implementing exclusion on grounds of ethnicity. At the same time when large-scale immigration was considered necessary for economic development and large numbers of European migrants arrived, the state clamped down on immigration by new citizenship, immigration and asylum legislation (Lentin and McVeigh, 2006).

Integration Policies

Up until recently, Ireland did not have an explicit integration policy, except for refugees (Hughes et al., 2007:241). This changed with the establishment of the Office of the Minister for Integration in 2007 and the formulation of a more proactive stance regarding integration in 'Migration Nation' (Krings, 2010). The office aims to develop integration policy in partnership with other government agencies and non-governmental organisations. Yet it has been argued that Ireland's integration strategy is one of 'laissez-faire', and remains quite fragmented and project based (Boucher, 2008). On the other hand, Messina (2009) argues that the mass migration into Ireland since the 1990s followed a similar trajectory as that of other migration receiving countries decades earlier, but that policy changes seem to occur somewhat more rapidly.

It is policy to fund governmental and non-governmental initiatives to support diversity management in various community organisations and provide services for immigrants. Furthermore it emphasises that service provision should be mainstreamed, and that immigrant integration should be embedded in a more general social inclusion strategy (OMI, 2008). Importantly, however, budget cuts have been severe in this area, with the Office for the Minister of Integration (OMI) having seen its budget cut by 26 percent in 2008. Furthermore, the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism, which acted as a state advisory body, was abolished as a cost-saving measure (Krings, 2010).

There are no obligatory language courses, but learning the host country language is stated as one of the key issues in the integration statement by the Minister of Integration (2008). There is an effort to adapt the educational system to deal with the rapidly increasing amount of non-native speaker children. In 2008 almost 2,000 language support teacher posts were allocated to schools compared to only 262 in 2001/2002. Adults can to some extent take advantage of English classes offered by Vocational Education Committees, which are state funded. Furthermore, many documents related to the education system have been translated into some of the most common immigrant languages. Efforts have been made in the training of English language teachers in schools (OMI, 2008: 59). Despite widespread budget cuts due to the recession, language support in schools has largely been spared (Krings, 2010).

Ireland allows immigrants to vote in local elections, and in the case of EU migrants, voting in European elections (Ruhs, 2009). Further measures to combat discrimination and racism included the setting up of a Racial and Intercultural Office in the Garda Síochána, the Irish police force. Another initiative by the Irish government included the 'National Action Plan on Racism' in 2005 (Hughes et al. 2007: 239).

Other Policies affecting immigrants

Ireland has relatively strong anti-discrimination legislation that also affects immigrants. Discrimination on grounds of race, colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins in the areas of employment, vocational training and provision of goods, services, accommodation, education and the disposal of property. Also, legislation linked to rights in the work place applies to all employees regardless of nationality (OMI, 2008).

The particular issue of workplace exploitation has been taken up in the social partnership agreement of 2006 entitled 'Towards 2016', with several measures aiming at higher compliance with employment rights. One of these is the setting up of the National Employment Rights Authority on an interim basis, whereas other provisions are awaiting ratification (Krings, 2010). Also, the Employment Permits Act 2006 established that the work permit is granted to the employee rather than the employer, to protect immigrant workers (Ruhs, 2009).

Immigration and Social Welfare

It is of particular relevance within the context of the current economic downturn to consider the social welfare benefits available to the immigrant population. The aim of immigration policy has long been that service provision should be made within existing services and structures, which is

not without challenges as it does not always make more specific provisions when those would be required, for example with regard to language barriers or cultural practices (Galvin, 2006).

The Irish social welfare system offers social insurance and social assistance. When becoming unemployed, individuals who have contributed sufficiently to social insurance receive job-seekers benefit for up to 12 months. EU and non-EU workers can receive this, although the latter need a valid residence permit (MCA, 2010a). EU workers can combine their social insurance contributions from different EU countries to qualify for this (Krings, 2010). If an applicant does not qualify for this, but is 'habitually resident' in Ireland, they can receive jobseeker's allowance, which is means tested. To prove habitual residence, the applicant's life needs to show that their centre of life is in Ireland, for which length of residence, employment history and future intentions are considered. The same is true for other welfare payments such as child benefit, although certain benefits can be received without satisfying the habitual residence condition, largely because of pressure by the European Commission (MCA, 2010a).

The numbers of migrants from the EU15 and non-EU migrants on the unemployment register has increased more slowly than that of NMS migrants. For the former group this is largely due to being employed in more highly skilled occupations and in sectors that are less affected by job losses. For the latter it may be linked to a hesitation to sign on even though they enjoy similar rights, as they may lose their residence permit if they do not find a new job after six months. Also they may fear that a period of unemployment could have a negative impact on their applications for permanent residency (Krings, 2010). Active labour market policies are open to all unemployed people, but immigrants may be underrepresented as there are no particular efforts to involve them or offer programmes tailored to their needs (Krings, 2010).

(b) Majority attitudes

National and European Identities

Ireland for a long time was not considered to be racist, and a long tradition of anti-imperialism seemed to contradict this possibility. Yet this has been strongly challenged for example by McVeigh (1992), pointing to the way Irish identity has been constructed as a monoculture based on being a Catholic country with a Gaelic and white population to foster a strong sense of community. During the struggle for independence from the British Empire, the Gaelic and Catholic identity became linked with political freedom (Hutchinson, 1987). Yet the country was never a monoculture, and neither is racism new to Ireland, considering for example the experience of Travellers, and indigenous ethnic minority, Jews and Black-Irish people (Lentin, 2001). In Kohn's (1982) contested typological distinction, Irish nationalism is thus considered ethnic, not civic.

Focusing on survey data on national identity, it is useful to look at figures from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), which covered these issues in special modules in 1995 and 2003. The data show that criteria for 'being Irish' became more relaxed, with fewer people citing 'having been born in the country', 'having citizenship' and 'having lived in Ireland for most of one's life' as important. Equally, ethnic criteria such as speaking Irish, being Catholic and feeling Irish had less importance in 2003 than in 1995 (Watson et al., 2007). However, compared to other European countries, the Irish express a stronger national pride, a closer link to their nationality and a weaker affiliation to a European identity than the average. The definition of being Irish seemed to be particularly strongly linked to religion, place of birth and place of residence, and Irish respondents expressed particularly high pride in the country's history, sport and art and literature (Davis, 2003).

Attitudes toward Immigrants

In terms of attitudes about the desirable level of immigration to the country, Ireland is comparatively more open than other European countries (Hughes et al., 2007), although there has been a move towards more restrictive attitudes over time (Watson et al., 2007). Yet they are below a critical level, as Smith (2008) argues, and despite some negative media reporting and political discourse, migration never emerged as a key concern in electoral campaigns (Mac Cormaic, 2007).

The overall more positive attitudes in cross-national comparison have been argued to be largely the result of the favourable economic context where immigrants are likely to find employment. A comparative study by Turner (2009) suggests that these structural variables do not seem to be related systematically to attitudes, however, and he suggests that it may be a country's historical context and institutional set-up that mediate the impact of other factors. The relatively more liberal attitudes of the Irish population towards immigration to the country have also been attributed to the emigration experience of many Irish people, as well as the absence of a strong right-wing party (Garner and White, 2001; Krings, 2010). The country's largest anti-immigration group received only 0.1 per cent of the vote in 2007 (Ó Muineacháin and Gallagher, 2008). Relatively few racist crimes are recorded in Ireland, although this may also be linked to high levels of underreporting (Garner and White, 2001).

However, with the onset of the crisis, there is some indication that this may be changing. An Irish Times survey carried out autumn 2009 showed that 72 percent of people preferred immigrant numbers to be reduced, and almost on third wanted most immigrants to leave the country. The most noticeable change was amongst the younger cohort (18-24 years old), who are most affected by rising unemployment levels (O'Brien, 2009).

Attitudes to immigrants have also become more exclusionary over time, as Watson et al. (2007) illustrate with ISSP data. More people believed that immigrants had a negative impact on Irish society in 2003 than in 1995. The increase in negative attitudes was sharper than in other countries, quite likely reflecting the relatively new nature of immigration in Ireland and the relatively rapid increase of immigration of different ethnic origins in the years covered by the survey. A similar argument is made by Bail (2008), who groups Ireland together with other countries at the periphery of Europe, where immigration is relatively recent and hence debates about it comparatively unsophisticated. Racial and religious boundaries seem stronger in these countries than those with longer migration history, which may be linked to the relative homogeneity of new migration countries.

Attitudes towards asylum seekers are particularly negative, with a vast overestimation of actual numbers, belief that asylum seekers received significantly higher benefits than they do in reality, and a perception that the main reasons for applying for asylum were quality of life, employment and welfare benefits rather than safety (Haynes et al., 2009). In a qualitative study of a relatively disadvantaged area, Ní Chonail (2009) finds that when resources were scarce, immigrants served as scapegoats rather than dissatisfaction being directed at the government for providing inadequate services.

Focusing on attitudes towards Poles, a recent study found that prejudices towards Poles correlate with perceptions of realistic and symbolic threat and inter-group anxiety, although this does not necessarily translate into discriminatory behaviour, as measured by employment recommendations (Schneider and Morrison, 2009).

Integration in Public Discourse

For several years, largely before the influx of NMS migrants, the debate on immigrants in Ireland was focused on asylum seekers. Media coverage included the issue of non-Irish nationals receiving residency based on having an Irish born child. It was claimed that asylum seekers purposefully 'exploited' this, and had children with the aim of securing residency (Ruhs, 2009). Lentin and McVeigh (2006) argue that pregnant non-national mothers were problematised and even criminalised. Also, media coverage referred to asylum seekers largely as a 'problem',

'flood', and as 'bogus refugees' or 'illegal immigrants' whose real motives were economic (Lentin, 2001). The sudden growth in asylum application was most likely at the root of the negative turn of public discourse, and was accompanied with a certain increase in racial abuse (Lentin, 1998). This was particularly prevalent when asylum applications increased rapidly and when serviced, particularly in relation to accommodation, were strained in the early 2000s (Quinn, 2009).

Coverage of other immigrant groups is less negative, and some are even portrayed positively as hard workers, necessary for Ireland's economic development (Haynes et al., 2009). Currently, there is no notable anti-immigration stance taken by the media and by political parties in connection to the economic crisis, with some exceptions, although this may change if the economy further deteriorates. So far, the OMI has not recorded an increase in racist violence (Krings, 2010). Integration is discussed relatively little in public discourse, perhaps due to the relatively recent arrival of larger numbers of immigrants and the perception that much of this immigration was temporary rather than permanent (Bail, 2008).

(c) Immigrant integration patterns

Ireland's case is particular in so far that most immigrants have arrived at a time of economic growth, which can be expected to create favourable conditions for economic integration. Also, most immigrants come from Catholic countries and are of White ethnicity, which means that they are less at risk of discrimination on grounds of religion or skin colour (Barrett and Duffy, 2008). All this taken together may indicate that immigrants' integration in Ireland should be less problematic than perhaps in other countries, where the economic context surrounding their arrival was less favourable and where immigrants differed more across various characteristics from the native population. Yet, it is important to note that immigrants experience disadvantage in various areas, and that particular groups are at significantly higher risk of this than others.

The immigrant population in Ireland is highly educated, with a higher proportion of immigrants holding degrees than the native population, but does not seem to access jobs that are in line with their formal qualifications (Barret et al., 2006). Also, immigrants earn less than comparable natives (Barret and McCarthy, 2007). Whilst at first sight it seems that longer staying immigrants improve their labour market position, this is actually due to cohort effects, as Barret and Duffy (2008) show. The most recent arrivals are largely from the NMS and suffer the largest occupational gap. Yet, it has to be noted that the time frame for this study was relatively short, so that upward mobility may occur in the intermediate to long term.

In the labour market, immigrants of White ethnicity and from English speaking countries fare similarly well to Irish nationals. Other groups, however, have higher risk of unemployment and lower occupational attainment, and report discrimination more often both when looking for work and in the workplace, and this is particularly pronounced for Black respondents (O'Connell and McGinnity, 2008). The risk of discrimination seems to be highest when looking for work (O'Connell and McGinnity, 2008; Russell et al., 2008). English language skills are also positively related to wages, and those from non-English speaking countries have been found to suffer a wage penalty (Barrett and McCarthy, 2007; O'Connell and McGinnity, 2008). Immigrants of Black ethnicity in particular report high levels of discrimination when looking for work (O'Connell and McGinnity, 2008). This reflects findings from a survey by McGinnity et al. (2006) on subjective discrimination, where Black South and Central Africans reported the highest levels across various settings.

Immigrants are overrepresented in some sectors in particular, notably the hospitality sector, where almost 30 percent of the workforce was non-national in 2007 compared to less than 12 percent across the whole labour market. It is also a sector characterised by low wages and short-term employment (Wickham et al., 2008). They are also overrepresented in construction and the manufacturing industries, and non-EEA immigrants are strongly overrepresented in the healthcare sector (CSO, 2008).

The rising unemployment as a result of the recession in recent years appears to have affected immigrants more strongly, with higher numbers unemployed amongst non-Irish nationals than Irish nationals (Krings, 2010; MCA, 2008). In the first quarter of 2009, non-Irish nationals had an unemployment rate of 14.7 percent compared to 9.4 percent for Irish nationals, which may be at least in part due to the high level of immigrants in the sectors that are experiencing the most dramatic job losses (Ruhs, 2009). When comparing Live Register figures from April 2008 with those from January 2010, numbers have more than doubled for Irish nationals. The increase is slightly higher for non-Irish nationals overall, but the increase is most notable for NMS migrants, where the increase is more than threefold (CSO, 2010). Immigrants from the NMS are overrepresented in low-skilled jobs and the construction, industry and retail sectors that are most negatively affected in terms of job losses (Krings, 2010). It has to be noted, however, that this may be linked to the higher number of NMS migrants fulfilling the habitual residence requirement to be able to register.

Reports of subjective discrimination on grounds of ethnicity were relatively low in Ireland compared to other countries, but this may be due to the relatively recent nature of immigration and the favourable economic environment (EUMC, 2006). An Amnesty International (2001) study of racism in Ireland found that racist incidents on the street were the most commonly reported form of discriminatory experiences reported. Also, Black immigrants seem to have the highest risk of discrimination on any grounds (Russell et al., 2008).

2.2. Integration of Poles in Ireland

(a) General aspects

Perceptions of Polish Immigrants

The Polish are constructed as hard workers in the Irish media and in public discourse, and are valued as such (Kropiwiec, 2006). Their 'work ethic' in particular is commented on favourably. They are the group most frequently mentioned when people were asked to identify recent immigrants, and were perceived as the best integrated into Irish society. Reasons given for this by Irish respondents were their hard work, cultural similarity and being Catholic (Haynes et al., 2009). Even with the recession, the discourse has largely not turned on Polish people, and it has even been claimed that Irish people appreciate that many Polish stay in the country despite the problems, and have put down roots (Steen, 2010). Debaene (2008) argues that the host community has developed a considerable interest in the Polish Community, as well as the Polish language and culture.

Research shows that NMS migrants did not seem to displace Irish workers (Doyle et al., 2006), and it would appear that the favourable economic conditions on arrival of this group of immigrants is linked to their relatively positive reception in Irish society. Yet there seems to be some evidence of discrimination in terms of lower wages, which is discussed above, with immigrants being more reluctant to complain due to lack of information about their rights, insufficient language skills and fear of losing their job (Kropiwiec, 2006). Negative discourses about Poles in the media emerged about reckless driving and having Polish registered cars that were exempt from Irish tax and insurance (Haynes et al., 2009).

(b) Structural integration of Poles

Labour Market

Despite the favourable employment situation in Ireland up until recently, there is lower labour market participation and higher unemployment amongst non-Irish nationals compared to Irish nationals overall (O'Connell and McGinnity, 2008). Yet the majority of Poles work, but largely in lower socio-economic positions. The main occupations in the Census 2006 were sales assistants, building labourers, cleaners and domestics and carpenters and joiners (CSO, 2008).

Few published studies investigate the labour market integration of Poles in particular. In a small qualitative study of Polish immigrants, Kropiwiec (2006) notes generally positive experiences, even though many immigrants are overqualified for the jobs they perform. Whilst some reported frustration at their situation, some considered this as a temporary condition in a longer term career plan or international journey. Language problems were cited most frequently as a barrier to accessing jobs that were in line with professional qualifications.

Other studies focus on NMS migrants, and with Poles being a large proportion of this group, it can be assumed that findings largely apply to them. Immigrants from the NMS are reported to suffer the largest occupational gap, and that little improvement seems to happen at least within the relatively short timeframe since arrival (Barret and Duffy, 2008). NMS migrants earn considerably less and occupy positions that are not in line with their qualifications (Barrett, 2009). The overrepresentation of NMS migrants in certain sectors that are characterised by lower wages and less secure employment (CSO, 2008) is also linked to the rapidly rising levels of unemployment amongst this group, as these sectors are most affected by the economic downturn (Krings, 2010). Indeed, NMS migrants have had the highest increase in unemployment (CSO, 2010), although as noted above this may be partially due to larger numbers fulfilling the habitual residency requirement.

Education System

Whilst many Polish immigrants are quite young and do not have children, there are a significant number of families with children of school age. In 2006/2007 there were 1,200 Polish pupils enrolled in secondary schools. There are no figures available to indicate the number of students in primary schools, but it is likely to be much higher. In a study by Lyons and Little (2009), which covered just under 10 percent of post-primary schools in the country, percentages of newcomer students in a school ranged from 1.9 to almost 40 percent. Students seem concentrated in Vocational, Community and Comprehensive schools and Community Colleges, rather than secondary schools, as well as more frequently attending schools that are designated as disadvantaged. The same is observed by Smyth et al. (2009), in that the highest proportion of newcomer students can be found in already disadvantaged schools.

Due to the rapid change in the make-up of the student population in Ireland, efforts have been made to teach English as a foreign language, and to manage a diverse classroom (NCCA, 2005; National Teacher's Organisation, 2002). English language tuition is provided, but to very varying degrees and quality, as Lyons and Little (2009) find in a study of post-primary schools. Often, responsibility for the integration of immigrant students was placed in the hands of language support teachers, who frequently did not communicate effectively with subject teachers. Non-native speakers were often problematised and placed in the same category as special needs students. In some cases students are taught in separate classes until they are ready to enter the mainstream, but largely, language tuition accompanies the regular curriculum, and students are withdrawn from main subject courses to attend language classes.

There seem to be vast differences in how schools apply guidelines, and how successfully they cope with the challenges brought on by the more diverse student population. Sometimes the idea of 'celebrating difference' was perceived by students to draw attention to their difference, without really understanding the difficulties of settling into a new country and education system. Also separation within the classroom was not unusual, and children tended to befriend largely children who spoke their mother tongue (Bushin, 2009).

Polish can be taken as part of the Irish Leaving Certificate examination, as is the case with any official languages of the EU (State Examination Commission, 2010). Yet there is little support for home languages within the education system (Lyons and Little, 2009). In addition to attending Irish primary and secondary schools, many Polish children, particularly younger ones, go to weekend schools, where they are taught in Polish and with the Polish curriculum. These schools are usually funded by the Polish government, with the aim of allowing children to re-enter the education system if their families return (Bushin, 2009). According to the Polish

Embassy in Dublin, there are currently five Polish schools supervised by the Polish Ministry of Education, and a further nine run by community associations.

Residential Segregation

Since immigration is a relatively new phenomenon in Ireland, new arrivals did not find an already existing pattern of ethnic segregation (Fahey and Fanning, 2010). Settlement patterns are uneven, however, and whilst immigrants do live across the whole Ireland, they are concentrated in more urban areas and Dublin in particular (CSO, 2008). A study of Dublin in particular shows that within the city, there is a very uneven distribution of immigrant settlement, with a share of 23.2 percent in the highest quintile of electoral division and only 3.6 percent in the lowest quintile. The highest quintile includes the inner city and North-Western suburbs. The same study shows, however, that immigrants had a relatively small tendency to be channelled specifically into disadvantaged areas, and where they did, often helped to 'lift' the average socio-economic status of these areas due to their higher education and skill levels. Also, residential segregation was not high for European standards and low compared to the United States (Fahey and Fanning, 2010).

Almost 93 percent of Poles live in rented accommodation in 2006, which is the highest proportion out of all groups (CSO, 2008). As Fahey and Fanning (2010) illustrate, immigrants tend to settle where availability of rented accommodation is highest, as they have little access to homeownership due to the high cost of this, and social housing due to eligibility criteria for recent arrivals. Polish immigrants are therefore likely to be present particularly in those areas with high availability of rental accommodation. Most Poles live in non-family households with exclusively other Poles (CSO, 2008). Poles are more likely to live in larger towns and cities than rural areas compared to Irish or UK born, and are relatively concentrated in their distribution, with over half residing in 7 percent of the electoral districts (Gilmartin and Mills, 2008). Only about one percent of Poles had an Irish partner, with this figure being significantly higher for females than males (CSO, 2008).

(c) Political incorporation of Poles

Naturalisation of Poles

Numbers of naturalisation of former Polish citizens are very low according to OECD (2010), with only 20 in 2005, 37 in 2006 and 7 in 2007. No figures are available before the year 2005. These very low figures may be due to the relatively long residency requirement, which recent migrants do not yet fulfil. Despite being EU citizens, gaining Irish nationality would have certain advantages for Poles, such as making travel to other countries easier by removing visa requirements. It can therefore be expected that numbers may increase as a result now that larger groups of Polish immigrants begin to fulfil the residency requirement.

Political Involvement and Associational Activity

Fanning et al. (2003; 2007) argue that none of the major political parties in Ireland explicitly represent the political interests of immigrants or have made a major effort to reach out to immigrants as voters or potential members. Whilst some have translated their material into Polish as well as some other languages, and have targeted advertisement at immigrants, there is little evidence that this has yielded much success (Fanning, 2007). However, as frequently observed in other countries, the more left-oriented Labour Party has probably gone furthest in trying to connect with the new ethnic minorities living in the country (Messina, 2009)

In Ireland, immigrants from EU states are entitled to vote in European and local elections. It is interesting to note that several Irish parties now have their websites available in Polish (Zelazowska, 2009). Very few Polish candidates were present in recent local elections. Associational activity is largely social and cultural, and not political. Forum Polonia (2010) acts as an umbrella organisation for a wide range of other Polish organisations, which are largely located in Dublin. Some of these are listed below under social and cultural integration.

(d) Social and cultural integration of Poles

Identifications

Whilst many immigrants arrived as ‘target earners’ their intentions of returning to Poland seemed to become less likely the longer they stayed. Yet interviewees in the qualitative study carried out by Kropiweic (2006) stated that even if they are staying, maintaining Polish language and culture were important to themselves, and for their children. Children themselves equally seemed to emphasize their Polish identity, and did not perceive themselves as Irish, but rather emphasised how they are different from Irish children (Bushin, 2009). On the other hand, even ‘target earners’ expressed an interest in learning about Irish society and gaining culturally from their migration experience, as observed by King-O’Riain (2008).

It has been argued that the new East-West migration is characterised by being more transient and new immigrants being more mobile than previous generations (MCA, 2010b). Polish immigrants have also been found to exhibit a more cosmopolitan or European attitude, although most continued to see themselves as primarily Polish (MCA, 2010b).

Bobek (2009) points out that the Polish community in Ireland is often perceived as homogenous, but that Polish immigrants themselves do not agree with this. The frequently observed division between generations, and between ‘political’ and ‘economic’ migration motives, is less noticeable in Ireland than in some other countries, as there was little pre-accession migration. However, divisions within the group do exist and seem to largely stem from socio-economic differences, with many well educated Poles not wanting to be associated with Poles of lower socio-economic status who they feel are giving Poles a bad name.

Religiosity

93 percent of Poles indicated being Catholic in the Census in 2006, whereas 5 percent indicated no religion (CSO, 2008). 3 Polish Catholic churches are registered in Dublin with the Companies Registration Office (Zelazowska, 2009). A Polish chaplaincy exists in Dublin, which provides services in Polish. It also organises a Sunday school and a choir (Polish Chaplaincy, 2010). Similarly, the Dominican Polish Chaplaincy offers masses, counselling and social support (Dominican Polish Chaplaincy, 2010). Whilst no figures exist that indicate the level of church attendance amongst the Polish community, they are largely considered to be a very religious group and compared to the Irish in previous decades in their devotion to the Catholic faith. In fact the arrival of Poles has helped some Irish parishes that were declining before, and now often offer more services in Polish than English (O’Clery, 2009).

Ethnic Institutional Completeness

The amount of institutions serving the Polish community has increased rapidly. Free information in Polish is provided to immigrants by the Polish Information and Culture Centre in Dublin, which also promotes Polish cultural events. Art Polonia organises cultural events. A Psychological Centre helps Polish migrants to adapt better to living in Ireland (Zelazowska, 2009). The Polish House and the Polish Social and Cultural Association are places where immigrants meet and socialise, with the latter offering a Polish library. The Irish Polish Society aims to promote Polish culture to the Irish public, organising English language events (Kropiweic, 2006). There are also Polish weekend schools for children, with the main aim of maintaining the Polish language, but also facilitating a potential return to Poland (Kropiweic, 2006). They also work with Irish schools to facilitate the integration of Polish children in the educational mainstream (Zelazowska, 2009). Polish shops have been set up quite widely, but also some Irish supermarkets stock Polish products (Kropiweic, 2006; O’Clery, 2009). About 110 Polish business names, 12 Polish organizations, 2 Polish schools and 4 Polish kindergartens were registered with the Companies Registration Office. The businesses include shops, hairdressers, restaurants, pubs and medical clinics (Zelazowska, 2009). As mentioned above, the Polish chaplaincy in Dublin organises

services and a Sunday school, but also provides other social services such as legal and social advice centres (Polish Chaplaincy, 2010).

After accession, Polish media developed very rapidly, particularly weekly print media. *Gazeta Polska* was established in 2005, and had a circulation of around 6,000 in 2006. *Polski Express* was launched in 2006, as well as some smaller or more regional publications, many of which no longer exist. Some Irish newspapers also include a Polish section. Since Polish television channels are available on satellite, there is less Polish language programming. Polish radio programmes are quite widely available in contrast (Titley, 2009; Zelazowska, 2009). Several web portals offer information about living in Ireland addressed to those who have already migrated and those who are planning to (Zelazowska, 2009). These forums seem to be used very widely amongst younger Poles in particular, and are a core part of their networks. 'Virtual communities' online include Polish migrants, return migrants as well as people still residing in Poland, and to some extent replace the traditional notion of ethnic neighbourhoods, with less residential segregation of Poles in Ireland than in other countries (Bobek, 2009).

Ties to Poland

Polish immigrants maintain strong ties to their families and friends back home, and dense social networks exist between Ireland and Poland. They frequently use technology maintain contact, with the use of the Internet being cited frequently. Also, whilst many do not have landlines, Internet cafes, phone shops and pre-paid cards are available. Media use is often oriented towards Poland, and many report reading Polish news rather than Irish news. Many also report sending money home regularly (Kropiwek, 2006). Polish immigrants have also been reported to participate quite actively in Polish political life, with a high turnout for the parliamentary elections in 2007 (Debaene, 2008).

Relatively cheap air travel is available via low-cost carriers that increased their routes between Ireland and Poland substantially. In a small study by Debaene (2008), three quarters of respondents visited Poland at least twice a year, and a majority frequently received visitors from Poland.

3. Conclusion

Large-scale immigration to Ireland is a relatively new phenomenon in a country with a long history of emigration. Immigrants largely arrived during a time of economic boom, and were vital for the economic development of the country. The influx of large numbers of NMS immigrants after EU accession was unprecedented, and led to major changes in Irish society. The current economic downturn is unlikely to reverse this, despite some immigrants moving back or moving on.

The recent nature of migration explains to some extent the lack of cohesive immigration legislation and integration policies. The main differentiation to determine residency and permission to work is based on country of origin and skill level, although particular arrangements exist for students, who make up a non-negligible group of non-Irish nationals residing in the country. With the exception of refugees and asylum seekers, immigration into Ireland has largely been based on economic criteria, and the government explicitly directs its policies to the needs of the labour market. The work permit system for non-EEA workers aims to fill labour market shortages, and has gradually become more directed at highly skilled migrants, as lesser skilled positions are now largely filled with NMS migrants, who have full access to the Irish labour market with some restrictions for Bulgarians and Romanians. Only very recently, integration has been addressed by the establishment of government bodies and the publication of some policy documents, and official discourse seems to emphasise that this needs to be addressed. Overall it is too early, however, to determine how this will be implemented, and whether the economic downturn will affect efforts in this area negatively.

Ireland is not a particularly hostile environment for immigrants when compared to other European countries, but ethnic groups experience discrimination on various levels, particularly if they are visibly different from the mainstream or if they are refugees or asylum seekers rather than labour migrants. This is best documented in the labour market, but is also evidenced in other areas. Some negative stereotypes are present in the media, and anti-immigration attitudes have hardened over time, and this may deepen further as the recession continues to have a severe impact in the country. In sum, although a late-comer to the club of European immigration countries, Irish migration politics seems to follow a trajectory that is not so different from her counterparts on the Continent (see Messina 2009).

Polish immigrants are the largest group of NMS migrants in Ireland, and are a very sizeable community of around 200,000 members. As many as half a million have at some stage lived and worked in Ireland since EU accession. The opening of the Irish labour market to NMS migrants together with the favourable economic conditions in the country compared to Poland were the major reasons for the rapid increase in numbers, although other factors, particularly the English language, also played an important role. Polish immigrants, whilst often being highly educated, tend to fill lower skilled occupations, and are concentrated in sectors that are characterised by lower pay and status.

The public discourse about Polish people is generally very positive and perceives them as quite well integrated, but focuses on their work ethic and usefulness for the Irish economy. Yet there is some evidence that the Polish community lives quite separate lives from the Irish mainstream, with a certain level of residential segregation. The availability of Polish shops, media, entertainment and services and the concentration in certain sectors in terms of work would allow Polish people to interact relatively little with Irish people if they do not wish to, but there is no clear evidence to what extent this is the case.

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