Immigration to Ireland: opportunities and challenges

Dr. Merike Darmody
Outline of presentation

- Introduction & Background
- Ireland: emigration and immigration
- The development of immigration policy
- Integration – opportunities and challenges
- Concluding comments
From a country of emigration....
... To a country of immigration

- Increasing immigration from the mid 1990s to early 2000s, driven by returning Irish nationals. Dramatic increases in the number of asylum applicants
Trends in immigration

- **2002-2004** - New peaks reached in non-EEA immigration flows and numbers of asylum applications during 2002. Asylum applications fell quickly from 2002 peak and stabilised at much lower level from 2004

- **2004-2007** - Substantial part of non-EEA immigration flows converted to EU flow after accession in 2004. New highs reached in overall immigration, driven by nationals of the enlarged EU

- **2008-2012** New phase of net emigration driven by Irish nationals, dramatic drop of immigration flows after a peak in 2007. Recent rise in asylum applications (mostly from Pakistan)
Current situation

20% of Irish population foreign born (incl. NI)

17% of Irish born live overseas
Persons usually resident by nationality for selected countries 2006-2011

Census 2011  Census 2006

Slovak  Chinese  American (US)  German  Filipino  Indian  Romanian  Nigerian  Latvian  Lithuanian  UK  Polish
Profile of migrants

- Arrivals from a number of countries – April 2011
  non-Irish nationals from 196 nationalities
- Speaking a number of different languages – the
  number of separate languages coded in the 2011
census: 182
- Concentrated in cities (availability of jobs; areas of
  low rental prices)
- First arrivals lacked established support/information
  networks
- Mostly well educated
The development of immigration policy

- Migration policy developed in the last 2 decades
- Expectations of temporary immigration
- Ad hoc policies; reactionary rather than proactive
- Policies driven by workers moving here to fill gaps in the labour market; - policy focus mostly on labour migration
- Before 2003 – work permit system (employer lead) – little government intervention
- Work permit system before 2004 – attract high skilled; restrict low skilled immigrants (remains)
Positive impact of immigration

- Contribute to the growth of Irish economy
- New ideas, new skills (many highly educated)
- More likely to contribute in income taxes than to claim in benefits
- Bring cultural richness
- Countries with aging population need more, not less, imported workers
- Immigrants fill gaps in the labour market
Challenges

- Fare less well than Irish nationals in the labour market - access to privileged jobs, experiences of discrimination at work and levels of unemployment (O’Connell & McGinnity, 2008)
- Incidents of racism in work places and wider community; occasional exploitation of immigrants
- Occupational gap – does not necessarily get smaller over time (Barrett & Kelly, 2011)
- Irish labour migration policy is to issue work permits to high skilled workers only, mostly to fill positions in sectors like ICT, engineering and medicine.
- Some improvement in addressing the continuing demand for essential skills within the labour market.
Language difficulties
Disadvantaged in accessing services e.g. schools (Darmody et al., 2012)
Proportion of migrant students in Irish schools in 2007

- None
- <2%
- 2-9%
- 10-19%
- >20%

Primary (up to 11-12 years of age)
Second-level (up to 17-18 years of age)
Entrants from schools outside Ireland over time (primary schools, DES)
School enrolment policies in Irish primary and secondary schools

- Lives in local area
- Siblings in the school
- Date of application
- Religion
- Primary school attended

**Primary schools**

**Secondary schools**
Recent debates ..... 

- New laws on school admissions, 2013
- a new parent-friendly, equitable and consistent framework to regulate school admissions policy for all schools
- School patronage
- Multidenominational schools grow in popularity
- Revised curriculum about religions and beliefs
Principal’s perceptions of migrant students

Achievement
- Above average
- Average
- Below average

Motivation
- Above average
- Average
- Below average

Aspirations
- Above average
- Average
- Below average
Progression to 3\textsuperscript{rd} level – recent changes

- Previously little clarity about post-school pathways
- Those without Irish or EU citizenship pay non-EU fees (up to 10,000 a year)
- Third level feels abolished for migrants with Irish citizenship
- The change is expected to benefit about 600 migrant students over the next four years
- Restrictions in place to ensure that students cannot arrive from non-European countries, claim Irish citizenship and qualify for free fees immediately.
From ‘boom’ to ‘bust’

- Economic crisis
- Somewhat more negative view of immigrants
- Empathy towards immigrants
Flight of the Tiger Cubs

Fig 1: Numbers of Irish Migrants, 2008–13
Source: Central Statistics Office of Ireland.
Home Thoughts from Abroad

Would your social circle be mainly Irish or is your social circle mostly non-Irish you have to know?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Circle</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Irish</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Have you been home to Ireland since you emigrated?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ever Been Home</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Have you any immediate family members such as parents, siblings, or sisters been to visit since you emigrated?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Visited</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Would you like to return home to live in Ireland again at some stage or would you prefer to stay in the country you now live in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Return Home</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How many years do you think it will take before you return home to live in Ireland again?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We must guarantee a genuine Irish welcome for our returning diaspora

The barriers to reintegration for returning emigrants can be psychological as well as material.

**AN EMIGRANT WRITES** AUSTRALIA IS HOME FOR NOW... BUT I WANT MY KIDS TO GROW UP IN IRELAND

Clare Turlaud with his girlfriend

I want my children to grow up in Ireland. I am determined to bring my family back. This is not just about my children but my entire family. I want to give them the opportunity to experience Irish culture and the beautiful country that is my home.

I still feel a sense of belonging in Ireland, even though I have been living in Australia for many years. My family and friends are important to me, and I miss them dearly.

**YOUR COMMENTS**

Have your say on this survey and the articles within it is available on The Irish Times emigration blog, emigration爱尔兰/immigration爱尔兰.

**Want to succeed? Emigrate to other countries to provide you with ready-made opportunities, get a sun tan and be admired by peers.**
Steps taken to support new arrivals

- Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration in the Department of Justice and Equality
- Cross Departmental Group on Integration
- Various support organisations: Migrants Rights Centre, Ireland; Migrant Power in Politics
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions: immigrant workers welcome to join unions
- UnionMigrantNet portal
... continued

- Existing employment standards for low paid workers
- Free access to primary and secondary schooling to all children in Ireland
Concluding comments (1)

- Rapid social transformation in Ireland
- Slow development of public policy
- Immigrants from a number of countries; generally well-educated
- Asylum seekers; particularly disadvantaged
- Positive contribution: contribution to economic growth; new skills and ideas; contribute to cultural richness
Concluding comments (2)

- Public opinion of immigrants worsened during recession but the Irish still feel empathy.
- Recession: emigration among immigrants as well as the Irish.
- Racism and discrimination; access to services.
- Improved policies and legislation to support immigrants, but change has been very slow.
- No tensions yet; this can change if inequalities become more established (high education but low paid job).
- Integration is a two-way process; necessary for social cohesion.