POLITIS – a European research project

Project information
POLITIS is short for a research project with the full title: Building Europe with New Citizens? An Inquiry into the Civic Participation of Naturalised Citizens and Foreign Residents in 25 Countries. The European Commission funds the project that mainly seeks to improve our understanding of different factors that promote or inhibit active civic participation of immigrants. A unique project construction is developed that includes workshops with foreign-born students who are recruited as discussants and interviewers. National experts in all 25 EU countries have prepared country reports on the contextual conditions and state of research concerning civic participation of immigrants. These reports can be downloaded from www.uni-oldenburg.de/politis-europe

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Abstract

Mass in-migration is a relatively new phenomenon in Ireland. Until the beginning of the 1990s, Ireland was a country of continuous and sometimes massive emigrations. But even at the height of mass emigrations, migrants and minority ethnic groups were present in the country. Most migrants that came to Ireland before the mass in-migration of the last decade were mostly temporary or non-permanent high-skilled workers and university teachers from the United Kingdom and North America. The mass in-migration that started in the mid-1990s has, however, resulted in dramatic changes on Ireland’s cultural and demographic landscapes. According to the 2002 census, approximately six percent of Ireland’s 3.9m population said they were not Irish and another 1.3% was only part-Irish.

Public and academic discourse of immigrant civic participation has been muted in Ireland because, among other reasons, mass in-migration and the large-scale presence of immigrants are recent phenomena. In this report it is argued that the reluctance, mostly at official level, to acknowledge Ireland as a major immigration destination has contributed to the silence on issues relating to immigrant civic participation. Consequently there is a dearth of research and publications on immigrant civic participation in Ireland. The majority of academic and popular publications relate mainly to general immigration and immigrant issues and, of late, integration and inclusion measures.

Despite the dearth of literature, immigrant groups and individuals have been active in many facets of civic engagements, even in the days of low in-migration. Experiential knowledge and mass media reports suggest that civic activism by immigrants has increased in the last few years and this is often attributed to the dramatic increases in the numbers of immigrants. This report challenges such a mono-causal explanation and states that other factors such as increased mobilisation and education and the specific immigration experiences of particular groups have contributed to the recent rise in civic activism among immigrants in Ireland. Many immigrants are engaged in civic activism because they want to effect a change, challenge a law or policy they considered unjust, attract social and material support for self-development or simply out of boredom.

This report also demonstrates that active participation in civic activities is not evenly spread among the different immigrant and minority ethnic groups in Ireland. The paths to civic activism for many individuals and groups are as different as their socio-cultural backgrounds.
and the kinds of activities they are involved in. For some immigrants, civic activism in Ireland
is a continuation of life in the old country, but for others it is a rough and uncharted path,
which their immigration experience and circumstances have forced them to tread. Particular
groups appear to be more active in particular fields. The Filipinos have taken the lead in
fighting for better rights for immigrant workers in the medical fields, Africans are active in
the religious sphere and in the anti-racism movements while the Chinese, though a large and
fast-growing group, are largely absent on many fronts.

There is also anecdotal evidence to suggest that some numerically bigger groups appear to be
more active on many fronts simultaneously than the smaller ones. Nigerians are a good
example in this regard. They have set up more churches than other groups, championed the
anti-racism struggles and made far greater foray into electoral politics than most groups. It is
simplistic and intellectually naive to attribute the achievements of a group like the Nigerians
simply to numerical strength. After all, the Chinese are equally a large, and perhaps the
fastest-growing non-EU, group in Ireland. While they are beginning to make their mark in the
economic sphere, their presence on the civic landscape is noticeable by their absence. A
report like this one, which is the first attempt to articulate a critical overview of the entire
immigrant civic participation landscape in Ireland, will necessarily raise more questions than
it answers. It will take time and concerted research to answer the questions and to validate the
many hypotheses contained in this report.
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1 Understanding the conditions for immigrant participation

1.1 Ireland: From emigration to immigration

In this introductory section, the increased presence of immigrants in 21\textsuperscript{st} Century Ireland is situated within the context of increased global migrations, especially from countries in the South to those in the North and from East to West (Faist 2000, Zlotnik 2001, Martin 2001). Although Ireland did not participate in a significant way in earlier post-war overseas recruitments of labour by some countries in the West or in the influx of former colonial subjects into mother-countries, its immigration policies at the beginning of the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century resembles those that had been enacted by countries like Germany and the United Kingdom which were intended to dissuade the long-term presence of immigrant and minority ethnic groups. This is not unexpected given that member-countries of the European Union have made concerted efforts in the last few decades to harmonise their immigration policies.

The demographic and cultural shifts in Ireland in the last decade have taken place against the backdrop of a dynamic and fast-growing economy. Consequently, some groups have been quick to conclude that immigrants have come into Ireland solely because of its growing economic prosperity. While acknowledging the role played by Ireland’s newly-realised economic fortunes in attracting different categories of migrants, other factors like the country’s insertion into and connection to regional and international organisations, its burgeoning influence and status in international politics and the multiplicity of arm and civil conflicts in many parts of the world have no doubt contributed to increased immigration.

Ireland had been a country of intermittent and sometimes massive emigrations from the 18\textsuperscript{th} Century until the 1990s, as illustrated by the graph below. Despite the continuous and almost uninterrupted outflows, immigrants and minority ethnic groups have existed in the country long before the dramatic increases in in-migration in the 1990s (Goldstone 2002, Keogh 1998, Lentin 2001, MacEinri 2001). The only time in-migration exceeded out-migration before the 1990s was between 1971 and 1981 when there were 10,000 more in-migrants than out-migrants (CSO 2002). Between 1991 and 1996, migrant in-flows outstripped out-flows by nearly 2,000 and by 2002 the disparity had jumped to almost 26,000 (CSO 2002).

The population estimates released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in April 2003 revealed that net migration rose to 29,800 in the preceding 12 months. The total number of
immigrants during this period was 50,500, down from 66,900 for the 12-month period before that (CSO 2003).

**Immigration, emigration and net-migration in Ireland, 1987 – 2003**

*Source: Central Statistics Office; migrationinformation.org*

The net migration between April 2003 and April 2004 was 31,600. Of the 51,100 persons that immigrated to Ireland during these 12 months, 30% were nationals of countries other than the EU or the US while 34% were returning Irish nationals. Nine percent were Chinese and 8% were citizens of Eastern/Central European countries (CSO 2004). Similarly, the results of the 2002 Census showed that 5.8% of Ireland’s 3.9 million population were non-Irish citizens. The largest of these came from England and Wales (182,624), Northern Ireland (49,928), the USA (21,541) and Scotland (15,963). The other large groups include Nigeria (9,225), Germany (8,770) and France (6,794). People from South Africa, Romania, China and Australia each number about 6,000 (CSO 2002). Figure 2 shows the ten top non-EU nationalities in Ireland, according to the 2002 census.

However, emigrations from Ireland have continued in the midst of the recent and dramatic increases in in-migration. Whereas the US, Britain and Australia constituted the major emigration destinations before WW11, many post-War and recent emigrants went to continental Europe. The majority of recent emigrants are young and they tend to be non-
permanent migrants who would return to Ireland after about two or three years. The April 2004 Population Estimates revealed that 18,500 persons emigrated from Ireland in the previous 12 months, the lowest since 1987. More than half of them (54%) were between the ages of 15 and 24.

![Top 10 non-EU nationalities in Ireland in 2002](image)

**Figure 2: Based on results of the 2002 Census**

The **needed but un-welcomed guests**
For a long time Ireland, a largely rural and agrarian country with little industrialisation, had no need for immigrant workers. The few workers that came into the country before the 1990s were mostly employees of multinational corporations on short-term stay and university teachers. Work permit regime was largely restrictive and employers had to prove that there were no Irish citizens (or citizens of EU member-states after 1973) before applying for a work permit on behalf of an immigrant (MacEinri 2001). But as economists warned from the mid-1990s that manpower shortage could slow or even unravel the economic growth, the government reached out to outsiders – non-Irish nationals and Irish emigrants - in order to meet employers’ demand for workers. The Tánaiste (deputy prime minister) spear-headed the recruitment drives, attending job fairs in Asia and South Africa (Beesley 2000, 2000a, 2000b;
McGrath 2000). Private employers and job agencies, with the aid of information and telecommunication technologies, also reached out to foreign workers. Monthly statistics of foreigners who received permits to work in Ireland increased dramatically from the late 1990s to 2004 when migrants from the 10 EU countries reduced Ireland’s need for workers from non-EU countries.

Permits for non-Irish and non-EU nationals to work in Ireland operate at two levels or tiers; the work permit and the work visa/work authorisation. Workers who come into the country on work permit are obligated to work for the particular employer who applied for the work permit on their behalf. In fact the permit is issued to the employer, not the employee. This means that the worker is not allowed to seek a different employer even if he/she is displeased with his/her situation. Work permits are issued for a short duration (usually for six months or one year) and holders of work permit cannot apply to have members of their families join them. Work permit holders do not have the right to free medical care, social welfare entitlements and free education.

The work visa/work authorisation scheme introduced in 2000 does not restrict the worker to a particular employer but workers who want to change employers must remain within the same field. Applicants process their application at the Irish embassies in their countries of origin or primary resident. Visas are usually granted for about two to three years and are renewable. Under the work visa scheme, family members can join the immigrant worker after three months of continued employment. Family members can join holders of work authorisation almost immediately, so long as they have proof that they are gainfully employed. Both the work visa holders and those under work authorisation scheme are not entitled to social welfare allowance or free medical card. Children (under the age of 18) of work visa holders/work authorisation are entitled to free education. The work visa/work authorisation schemes are mainly applicable to selected high-skill areas where there are noticeable shortages of workers.
As illustrated in the graph above, the numbers of permits rose from about 3,000 in 1995 to 6,262 in 1999 and to 18,061 in 2000. In 2001, the number was 36,431 and this increased to 40,321 in 2002 and 47,551 in 2003. In 2004 the number fell to 34,067 (Dept of Enterprise, 2003). These figures, though, must be interpreted with some degree of caution because official work permit statistics do not indicate whether those issued with work permits actually relocated to Ireland or how many have returned to their countries of origin having completed their contract. A permit to work in Ireland does not equate with the right to enter into and reside in the country. Whereas work permits are issued by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, visa and immigration matters fall under the remits of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. There have been cases where persons who got work permits were denied entry visa. In other cases, immigrants with visas were prevented from entering into the country or ‘denied leave to land’, to borrow the phrase of the immigration officials. Under Irish immigration laws, there are 19 grounds on which immigration officials can prevent immigrants at any entry points – borders, airports and seaports - from entering into Ireland.
The unwanted and un-welcomed guests
The other major source of legal migration to Ireland in the last decade has been asylum and refugee applications. Since the 1990s there have been swift increases in asylum applications although the numbers have fallen in the last two years. In Ireland, refugees can broadly be divided into Geneva Convention applicants and programme refugees. As in most EU countries, programme refugees are a pre-specified numbers of asylum seekers who have arrived as a result of a government decision to waive the requirements of a formal application under the 1951 Geneva Convention. Generally, asylum applications in Ireland are made under the terms of the 1951 United Nations Geneva Convention and the 1967 New York Protocol. Both the Convention (which Ireland signed in November 1956) and the Protocol (Ireland signed in November 1968) have been incorporated into Ireland’s asylum laws via the Refugee Act, 1996. The Refugee Act has been amended by section 11(1) of the Immigration Act, 1999, section 9 of the Illegal Immigrant Trafficking Act, 2000 and section 7 of the Immigrant Act, 2003. The Refugee Act, which came into effect in November 2000, establishes the Office of the Refugee Application Commissioner (ORAC) with responsibility for determining asylum applications in the first instance and the Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT), which hears appeals arising from the decisions of the ORAC.

In Ireland asylum seekers do not have the right to work or to third-level education. Until 2000, the majority of asylum seekers were housed in and around the Greater Dublin Area. In December 1999 the government implemented a one-off gesture when it allowed asylum seekers that had been in Ireland for up to one year to apply for work permits. That same month it announced a new policy of ‘dispersal’, which meant that asylum seekers would be assigned to designated accommodation centres all over Ireland (Trocaire/ICJP 2002:25-26). It also implemented a new policy, which replaced social welfare cash payments with direct provision of meals and basic necessities to asylum seekers. Under the new arrangements, adult asylum seekers receive about €19 weekly while children get about €10. This policy has been criticised by the Free Legal Aid Centre (FLAC, 2003), other pressure groups and immigrant organisations.

Until the late-1990s, asylum seekers came into Ireland in trickles (see table below): From 39 in 1992 to 424 in 1995. This rose dramatically to 1,179 in 1996 and to 7,762 in 1999. In 2000, the number of applicants stood at 10, 938, fell slightly to 10,325 in 2001 and rose again to
11,634 in 2002. The total number of applications in 2003 dropped to 7,900. It slipped further to 4,766 in 2004, the most dramatic decrease so far. Nigerians accounted for the highest number of applicants last year and, for every year since 2000, they have accounted for one-third of total applications (ORAC, 2003). However, official asylum statistics can, for a variety of reasons, be notoriously unreliable for ascertaining the actual number of asylum seekers because the actual numbers are often distorted or jacked up by some immigrants who make multiple applications.

As demonstrated in the graph above, many migrant workers in Ireland in 2004 were Filipinos while the vast majority of Asylum seekers were Nigerians. This has been the trend in the last in the last two or three years.

**Those who came on the back of others**
Fewer immigrants have come into Ireland via the family reunification route because of the slow and strict application procedures. Though applications by refugees and other migrants for members of their family to join them are made to the Minister of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Office of the Refugee Application Commissioner is charged with processing them and with making recommendations to the minister. Between 2001 and the end of 2003, a total of 544 persons were given approval to join their refugee relatives in Ireland. At 227, the number approved in 2002 was the highest, followed by 192 in 2003 (Dept of Justice, 2004).
Those who came to study

Some of the longest-established immigrants in Ireland came in as students. Many Africans, Americans and others from Asia and South America who came in as students in the 1970s and 1980s have remained in Ireland after they established familial or business relationships. Chinese and African immigrants are increasingly adopting these same tactics at the beginning of the 21st Century as the laws on other means of establishing legal residency have become stricter. Until early 2003 immigrants, including students, who became parents of children born in Ireland, could apply for residence permits solely on that basis. Although there are no official statistics to indicate the numbers of students that acquired residence rights through this means, mass media reports suggest that students have been among the immigrant groups that have increasingly taken advantage of this provision. Statistics for immigrants who came into Ireland to study are scanty, haphazard and unreliable.

The Higher Education Authority (www.hea.ie), the supervisory body for universities and colleges, has reported dramatic increases in the numbers of foreign students in the last decade. Whereas the bulk of the students in the past came from mostly North America and Europe, more students are now coming from Asia and Africa. However, the statistics produced by the HEA paints a partial picture because they do not cover many private colleges and language schools. The number of language schools has increased dramatically in the last decade and more students, especially from China and other Asian countries, have enrolled in them. Although there are representative bodies for language schools, there are no reliable statistics on the actual numbers of students. Anecdotal evidence, including the public pronouncements of state officials, suggests there have been dramatic increases. In Ireland non-EU students, including those in language schools, are entitled to work for a maximum of 20 hours a week. It is common knowledge that many of them work full-time with the active connivance of their employers, many of whom exploit the workers. Introduced in the hey days of the Celtic Tiger as part of the measures aimed at wrestling a slice of the English language market from United Kingdom, the measure to allow foreign students to work has proved attractive to many immigrant groups.

Official and public discourses on illegal immigrants have been low-key mainly because there are relatively few avenues for illegal entry into and residence in Ireland. Unlike many European countries Ireland has no land borders with any country and the sea and air ports are rigorously policed, especially in recent years. While Ireland’s geographical location and tough
immigration control measures have safe-guarded it from most forms of illegal migrations, there is anecdotal evidence that there are illegal immigrants in the country. Most of them would be failed asylum seekers or other legal immigrants whose residence permits/visas have expired but have chosen to remain either by obtaining false documents or simply inhabiting the underworld of undocumented labour. Statistics for these categories of ‘migrants’ are rare but it is generally believed that they constitute a tiny minority.

1.2 Ireland’s immigration debate: The voices and the issues
In the late 1990s and early 2000s when Ireland recorded the highest numbers of asylum seekers, insinuations and accusations that depicted the majority of asylum seekers as ‘bogus’ and as ‘economic’ migrants saturated media and public discourses. Many in the society were still bewildered by the fast-changing demographic and cultural situation. Anti-immigration groups and some sections of the media capitalized on the prevailing sense of confusion and bewilderment to stir up anti-immigrant sentiments. Groups like the Immigration Control Platform and Keep Ireland Green and White held public meetings and launched campaigns aimed at getting the government to adopt a more restrictive immigration policy. While the government professed a commitment to its obligations under the Geneva Convention and to providing refuge for those in need, some government ministers engaged in negative debate and made unsubstantiated distinctions between ‘genuine’ refugees and those they termed ‘bogus’, ‘economic migrants’ and ‘welfare scroungers’.

Racism and racial attacks directed at immigrants, mostly Black Africans, rose almost in equal proportion to anti-refugee tirades from official and unofficial quarters. Parnell Street and Moore Street in the heart of Dublin, where the socio-cultural and economic activities of many immigrant groups are mostly concentrated have been a hotbed of racial tension (McCarthy and Rafferty, 2002; Nuala 2000, 2000a). Racially-motivated incidents, according to a report in the Sunday Business Post of April 23, 2000, “…have included attempted arson, shots being fired at the shop and vandalism. On one occasion… a woman brandishing a knife entered the shop and threatened to ‘slash everyone’s throats” (reported in Spiller, 2002). Reports in the Irish Times and in other news media (Nuala 2000, 2000a, Cullen 2000) have also documented a litany of racially motivated assaults on African both in the Parnell Street and Moore Street areas and in other parts of the Greater Dublin Area. Though the debates and controversies generated by these attacks have dominated public discourse and elicited response from anti-
racism groups, including those led by immigrants, the most emotive and vociferous debates have been on recent changes citizenship laws, particularly the abolition of automatic citizenship for children of immigrants. Before this latest development the rights of parents of immigrant children to apply for residence permit solely on that basis had also been abolished.

Up until early 2003, immigrants, including asylum seekers, who become parents of children/child born in Ireland, could also apply for residence permit solely on that basis. Section 2.1 of the Irish constitution (Dooley 2003; Irish Times 2002), including the new Article 2 adopted as part of the Belfast Agreement, grants the right to naturalization to every child born in the island of Ireland. In a famous judgement in what has become known as the ‘Fajujonu case’, the Irish Supreme Court ruled in 1989 that the children of non-citizens had a constitutional right to the "company, care and parentage" of their parents within a family unit, effectively compelling the state to grant residence permit to such parents (Irish Times 2002; Dooley 2003).

The number relying on this avenue to establish the right of residency grew sharply in the late 1990s and especially from the beginning of the 21st Century after Ireland’s stricter immigration and asylum policies made it difficult for immigrants, especially asylum seekers, to enter into or establish a base in the country. The asylum route had become a road that led to nowhere or to frustration for many immigrants. Fewer asylum seekers – less than 10 percent - were being granted refugee status and several years of delay in processing asylum cases meant that thousands of applicants were increasingly frustrated. As a result of these changes, the numbers of immigrants applying for residence rights on the basis of having children born in Ireland increased dramatically towards the end of the last decade. Between 1996 and the end of 2001, a total of 4,859 people were granted rights to remain in Ireland on this basis while the number of births in 2001 to non-Irish nationals in the Dublin-based Rotunda hospital was reported by the Irish Times to be one in five (Irish Times, 2002).

The government’s decision to abandon this policy followed another Supreme Court decision on January 23rd 2003 in a case involving two families from Nigeria and the Czech republic (Irish Times 2002; Haughey 2003). The court ruled that immigrant parents of Irish-born children and their non-Irish siblings could no longer apply for residence permit solely on that basis. The decision was applied retroactively to include all parents whose children were born before the court decision (but not those who had been granted residence permit), including
those whose applications were pending or waiting for the department’s approval. As of 19th February 2003 when the Minister of Justice stopped granting residence permits on the basis of having an Irish-born child, there were 11,493 outstanding applications for residency on this basis (Dept of Justice 2004). Of these, 9,631 had been or were still in the asylum system and 1,862 were non-asylum cases.

A coalition of NGOs, including immigrant and asylum seekers organisations, has since launched a campaign to get the minister of justice to have a change of heart over the 11,000 applicants. In October 2003, the Irish Times reported that the ministry of justice had started deporting parents of Irish-born children but it did not give a specific number or other details. Though the head of the Garda National Immigration Bureau, Chief Superintendent Martin Donnelly, said in December 2003 that there was “no big move” on deportation of parents of Irish children, the department of justice confirmed in January 2004 that “three persons with IBC have been deported so far” (Department of Justice 2004). The majority of the over 550 deportations in 2003 were to countries in Eastern Europe. Although many Nigerians have been served with deportation orders, Chief Superintendent Donnelly said the lack of direct flight to Nigeria has made actual deportation laborious and therefore unattractive. In 2003, the Bureau embarked on joint charter of aircrafts with immigration authority in the United Kingdom and The Netherlands to facilitate deportation to places like Nigeria, Romanian and some other countries in Eastern Europe.

At the time of putting this report together the government had just announced a new policy that would allow the over 11,000 immigrant parents to reapply for residence permit (Irish Times 2004). The new policy, which marks a departure from the stance the government had taken until now, removes the threat of deportation that has dangled over the heads of these immigrants since February 2003. Under the new policy, the applicants would have to prove that they are of good character, have not travelled out of Ireland since they made their applications and that they have the ability or possibility to become self-sufficient in five years from the time they are granted residency rights. They are also required to give an undertaken not to invite other members of their family outside of Ireland to live with them. The implementation of the new policy will begin in early 2005. It has received a cautious welcome from many immigrant groups and campaigners.
The year 2004 also witnessed the most fundamental change to Ireland’s citizenship law. Until this year anyone born in the island of Ireland was entitled to Irish citizenship, the only country in the European Union that still had such a law. In June 2004 (on the same day as the local elections in which two Africans were, for the first time, elected to council seats) the government organised a referendum on the constitutional guarantee of citizenship to immigrant children born in Ireland. The referendum followed an acrimonious and emotive public and media discourse on immigration in which anti-immigrant groups and nationalist politicians said Ireland had become a ‘soft’ touch for immigrants, mostly from the developing world, who could not reach or enter into other countries in the West. They also described the majority of asylum seekers as ‘economic migrants’ and opportunists who came to Ireland to have babies and acquire citizenship for their children. Irish citizens voted overwhelmingly in favour of changing the citizenship law. Acting on the result of the referendum, government introduced a new legislation in late 2004. Under the new legislation which came into effect in January 2005, automatic rights to children of immigrants have been abolished unless one of the parents or grandparents has Irish citizenship or if the parent had been living in Ireland for three of the four years preceding the birth of the child.

1.3 Institutional setting of Civic Participation of Immigrants

As demonstrated in the previous sections, mass in-migration and the presence of immigrant and ethnic minority groups on a large scale are recent phenomena in Ireland. Partly for this reason but also because ‘official’ Ireland has shown a reluctance to promote itself as a migration destination, legal and institutional issues around immigrant civic participation were never actively proposed, debated or promoted until now. The main direction and motivations of the involvement by immigrants in Ireland in different kinds of civic activities would appear, at least in the initial stages, to be personal and group interests as will be illustrated in this section. Generally, the active participation of immigrants in many kinds of civic activities is influenced to a large extent by the status and conditions of their residency. The residence status and conditions of immigrants are, in turn, determined by general immigration laws and policies. The laws prescribe or dictate the nature and length of residency and also the kind of educational, economic or political pursuits immigrants can legally engage in. Anecdotal and experiential knowledge suggests that immigrants with long-term or permanent residence status and those that have Irish citizenship have taken a more confident and committed
approach to matters relating to civic participation. In relation to politics and electoral participation, there are specific regulations under Irish laws and those will be analysed very shortly. The next section will expatiate on the relationship between general immigration laws and immigrant civic participation.

As the first sections of this report demonstrate, there are different regimes in Ireland for receiving and integrating asylum seekers, foreign workers, students and family reunification migrants. Whereas students, migrant workers and their relatives/dependants have access to education up to any level, asylum seekers have access to only primary and secondary education under the law. In addition, they do not have the right to gainful employment, secure and private accommodation or to travel freely in and out of the country. While these restrictions have made it impossible for asylum seekers to be active in many civic spheres, many have been engaged in political activism mostly aimed at changing these and other restrictive immigration policies and at combating racism. Examples of immigrant-led groups in this respect include the Association of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Ireland (ARASI), African Refugee Network (ARN), Nigerian Support Group (NSG) and Asylum Seekers Group Ireland (ASGI). The fact that they cannot take up jobs or enrol in colleges leaves many asylum seekers much time and energy to devote to voluntary activities in the political and civic spheres. Some who started their civic activism in these specific fields have expanded their activities to broader citizenship and human rights issues like Female Genital Mutilation, domestic violence, and civic education. Others, after gaining refugee status and some guarantee of long-term/permanent stay in Ireland, have retreated or retired into obscurity and a life of considerably less activism.

Under the law, some categories of foreign workers are denied the right of family reunification and the spouses of work permit holders are not allowed to work. The civic actions of many foreign workers have been focused mainly on changing these and other policies relating to the conditions of their employment, access to healthcare and to state support for them and their dependants. The paths of many immigrant workers to such activism are usually the trade unions or some other kinds of pressure groups. There are no constitutional and institutional barriers to membership of trade unions for foreign workers but it would appear that immigrant membership of many unions have been low until now. Some of the reasons for this were that some immigrant groups were not clear what their rights in this respect were, others who were not envisaging a long or permanent presence in the Irish labour market did not feel compelled
to join the unions and others simply did not know where and how to apply for membership. Early this year the government decided to issue work permits to spouses of foreign workers in the healthcare and other highly-skilled sectors. This decision followed active campaigning by immigrant nurses’ groups led by the Filipinos and the fact that their exit from Ireland, as many had started to do, could complicate the prevailing manpower shortages in several critical sectors of the economy, particularly healthcare. At present there is a clamour, spearheaded by immigrant groups and workers’ unions, to extend the privilege to other categories of workers.

Other socio-political and civic spheres where immigrants have similarly been active include religion, the media, and cultural/national groups. Religious activism is one area where immigrant participation appears to be most intense and voluntary, less problematic and apparently unhindered by precarious residence status or length of time in Ireland. In the specific case of immigrants from Africa religious affiliation would appear to be the first that the majority cultivate, activate or reinstate once they have arrived in Ireland. Although the numbers of people in the majority society claiming to be agnostics and atheists have grown in recent years, religious participation by immigrants, the majority of whom came into Ireland since the second half of the last decade, is provoking resurgence in spirituality (Ugba 2003). According to the 2002 Census, this spiritual resurgence has impacted positively on the socio-demographics of mainline religions, especially the Protestants, Muslims, Greek Orthodox and other lesser-known groups. Between 1991 and 2001, the number of Muslims more than quadrupled, from 3,900 to 19,100 while those claiming to be Orthodox Christians increased from 400 to 10,400, according to the Census figures. The Church of Ireland added 26,400 adherents, the Presbyterian Church an extra 7,400 and the Methodists 5,000 (Census 2002).

However, the most innovative and dramatic changes in Ireland’s religious and cultural landscape is not the participation of immigrants in mainline churches but the birth and spread of immigrant-led religious groups (Ugba 2003). Available evidence would suggest that it has been relatively easy for immigrant groups to set up places of worship and to give a public demonstration of their beliefs. This is partly because the institutional requirements are not as stringent as they are in some countries and also because many in the Irish society still have a soft spot for religion even though their activism in this area may have diminished or ceased. Most immigrant religious organisations in Ireland are registered as public company limited by guarantee but a few have charitable status. Some groups are not registered but operate as
loose structures without defined membership or hierarchy (Ugba 2003). The requirements under Irish laws for a company limited by guarantee are an Article of Association, a Memorandum of Agreement and a minimum of seven directors. These requirements appear not to have posed difficult challenges for many immigrant groups as the numbers of registered churches and other forms of religious organisations have increased steadily in recent years.

Immigrants have also been active in media production, particularly in the ethnic media sector. The assumption that immigrant and minority ethnic groups in Ireland did not have their own media before the launch of Metro Eireann in April 2000 beclouds the fact that the Jewish, Italian and Traveller communities had published their own periodicals long before Metro Eireann debuted (Ugba 2002). However, the launch of Metro Eireann marked a turning point as it stimulated greater intellectual and public debates on the role of ethnic minority media in Ireland. It also opened the floodgates to the birth of many other publications. The idea to publish Metro Eireann, a monthly newspaper that focuses on the activities of immigrants and minority ethnic groups, was conceived by ChINEDu Onyejelem, a Nigerian journalist and the author of this report who also became the newspaper’s pioneering editor (www.metroeireann.com). The appearance of Metro Eireann on the Irish media landscape and the rapid births since then of other publications wholly owned and managed by persons from minority ethnic groups have provided additional opportunities for immigrant civic participation. Many contributors to these media are immigrants. During the 2004 local elections, many political aspirants and interest groups relied on these media to propagate their message and solicit for support. Many immigrants cannot set up their media because of legal, professional and financial reasons but the majority of them are intellectually capable of contributing to public and civic debates using these media as platforms. Whereas the foray of immigrants into radio and television production has been limited and less effective, the use of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to foster or enhance civic participation is becoming widespread. Most immigrant groups have set up websites for publicising their activities and exchanging information with the public.

Not surprising immigrants have not been fully active in those spheres where there are legal prohibitions or limited access. The education sphere is one example. Anecdotal evidence would suggest limited participation of immigrants in Student Union activities in the universities and other tertiary institutions. Since all categories of legal immigrants have access to primary and secondary education, one would expect a higher participation of immigrants in
Parents-Teachers associations and after-school clubs or groups. As research into this and other areas of immigrant civic participation in Ireland is scarce or even non-existent, it is difficult to say if this expectation has proved true.

With regard to political and electoral participation by immigrants in Ireland, specific rules and conditions apply. Generally, four kinds of election to political offices are held in Ireland periodically. These are local elections to select county, town/city and borough councillors, elections to the two houses of parliament (Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann), Presidential elections and election of European Parliament members. From time to time Ireland has also held referendums on constitutional changes. Whereas only Irish citizens can take part in the referendums and vote in all kinds of elections, citizens of EU countries can vote only in European and local elections while “every person who is a citizen of Ireland or ordinarily resident in the State and has reached the age of 18 years” (www.environ.ie) can vote and be voted for in local elections.

Only persons whose names appear on the Register of Electors can vote. The compilation of this Register is undertaken each year by county and city councils. A draft of the register is published on November 1 each year and is displayed for public inspection in post offices, libraries and other public buildings. A person can lodge a claim for correction in the draft register up to November 25. Claims are adjudicated on by the county registrar, whose decision may be appealed to the Circuit Court. The register of electors comes into force on 15 February. Even when the formal registration of electors has closed there are provisions for "late" applications for inclusion in a supplement, which is published prior to polling day. An application for inclusion in the supplement must be received at least 15 working days before polling day.

There is a period of one week, four weeks before the actual polling day, to nominate candidates for local elections. An interested person can nominate himself or herself or can be nominated by a registered voter in the particular area he or she wishes to contest the election. In the case where the candidate is contesting the election on the platform of a registered political party he or she must attach a certificate of political affiliation to the application or alternatively have the form signed by 15 persons (excluding the candidate and any ‘proposer’) registered in the local electoral area concerned. It is the responsibility of the candidate or ‘proposer’ to ensure that the completed nomination paper is delivered to the returning officer.
before the deadline for receipt of nominations. The returning officer is obliged to make a
decision on the validity of a nomination paper within an hour from the time it is delivered to
him.

Although immigrants who are also Irish or EU citizens can participate in the other elections,
participation in local elections which is opened to almost every adult, including all categories
of immigrants, is particularly relevant to this analysis of immigrant civic participation in
Ireland. Local elections are held every five years in Ireland, usually in the month of June. The
most recent one held in June 2004 was particularly interesting for two main reasons. First, it
was the first time immigrants actively participated both as voters and candidates, raising the
profile of immigrant political participation to an unprecedented level. Secondly, the local
elections were held on the same day as a referendum in which Irish citizens overwhelmingly
voted to deny children of immigrants automatic right to citizenship. To qualify for citizenship,
immigrants and their Irish-born children would have to have resided in Ireland for specified
number of years or have Irish parents/grandparents.

Up until the 2004 elections, immigrant participation in the political and electoral processes
has been limited and low-keyed. There had been a very few parliamentarians of Jewish and
Asian origin but no member of the physically ‘visible’ minority had made it into the political
arena. About 20 immigrants contested the June 2004 local elections (Holland, 2004a). The
majority of them were Nigerians. The two who got elected were Nigerians who had come to
Ireland as asylum seekers but had gained residency rights because of their Irish-born child or
children. Various explanations and interpretations have been adduced for the greater and more
active involvement of immigrants in the last elections. The most prominent of these is that
greater participation has been made possible largely because of the dramatic increase in the
number of immigrants. But this explanation, while plausible, does not suffice. Whereas
elections are generally a matter of numbers, involvement in politics can be motivated by
personal or ideological convictions, quest for justice and equity and crass opportunism.

There is, however, no doubt that many immigrant candidates were inspired or encouraged to
enlist in the electoral race by the relatively larger number of immigrants in Ireland in recent
years. On the other hand, the majority of candidates had been active in other civic fields and
their foray into politics was motivated by the conviction that it would offer a better channel to
tackle the issues that had motivated them into civic activism in the first place. In the specific
case of the 2004 local elections, there was a huge and concerted mobilisation and education programme spear-headed by immigrant-led groups such as the African Solidarity Centre (www.africacentre.ie) and Integrating Ireland (www.integratingireland.ie). These groups produced and distributed leaflets that encouraged immigrants to participate in the elections and also organised public debates.

Some immigrants have been active in civic spheres where they have had to work together with members of the majority society. Prominent examples include anti-racism groups like Residents Against Racism (RAR), Amnesty International, and the Coalition Against Deportation of Irish Children (CADIC), set up to fight for the rights of immigrant parents of Irish children that were facing deportation after the government abolished the policy of granting residence permit to them. Some groups led and dominated by immigrants also have members of the majority society on their board or as consultants and advisers. Examples include Integrating Ireland, ARASI and the Africa Solidarity Centre which, at the time of putting this report together, has three non-Africans on its seven-member board of directors. As mentioned in other parts of this report the relationship between immigrant-led civic groups and those led by members of the majority society has also been that of competition and mutual distrust.

**Part 2 Active Civic Participation of Immigrants in Ireland**

Not unexpectedly, public and academic discourse of immigrant civic participation in Ireland was muted for a long time. One of the reasons for this is that immigrants have only arrived in Ireland on a large scale since the mid-1990s. Also, there has been little space and inclination to engage with the theme of immigrant civic participation from members of a society that perceived theirs as a non-immigrant society. There was always the unspoken fear, as there had been with discourses of immigration policies generally, that public engagement with themes on immigrant civic participation would convey the impression that Ireland was willing and ready to admit immigrants. It is therefore not surprising that there is a dearth of literature on this theme. There is certainly not a single book, report or journal article that explores the theme of immigrant civic participation in Ireland in a comprehensive and detailed manner.

Intellectual engagement with this theme aimed at promoting knowledge and critical debates has been lacking in Ireland. The available publications have been produced mostly by NGOs.
or academics working on behalf of these organisations and they are mostly instruments of lobby or mobilisation. The majority of available literature do not address civic participation directly but focus on the more general issues of community development, integration and settlement. The few publications that address civic participation directly focus on particular strands like religion or politics and they also tend to concentrate on particular ethnic/national group or groups. The first part of this section reviews these publications, starting with the most recent and most relevant. This analysis does not engage in a detailed examination of those publications that are not directly relevant to civic participation. It simply identifies or names them and states their limited relevance to the subject-matter.

The publication that is most directly relevant to the theme of immigrant civic participation in Ireland is titled, *Positive Politics: Participation of Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities in the Electoral Process*. The authors of the 24-page pamphlet, published in November 2003 by the Dublin-based Africa Solidarity Centre, are Bryan Fanning, Fidèle Mutwarasibo and Neltah Chadamoyo. As the title of this report suggests, its main focus is on the participation of immigrants and ethnic minorities in electoral politics in Ireland. It is the first publication of its kind that examines this issue. The authors and publisher were motivated by a desire to “promote positive political responses to recent social change due to immigration” and “to promote greater political responsiveness” (Fanning et al 2003). The study on which the report is based consisted of a set of questionnaires administered on the six major political parties in Ireland in which they were asked to detail the measures or policies they have put in place to attract members of the country’s fast-growing immigrant groups or to get them involved in politics and elections. While this would appear to be a simplistic technique to investigate a complex issue, it yielded interesting findings and ultimately led to some far-reaching recommendations. Among its very important findings were the following:

1) None of the political parties had adopted specific policies or good practices to encourage members of immigrant communities and ethnic minority groups to become party members. As a matter of fact, the constitution of the Progressive Democrats prevented non-Irish and non-EU citizens from becoming members of the party. Following the publication of the report and the media publicity it generated, the party changed its constitution to allow non-Irish and non-EU citizens to join.

2) Only one of the six political parties had selected an immigrant candidate for the June 2004 local elections. The majority of immigrant candidates in that elections were ‘independents’, that is, they were not affiliated to political parties.
3) None of the parties had devised specific initiatives to solicit for votes and support among immigrant for the local elections. In other words, the parties had refused to consider immigrant groups as valuable political assets.

4) Though all the parties had signed the anti-racism protocol devised by the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) to prevent election candidates from playing the race card during the 2004 local election, the report noted that the parties had not established mechanism for preventing or dealing with racism among their members.

Among its main recommendations, the report called on all political parties to review their membership policies and to actively recruit members of immigrant and ethnic minority communities. Policies aimed at achieving this goal should be strictly monitored and targets should be set. The report also called on the political parties to develop mentoring schemes aimed at nurturing future candidates from immigrant and minority ethnic communities.

There is no doubt that this project represents the first concerted effort to analyse immigrant political participation in Ireland and it has enhanced our understanding of the issue. However it fails to provide a comprehensive picture because it focuses on one aspect of a multi-dimensional phenomenon. It sheds no light on the situation or conditions of the immigrants and therefore does not further an understanding of the willingness (or lack of) and preparedness of immigrants to engage with elections and politics in Ireland. Put differently, the report tells us what the mainstream political parties are not doing to encourage the participation of immigrants in the political process but gave no indication whether the immigrants are able, ready and willing to be involved. A more comprehensive and multi-dimensional analysis would include an examination of the structural constraints as well as a micro analysis that would involve an examination of the conditions of the immigrants. But despite this obvious weakness this report has, no doubt, enhanced our understanding of the subject-matter and provoked academic and public discourse.

The second publication, also published by the Africa Solidarity Centre and authored by the same persons, is a follow-up to the first. It is titled, ‘Negative Politics, Positive Vision: Immigration and the 2004 Elections’. Although the 25-page report shares some traits with the first, its findings are more prescriptive. It contains many recommendations aimed at achieving the inclusion of immigrants and ethnic minorities in the electoral and political process. Published a few months before the June 2004 local elections, its findings and
recommendations provoked a public discourse that resulted directly to greater attention on the part of the political establishment to the situation of immigrants. Before presenting the recommendations of the report, it is helpful to highlight some of its main findings. The report noted that although some of the political parties had taken positive steps to remove institutional barriers to the participation of immigrants, the measures were “insignificant” and had been “overshadowed by the current election climate where there are concerns that a few unscrupulous politicians will exploit intolerance and racism” (Fanning et al 2004:8). The report linked institutional barriers to immigrant participation in Irish political parties to the racism in Irish society: “Racism in Irish politics is a reality. The mono-cultural character of Irish politics is part of the problem of racism in Ireland” (Fanning et al 2004: 8).

On the political parties, the survey revealed that Fianna Fáil (the largest party in Ireland and senior coalition partner in government) had included an anti-racism section in its local election manual, which it distributed to all candidates. It had also placed an advertisement in Metro Eireann, a newspaper read by many immigrants, inviting new members. One of the party’s candidates had also translated election material into Mandarin, the mother tongue of many Chinese immigrants in the neighbourhood. The Progressive Democrats had removed the clause in their constitution that barred immigrants from becoming members and some non-Irish citizens, including two Chinese, had actually joined the party. The Labour Party had also translated election materials into various community languages including Mandarin, Russian, French and Arabic and the party was fielding an ethnic minority candidate in the local elections. Fine Gael, the second biggest party in the state, had also advertised in media patronised by immigrants in order to encourage potential ethnic minority candidates and to secure votes. The Party had appointed an Equality Strategy Manager and was in the process of drafting an equality strategy. Both the Green Party and Sinn Fein had organised anti-racism trainings for their election candidates. The Green Party had also translated some party publications into immigrant languages while Sinn Fein was promoting an anti-racism charter for local authorities in some areas.

Despite these positive developments, the report described the level of immigrant involvement in the main political parties as “abysmal”, adding, none of the two parties that make up the coalition government had nominated immigrant candidates to contest the elections on their tickets (Fanning et al 2004:12). To improve immigrant participation in politics and elections, the report called for urgent measures by the party leaderships against racism. It was not
enough to translate party materials into immigrant languages but the political parties must work harder to recruit immigrant members and they must also address “institutional barriers to membership” (Fanning et al 2004:4). The report also called for the rights of long-term residents to vote in national elections and European ones, stating their continued exclusion violates the principles of representative democracy. A national immigrant and ethnic minority consultative forum should be set up, according to the report, to facilitate the involvement of these groups in policy formulation. Although rich in findings and recommendations, this report, like the one preceding it, addresses one dimension of a multi-faceted problem. There is however no doubt that it contributes to a greater and clearer understanding of issues surrounding the participation of immigrants in Irish politics and elections. This and the fact that it is the only report that has attempted to unravel this very important issue make it (and the first report) the most important published document on the issue. The two reports certainly offer firm foundation for future research efforts to build on.

A third publication released in 2003 by the Belfast-based Irish Council of Churches examines the religious activities of immigrants, including asylum seekers and refugees. Titled “Research Project into Aspects of the Religious Life of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Immigrants in the Republic of Ireland”, the report forms part of the ‘Churches Together in England’ document. The purpose of the report was to find out “basic facts” about “Black Majority Churches” (ICC 2003:1). It is therefore not surprising that the report focuses mainly on churches set up by African immigrants although it also discusses the activities of immigrant Christians in Irish main churches and the religious groups set up by Romanians and other immigrant groups. The report sets out to examine, among other things, the religious life of these churches, their relationships with ‘mainstream’ Irish churches and the possibilities of linking them to Irish church and ecumenical structures. The section of the report on ‘Black Majority Churches’ was written by Mr Femi Olayisade, a Nigerian and staff of Christian Aid Ireland.

The presence of immigrants in mainline Irish congregations was little and almost insignificant and in the few cases where immigrants were present, they mostly used the churches as transits to immigrant-led ones. There were only two Church of Ireland parishes where a significant presence was found. Many immigrants change from mainline churches to immigrant ones usually in search of a “congenial” atmosphere or when they are forced to relocate to another geographical area by the government or by economic and social conditions (ICC 2003:3). The
relationship between immigrant-led Pentecostal congregations and Irish mainline churches was generally that of mutual suspicion although a few Irish churches have allowed immigrant congregations to use their premises or facilities. A few immigrants belonged to Irish-led Pentecostal churches but most immigrant Pentecostals belonged to congregations led by immigrants, mostly by persons from their national/ethnic group. The report acknowledged the rapid spread of these congregations all over Ireland. The majority incubated in hostels for refugees and asylum seekers. Their spread from Dublin and other major cities to villages and the hinterlands has been helped by the government’s policy of ‘dispersing’ asylum seekers all over Ireland.

A common problem confronting many immigrant-led church groups is the lack of dedicated worship centres. Some group started in halls and lounges of hotels or the dining rooms of hostels for asylum seekers and others in private home, rented front stores or the rented premises of an Irish mainline church. However, sharing premises with mainline churches has resulted in tension and conflicts between these immigrant-led churches and their hosts. In other cases, a few groups have been forced out of their rented hotel hall after the managers complained of the ‘noise’ that their worship sessions generated. The other major problems faced by the churches are inadequate financial resources and mistrust and resentment from members of the majority society. These problems, the report concludes, have not stopped the growth of the churches and a few have, in recent times, acquired their own dedicated premises.

The media publicity that followed the launch of this report was useful in drawing public attention to immigrant religious activities. Until the publication of this report, public discourses of immigrant religious activities were restricted to occasional newspaper or magazine articles or a few minutes of airtime on radio or television. This report represents the first serious attempt to analyse this phenomenon. However, the report lacks depth because, among other things, its macro approach has yielded very little detail on the participant actor or individual believer. This is a serious limitation, as the reader does not get satisfactory answers to very pertinent issues after reading the report. Questions relating to the various motivations of members, the manifestation of beliefs in everyday conduct, the role of beliefs in identity formation, the role of the church in the community, the church as instrument of boundary construction/maintenance and a host of others are either not discussed at all or touched on superficially. One cannot but feel that the authors of this report squandered a major
opportunity to produce a definitive document on this new but interesting feature on Ireland’s civic landscape. The next sections concentrate on those publications, which do not focus mainly on immigrant civic participation but are nonetheless remotely relevant. This report does not aim at a detailed analysis of these publications but it simply identifies them and states their relevance to immigrant civic participation in Ireland.

In “Africans in Ireland: Developing Communities” published in Dublin in 2000 by the Dublin-based African Cultural Project, the authors examine the nature of and obstacles to community development by African immigrants in Ireland. They noted that African solidarity groups have waxed and waned due to inadequate financial resources and the lack of sustained involvement at the grassroots. The report also derided the lack of a “long-term comprehensive strategy for the inclusion of immigrants into Irish society” (Smith and Mutwarasibo 2000:10). It noted that “there has been little evidence …to suggest African communities have developed in Ireland at any point in time”, adding that community development, if it is to be successful, must involve participation. Although African communities had not emerged, effective networks of African were already in place. The report called for greater participation of Africans in designing and implementing programmes meant to facilitate community building and participation in the majority society. This report is based on a small sample and it certainly does not describe the dynamism and dynamics of Ireland’s fast-growing African communities. Since it was completed over four years ago, the number and categories of African immigrants in Ireland have changed dramatically. The report therefore has little relevance to any analysis of the conditions of African immigrants in today’s Ireland but the obstacles to participation and community development it identifies are relevant to an examination of immigrant civic involvement.

Another project, “A quantitative profile analysis of African immigrants in 21st Century Dublin” (Ugba, 2004), completed in 2004, similarly focuses on African communities. Though it is a straightforward quantitative analysis that does not have civic participation as its main theme, it paints a picture of Ireland’s African communities and highlights some obstacles to community development and civic participation. It highlights racism and racially-based discriminations as problems members of the communities are contending with. The report also illustrates the strategies of survival and of community development members of the African communities have adopted and shows that many have remained optimistic about making Ireland their new home despite the racisms and the instability occasioned by on-going
changes in immigration and citizenship laws as I described in the sections on immigration and citizenship policies. This survey is useful because it contributes to a deeper understanding of one of Ireland’s largest and most dynamic immigrant groups. It reveals some barriers to participation and belonging and supplies the inspiration and ideas for further investigation. However, it is strictly a quantitative study and therefore the interpretations and inferences one can draw from it are quite limited. Moreover, it focuses on only one of many immigrant groups in Ireland.

Other reports have also been written about other national/ethnic groups in Ireland. These reports, which focus mainly on the needs of these communities, provide some insights to the unique problems they face with regard to integration and settlement. In these reports, integration and settlement are often understood to include but not limited to civic participation. Some of these reports are:

a) The Community Development Support Needs of New Communities Within The Inner City of Dublin (Rourke 2003). This report investigates the community development needs and strategies of some immigrant groups in the Inner City of Dublin. It makes recommendations on ways the state and local authorities can support the development of these groups and facilitate their settlement and involvement in community initiatives.

b) Report of the Survey of the Vietnamese and Bosnian Refugee Communities in Ireland (O'Regan 1998). This survey was the result of collaboration between the now defunct Refugee Agency, the Eastern Health Board and various government departments. It gives a historical account of the presence of the two communities in Ireland and highlights their demographic characteristics. It also identifies obstacles to community formation and participation. Among these obstacles are language barriers and the lack of economic and cultural capital.

c) Report of a Survey on Bosnian Refugee Women in Ireland (Sultan-Prnjavorac, 1999). Initiated by the Bosnian Community Project and the Refugee Agency, this project focuses on women within the Bosnian community. It highlights general as well as gender-based impediments to active participation in society. Among the gender-based obstacles it identified is the lack of appropriate and adequate childcare facilities. Women are often compelled by this circumstance to work at home only and are therefore removed from social and education contacts and opportunities.
d) Dibelius C., Lone but not Alone: A Case Study of Social Networks of African Refugee Women in Ireland (Dibelius, 2001). This analysis explores the experiences of lone African refugee mothers of creating new social networks having arrived in Ireland, in most cases, traumatised, desperate and without friends or acquaintances. The research concludes that the ability of these women to form or participate in new social network is affected by, among other things, the lack of practical resources such as money, transport and language skills. Other obstacles include everyday racism and the lack of adequate and appropriate childcare support. Intricate, multi-dimensional and multi-levelled experiences of inclusion and exclusion, comradeship and mistrust between them and members of the majority society and other refugee and immigrant groups affect participation in social networks. The research identified the Church and the women’s closest friends as useful sources of support in the process of negotiating a place and participating in various aspects of the Irish society. Most of the issues raised in this report would be relevant in any analysis of civic participation not only by this group but also by other sub-groups of the immigrant population.

Two other publications that have some relevance to the issue of immigrant civic participation in Ireland are Diverse Voices (NAPAR 2003) published by the Steering Group of the National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPAR) and Research, Development and Critical Interculturalism (Feldman et al 2002) published by the Social Science Research Centre, University College, Dublin. Diverse Voices is the result of public consultations and meetings aimed at the development of Action Plan Against Racism. The rounds of national consultations and meetings were organised by a government-appointed steering group. It also wrote the report. The report identified ‘inclusion’ and ‘participation’ as key planks of any plan aimed at combating racism and building a more inclusive and intercultural Ireland. It recommended the enhancement of community development supports for immigrant groups to facilitate their participation in society at local and national levels and called for specific measures to ensure adequate representation of immigrants and minority ethnic groups in political and public offices. Specifically, it recommended that two seats should be reserved in Seanad Éireann (upper house of parliament) for representatives of immigrant and minority ethnic groups.

The report by Feldman and her colleagues (Feldman et al 2002) examines the nature of refugees’ and asylum seekers’ participation in a variety of research and development-based
projects. In 2002 when the research was conducted, Ireland was awash with state and EU-funded projects directed at the new immigrant communities, including asylum seekers and refugees. The report notes that “the complexities associated with the precarious, unstable and even transient lives” of immigrants “greatly affect and often impede their ability to engage in various forms of participation” (Feldman et al 2002:11). Many asylum seekers are in most cases unaware of the existence of projects aimed at them and in some cases they are simply unable to participate because of transportation costs and lack of suitable childcare assistance. In other cases members of these groups have refused to participate in projects even when invitations were extended to them because they viewed such invitations as symbolic gestures that were never intended to truly get them involved but only to give the appearance of doing so. The lack of effective participation of these groups in research projects on or about them has meant that their interests and voices are sometimes not well represented in the research outcomes and it has led to researchers presenting inaccurate, misleading and incomplete picture of these groups. The issues identified in this report as obstacles to immigrant involvement in research initiatives are useful to any analysis of their involvement in other civic fields.

2.2 Making their voices heard and pioneering change (Five examples of key immigrant civic activists)

Below are names and brief biographical accounts of five immigrant civic activists in Ireland.

a) **Mr Rotimi Adebari**, from Nigeria, is one of only two Africans who have won seats on a county council in Ireland. At present he is a councillor on the Portlaoise County Council, having been elected in June 2004. Mr Adebari came to Ireland over four years ago to seek political asylum, having fled religious persecution. Although his asylum application was rejected, he was able to acquire residence rights because of his Irish-born child. As the analysis in the section on immigration policies demonstrates, immigrants in Ireland are no longer able to acquire these rights solely on the basis of parentage of a child born in Ireland and children of immigrants no longer have automatic right to Irish citizenship. Involvement in electoral politics for Mr Adebari is a continuation of and a new dimension to the active civic life he has led since arriving in Ireland. The father of three and self-employed consultant on interculturalism and anti-racism issues had been an elected member of the national executive of the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed, member of the Laoise County Community
Forum, member of Portlaoise Community Action Project and a member of Laoise County Housing, Social and Cultural Strategic Committee. His interest in unemployment issues was ignited by his own experience of job hunting and the blatant racially-based discrimination he encountered. His experience informed him of the need for support for people who are faced with similar problems. The network of contacts he established as an activist on social issues has proved useful in his present political endeavours.

He can be contacted at: 00353-86-3010262 or optimumpoint@hotmail.com

b) **Fidèle Mutwarasibo** from Rwanda is a pioneering member of the Dublin-based African Solidarity Centre, also known as Africa Centre and a staff member of the Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI), also based in Dublin. He is a Rwanda-born Irish citizen who came to Ireland in 1995. His path to civic activism began in his home country. In Rwanda, he had worked as a secondary school teacher and subsequently as a community development worker with a Church affiliated with an NGO. He left Rwanda in 1994 and spent one year in the Congo (DRC) where he worked with an international NGO in relief and emergency. Since 2000, he has been working with the voluntary sector in Ireland and has, during this time, written or co-written articles and reports on community development and the rights and entitlements of immigrants. While he was still with the Canal Communities Partnership, he spear-headed the publication of a Directory of Services in the local community. He is co-author of two documents on immigrant civic political participation published by the African Solidarity Centre in 2003 and 2004. He is currently researching the links between social capital and the emergence of immigrant “elites” in Ireland. Mr Mutwarasibo’s other current civic engagements include membership of the Church of Ireland Discovery and Anti-Racism subcommittee and member of the advisory committee of RAXEN, an EU programme on Anti-racism and xenophobia. He had previously been a member of the national executive of Integrating Ireland and LIR anti-racism group. Mr Mutwarasibo can be contacted at: 00 353 1 645 8046 or fidele@immigrantcouncil.ie

c) **Mercy Ebun Peters** is a journalist, a specialist on media and psychology and the director of the Association of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Ireland (ARASI). Born in Freetown, Sierra Leone, Ms Peters had worked as a regional reporter for The
NewStorm Newspaper in Sierra Leone for four years. In Ireland she did a stint with Metro Eireann, Ireland’s multicultural newspaper. Ms Peters arrived in Ireland about five years ago to seek political asylum. Her civic activism began with several volunteer positions in different immigrant, refugee and human rights organisations. She has worked as community development officer on integration measures for refugees and promoting peer education as a tool of intervention for participation in community development. In her present position, she is in charge of ARASI’s project aimed at providing structural support for refugee community leaders/organisations. She is also involved in developing mentoring for refugee youths and single parents. Ms Peters can be contacted at: mercyepeters@hotmail.com or 00353-876545900.

**d) Rev Remba Osengo** is a pastor and spiritual leader of Dublin-based Christ Co-Workers Vineyard Ministries, the first African-led Pentecostal church in Dublin. Now an Irish citizen, Rev Osengo came from the Democratic Republic of Congo to Ireland in Mid-1990s to seek political asylum. He completed the MPhil in Ethnic and Racial Studies at the Department of Sociology, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland, in 2001. His civic activism extends beyond the religious sphere into anti-racism, parent-teacher association and involvement with the Congolese community in Dublin. The father of seven is at present researching for a doctoral thesis in Trinity College, Dublin. Mr Osengo can be contacted at: 00353-12827629

**e) Shalini Sinha** is a Canadian Indian, a self-employed consultant on anti-racism and equality issues and a Television presenter. She completed her undergraduate studies at Alberta University in Canada and her postgraduate at the Women's Education, Research and Resource Centre in the University College Dublin (UCD). Before she went into self-employment, Ms Sinha had lectured on women's studies in UCD. She arrived in Ireland in 1997 with her Irish husband. As an independent producer and journalist, she presents Mono, a prime-time intercultural programme on Radio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ), Ireland’s Public Service Broadcasting Organisation. She was also involved in the Black Collective of Ireland, a fledging organisation of black people whose aim, among others was to "create a space" to discuss their experiences, including racism. Shalini is a regular contributor to the Irish Times on health matters. She can be contacted at: ssinha@gofree.indigo.ie
3. Expert assessment

a) The main fields of civic activities of immigrants in Ireland are religious, special interest groups like anti-racism, integration and equality; national/ethnic associations, and of late political/electoral activities.

Comments: I would consider this answer a hypothesis based on experiential and anecdotal evidence.

b) It would appear that many ethnic/national groups in Ireland are active in different spheres of civic activities. Immigrants from Nigeria would appear to be most active and versatile, dominating in several fields of civic activities. The preponderance or dominance of Nigerians can be explained, among other reasons, by these three factors: a) their sheer numerical strength which provides valuable social and cultural capital. B) The linguistic affinity between Nigeria and Ireland. Since English is Nigeria’s official language, many Nigerians in Ireland would not experience the same communication difficulties as would immigrants from countries where English is not an official language or widely spoken. C) The geographical proximity of Ireland to the United Kingdom where there has been a longer and more established community of Nigerians. Many Nigerians in Ireland have some connection or link to Africans in the UK (Ugba 2004a) and this has made it possible for them to observe and seek to replicate the civic activities engaged in by their fellow countrymen on the other side of the Irish Sea.

Many new immigrant congregations in Ireland have either been established or are led and mostly populated by Nigerians (Ugba 2003). But some other African groups, for example, those from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe and South Africa, are also very active in the religious sphere. Other non-African groups that have also set up congregations or join mainline Irish churches include Romanians, Chinese and, to a lesser extent, immigrants from Lithuania, Moldova and the Philippines. Anecdotal evidence and media reports suggest that Nigerians have taken the lead in political and electoral activities. Of the about 20 immigrant candidates in the June 2004 local elections, no fewer than eight were Nigerians. The only two immigrant candidates that won the elections were Nigerians.
Immigrants from the Philippines have been predominantly active in advocating the rights of immigrant workers, specifically those of nurses and others in the medical profession. Their disproportionate involvement in this sphere of civic activities is not surprising giving that the vast majority of Filipinos workers in Ireland are healthcare workers. In advocating for the rights of migrant workers, Filipinos have worked with mainstream employers and workers’ unions like the Irish Nurses Organisation (INO) and the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC). Many national groups have been involved in anti-racism, integration and equality issues. The majority of immigrants that are active in these fields have worked in collaboration with mainline Irish anti-racism groups like the Anti-Racism Campaign and the Coalition Against Deportation of Irish Children (CADIC).

Many immigrant groups have ventured into media production, particularly newspaper and magazine production, in recent time. Again, available evidence suggests that Nigerians have taken the lead in this area of civic activity. Today, there are periodicals published by Chinese, Filipinos, Russians and Pakistanis.

**Comments:** I would consider this answer a hypothesis based on experiential and anecdotal evidence.

c) There is little or no empirical evidence to support a valid and reliable comparison of immigrant civic participation and that of the majority population but anecdotal evidence would suggest that persons from the majority population tend to participate more in such activities like parents-teachers meetings, after-school clubs, neighbourhood residents association and community environmental protests.

d) At some level, there is a positive correlation between engagement in ethnic or migrant organisations and involvement with mainstream organisations but at another level, there is a negative correlation. This happens when the aims and objectives of the national organisation correlate to or are re-enforced by those of the ethnic or immigrant organisation. For example, immigrant members of the African Refugee Network or the Association of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Ireland (ARASI) are most likely to be interested in or be involved with mainline Irish groups like the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL), Amnesty International (AI), the Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC) and the Anti-Racism Campaign (ARC). On the other hand, immigrants that are active in national-cultural groups aimed at promoting a
particular culture might not see the relevance of getting involved with mainline Irish
groups that have different aims and perspectives. I might also add that the willingness
and ability of immigrants to engage in cross-cutting civic activities could sometimes
be just a matter of opportunity and personal circumstances rather than calculated or
targeted personal interests. There is an immigrant (also an Irish citizen) who is a pastor
and head of a Pentecostal congregation and is active in parents-teachers association
and in anti-racism initiatives.

e) Immigrant civic participation in Ireland is only just beginning to attract the attention
of intellectuals and the public. This makes the entire field interesting and deserving of
concerted scientific analysis. Of particular interest to me are the following areas: 1)
who participates and who doesn’t? Why do some immigrants participate and others do
not? 2) What are the issues and who defines and prioritise them? 3) The relationship
between participation, identity and integration is a complex but interesting one that
deserves to be untangled. So also is the relationship between forms of immigrant civic
participation and mass media role and representation.

f) As the analyses in the main body of this report demonstrate, the entire field of
immigrant civic participation in Ireland is grossly under-researched and largely absent
in intellectual discourses and production. This would imply the existence of a wide
scope for research into this very multifaceted phenomenon.

i) For a start, a thorough and scientifically rigorous mapping exercising that
would identify the major issues as well as the key players (individuals and
groups) is necessary. This exercise could also incorporate a gender as well
as ethnic profile of activists. Following the successful completion of this
exercise, other specific areas could then be investigated.

ii) A large-scale qualitative analysis of the constraints or impediments (legal,
social, structural, individual etc) to active immigrant civic participation. An
exercise like this would necessarily also address the motivations/inspiration
for active civic involvement. The exercise would involve but not restricted
to an analysis of the biographies of key civic activities and the trajectories
of their civic engagements.

iii) A qualitative analysis of the relationship between active civic engagement
of immigrants and identity/trans-nationalism. A project like this would
seek to answer these questions: A) what particular image (individual or
group) is most associated with immigrants who are active in the civic
spheres? B) Is there a connection between a desire to identify (culturally, politically, values etc) with the majority or ‘host’ society and active immigrant civic participation?

iv) An analysis of media discourses/representation of immigrant civic participation. This exercise would concentrate on particular forms of civic participation and on defined immigrant groups. The study of media representation is important, among other reasons, because the media are often the only window on society for many people.

v) Connected to the above is an investigation of the role of the media, particularly Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in promoting/shaping forms of immigrant civic participation.

vi) Finally, a research into the relationship between mainstream civic forums or groups and those formed, led and mostly populated by immigrants is necessary. Again, this topic would have to be defined and streamlined to make it effective and useful. Generally the project should seek to answer, among others, these questions: a) Is the interaction between mainstream civic forums and those led by immigrants that of cooperation or contention or a more complex one that incorporates dimensions of both and more? B) How rigid, flexible or negotiable are the boundaries that separate the two forms of civic participation? Is there a logical progression from one to the other? Are there forms of dialectical involvements? This research topic would particularly find relevance in Ireland where many immigrant civic activists complain of lack of resources, which they say are siphoned away by mainline civic groups.
Appendix

Mapping of Research Competences in Ireland

1) Civic participation of immigrants in Ireland—leading institutions

Summary: As already indicated in the body of this report, very little has been accomplished with regard to research on immigrant civic participation. This would also imply the existence of a very few institutions and researchers in Ireland who can be considered specialists in this field. The leading institutions/departments in this field in Ireland are:

1) Department of Social Policy and Social Work
University College Dublin
Belfield
Dublin 4
Ireland
Telephone: +353-(0)1 716-8419 / 716-8511 Fax: +353-(0)1 716-1197

2) Department of Sociology
University College Dublin
Belfield
Dublin 4
Ireland
Tel: +353-1-716 8510 | e-mail: sociology@ucd.ie

Dr Brian Fanning, who co-authored the two reports on immigrants and electoral politics, is based in the Department of Social Policy and Social Work while Alice Feldman who has taken academic and activist interest in the subject-matter is based in the Department of Sociology. This is the reason both Departments are highlighted as the top, and perhaps the only, specialist institutions in Ireland.

Civic participation of immigrants in Ireland – leading experts
1) Dr Bryan Fanning
Department of Social Policy and Social Work
University College Dublin (see above)
Email: bryan.fanning@ucd.ie

Dr Fanning co-authored two reports on immigrant political participation published by the African Solidarity Centre in 2003 and 2004. The reports have been reviewed in the main body of this report.

2) Dr Alice Feldman
Department of Sociology
University College Dublin (see above)
Email: alicefeldman@yahoo.com

Dr Feldman has maintained intellectual interest in Ireland’s fast-growing immigrant communities. She has also participated in immigrant-led initiatives and she is at present a member of the board of African Solidarity Centre (ASC). She is co-author of the report on “Research, Development and Critical Interculturalism: A Study on the Participation of
Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Research and Development-Based Initiatives”, published by the Social Science Research Centre, University College, Dublin.

2) Civic participation in Ireland – leading institutions
Many universities and colleges in Ireland have dabbled in and out of this field of study and at present it is difficult to pinpoint the specialist institutions. Generally, some member of staff of political science departments in these institutions have tended to concentrate on elements of political participation while the sociology, social work and community development departments have tended to concentrate on the other areas of civic participation. However, there is no evidence of extensive research or publications by any university or college in Ireland. Library and Achieve searches have also not revealed evidence of research or publications.

Civic participation in Ireland – leading experts
For the same reasons listed above it is difficult to say who the experts are in the general field of civic participation in Ireland. The interest that many researchers and academics in universities and colleges here have shown is limited, not concerted or coordinated and therefore not focussed. Most professionals that have investigated this area has subsumed it under other major investigations or labelled it differently. It is most likely that there would be some response if there was a well-advertised call for collaboration on civic participation projects of various kinds.

3) Immigration in Ireland – leading institutions
Summary: Academic studies relating to immigration in Ireland have been diffused among many institutions and colleges. The only specialist institute for the study of migration, the Irish Centre for Migration Studies (http://migration.ucc.ie), located in the University of Cork, ceased to operate as a separate and semi-autonomous unit in 2003. Some of its activities and personnel have been transferred to the Department of Geography in the same university. For this reason, the Geography Department of this university would qualify as one of the leading institutions in the migration field in Ireland. Its activities cover both immigration and emigration and immigrants and emigrants.

1) Department of Geography,
University College Cork
Ireland

Telephone: +353 21 490 2517/ 2888/ 2801
Fax: +353 21 427 1980

2) MPhil in Ethnic and Racial Studies,
Department of Sociology,
University of Dublin,
Trinity College, Dublin 2, Ireland.

Tel +353 1 608 2766
Fax +353 1 677 1300
The unit is located within the Department of Sociology, Trinity College, and Dublin. Its director, Dr Ronit Lentin, has done extensive work on immigrants, especially women and Jews. She has also coordinated major conferences and research projects relating to migration and immigrants in Ireland. Many students of this programme have completed their final dissertation on themes related to migration and immigrants.

3) Department of Sociology
Trinity College, Dublin 2
Ireland

The Mphil in Ethnic and Racial Studies is based in the Department of Sociology, Trinity College, Dublin. Until early 2005, the author of this report was also based in this Department.

4) Department of Sociology
University College, Dublin
Dublin 4
Ireland

The above department is mentioned because Dr Alice Feldman is based there.

5) Department of Sociology
National University of Ireland, Maynooth
Co Kildare, Ireland.

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The academic interests of Dr Rebecca King Ó Riain, based in the above department, cover migration matters.

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Dr Breda Gray, mentioned below, is based in the above department.

Immigration in Ireland – leading experts
1) Dr Piaras Mac Einri
Department of Geography
University College Cork (address as stated above)
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Tel: 0035321 490 2889

Piaras MacEinri was head of the now defunct Irish Migration Centre at the University of Cork.

2) Abel Ugba (author of this report)
Department of Sociology (until January 2005)
Trinity College
Dublin 2, Ireland

3) Dr Ronit Lentin
Director
MPhil in Ethnic and Racial Studies,
Department of Sociology,
University of Dublin,
Trinity College, Dublin 2, Ireland.

Tel +353 1 608 2766
Fax +353 1 677 1300
Email rlentin@tcd.ie

Dr Lentin has published several papers on the experiences of migrant women and their involvement in anti-racism and anti-discrimination movements in Ireland. She is a co-founder of the Migrant Women Network and the Coalition Against the Deportation of Irish Children.

4) Dr Breda Grey
Department of Sociology
University of Limerick (address same as above)

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Dublin City University
MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION PROGRAMME

Ireland is going through a triple process of social transformation caused by the economic boom, the peace process and the unprecedented levels of inward migration. Over the last decade the state shifted from one where large swathes of its population emigrated to one which is attracting vast numbers of immigrants from Europe and further afield. While there is little agreements on the numbers involved we do know that there are now over 150 languages being spoken in Ireland. This is a far cry from the mono-cultural and mono-ethnic society once referred to by its critics. How the political system, civil society and the educational institutions respond to this new internationalised and intercultural Ireland will largely determine the quality of the democracy we will live under in the decade to come. If the new found economic prosperity is to be matched by social inclusion and a respect for cultural diversity then we need to be acting now in a spirit of partnership to design the new Ireland.

DCU is Ireland’s youngest university and it prides itself for being always innovative and progressive in its development. In 2005 DCU was named Irish ‘university of the year’ on the basis of a range of
measures but primarily because it attracted the most research funding per member of academic staff. DCU’s objective is to be a distinctive agent of radical innovation within a culture of world-class excellence. Also in 2005 DCU launched an ambitious transformation strategy on the basis of creating ‘theme leaders’ to champion interdisciplinary and outward-oriented strategic development. These include science and discovery, business and innovation and internationalisation, interculturalism and social development. The theme leaders are currently engaged in a Foresight exercise designed to look into the future and discern areas and topics of great social need where the university will focus its considerable scientific and technological expertise. DCU is at the same time launching an innovative Citizenship and Community Engagement Strategy to match its teaching and research strategies.

Recognizing the critical importance of migration and social integration in contemporary Ireland, DCU has launched a concerted research and intervention programme around these issues. This programme—the Migration and Integration Programme—responds to the call by the National Action Plan Against Racism for further research and policy development in this area. The MIP brings together researchers and practitioners across a range of disciplines—including economics, sociology, media studies, politics, legal studies, education, nursing studies and intercultural studies. Together with researchers at other universities and civil society and government partners we will seek to forward a progressive agenda so that the opportunities presented by migration contribute to a better Ireland. To date the IWP has:

- Led the ten country European Intercultural Workplace Project funded by the EU’s Leonardo da Vinci Programme designed to develop best practice in relation to the intercultural workplace
- Conducted funded research on migrant workers in a variety of Irish workplaces including the hotel industry (funded by Failte Ireland), managing diversity (funded by McDonalds), and in the food processing industry (Glanbia), as well as a general study of law reform and workplace discrimination
- Carried out research in partnership with a number of civil society organisation including a study of trafficking for forced labour (in association with Migrant Rights Centre Ireland) and on the recognition of overseas qualifications (with Integrating Ireland)
- Developed a partnership with the NCCRI to pilot a community interpreting programme with government support and to develop a research forum
- Hosted an ambitious all Ireland electronic inter-university journal called Translocations The Irish Migration, Race and Social Transformation Review (www.imrstr.dcu.ie)
- Secured a major EU Science and Society grant in partnership with Cairde to carry out research with migrant communities around mental health issues that will be conducted under the auspices of the new DCU Science Shop: Community Knowledge Exchange
- Developed the Intercultural campus Initiative (ICI) in collaboration with NUI Maynooth and assisted the Equality Authority in setting up and inter university Equality and Diversity Committee
- Launched an ambitious Congress/DCU research programme to investigate the impact of migration on the Irish workplace and develop a trade union policy in relation to its social impact

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