



Irish Political Parties, Immigration and Integration in 2007



Research on behalf of
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1 Introduction

This research, undertaken between November 2006 and March 2007, examines the responses of the six main political parties – Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Labour Party, Progressive Democrats, Green Party and Sinn Féin – to immigrants and immigration in the run up to the 2007 general election. A draft report was circulated to the six parties in March 2007. This report takes account of responses to the draft.

Firstly, the research sought to ascertain how and to what extent Irish political parties as institutions were responsive to immigrants. Each of the six parties was asked what policies or good practices they had adopted to encourage members of immigrant communities and ethnic-minority groups to become party members. Secondly the parties were each asked to outline their specific ‘vision’ for the integration of immigrants into Irish society. Across Europe, especially since 11 September 2001, debates about multiculturalism and integration have become highly politicised. Here it may seem that Ireland carries relatively little historical baggage. Yet Irish debates are likely to be influenced by internal values and ideologies as well as by the lessons and influence of other countries. Irish political parties are likely to play a central role in future debates about what it means to be part of twenty-first century Irish society. To date, integration has been mostly left to the economy. The experiences of other countries tell us that a more comprehensive approach to integration is needed and that the rhetoric of inclusion is insufficient.

Thirdly, the political parties were asked, given their vision of integration, where they stood in furthering the civic integration of immigrants through the political and legal system. Each was asked to what extent and how in their view did existing electoral rights for non-Irish citizens (including EU and third country nationals) allow for their vision for civic participation to be realised. Each party was also asked for its view on the desirability of extending the franchise. It is clear that a significant proportion of twenty-first century Irish society is not represented in parliamentary politics. The findings of this research suggest that this accounts in part for the present low commitment amongst Irish political parties to reaching out to immigrant communities.

The study was undertaken as part of a two-year project funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences on the development of evidence-based practice in Irish integration policy led by the Migration and Citizenship Research Initiative (MCRI) at UCD.¹ As with equivalent UK research, the emphasis was on identifying institutional barriers and good practices.² The research also built on earlier research on Irish political parties in 2003 and 2004 with the aim of identifying improvements in responses of parties to immigrants and ethnic minorities.³

1 MCRI, *Bridging the Research-Policy Divide: Evidence-Based Research in Irish Integration Policy*, www.ucd.ie/mcri

2 A Rushanara and A O’Cinnede, *Our House? Race and Representation in British Politics* (London: Institute of Public Policy Research, 2002)

3 B Fanning, F Mutwarasibo F and N Chadamoyo, *Positive Politics: Participation of Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities in the Electoral politics* (Dublin: Africa Centre, 2003) B Fanning, F Mutwarasibo and N Chadamoyo, *Negative Politics: Positive Vision: Immigration and the 2004 Elections* (Dublin: Africa Centre, 2004)

2 Main Findings and Issues

The good news is that, amongst Irish parties, there is much common ground. All emphasise that integration is important. There is considerable overlap in the ideas put forward by different parties within a rapidly developing policy debate about immigration, integration and social cohesion in the Republic of Ireland.⁴ From what the political parties say, there is a basis for a new consensual project of ensuring that Irish institutions, including political ones, come to reflect the diversity of twenty-first century Ireland.

The bad news is that the integration efforts of Irish political parties are, as of yet, minimal. This is a crucial issue. Politicians are key actors in debates about immigration and integration. They are expected to provide leadership. Yet their own specific institutions, the political parties, remain amongst the least diverse, the least responsive, the least capable of leading by example when it comes to representing the diversity of twenty-first century Irish society. This is unsustainable and potentially dangerous to social cohesion in the long run.

In some cases Irish parties in 2007 are making less of an effort on the ground to reach out to immigrants than they did in the run up to the 2004 local government elections. This is understandable insofar as the franchise for local elections is not restricted to citizens, whilst non-citizens do not have a say in the 2007 general election. In most cases Irish political parties still seem disinterested in reaching out to immigrant and ethnic minority communities, leaving the matter, in some cases, to initiatives of individual party members or constituencies. Most of the parties reported that developmental work aimed at recruiting immigrant and ethnic minority members had been deferred until after the 2007 general election.

The findings of this survey suggest that Irish political parties find it difficult to assess to what extent efforts they have made to reach out to immigrants and members of ethnic minority communities have been successful. Some, in their responses to this survey, found it difficult to give an account of work they had done previously, even though they had twice before collated responses to these questions in 2003 and 2004. This might be explained by a current absence of appropriate monitoring systems. The responses of all the parties suggest an urgent need for well-managed outreach, clear targets and monitoring of progress. However, without such data they are never going to be in a position to assess how well they are meeting their goals. Here, Irish political parties could learn much from the efforts of political parties in other countries where even those with poor historical relationships with minority communities are now actively seeking their support.

All parties express positive attitudes to the contribution of immigrants to Irish society. However, there is a danger that support for integration 'in theory' does not translate into integration in practice. Inevitably, the approach of Irish political parties to immigrant communities is likely to be a 'pragmatic' one. Behind the rhetoric of inclusion and integration there may be little real commitment to reaching out to immigrant communities unless there are votes to be won, as put by one respondent 'a few election cycles from now'. However, this would put the question of immigrant participation on the back burner until at least 2017. The experiences of other countries suggest that to stall the political integration of new immigrant communities in such terms will prove anything but pragmatic.

Some of the political parties identified a manifesto commitment to put in place a Minister of State with responsibility for Immigrant Affairs. Such an initiative is likely to improve the responsiveness of government to the diverse society of twenty-first century Ireland. It also has potential to promote the civic and political integration of immigrants. Political parties can do much to reach out to immigrant communities and ethnic minorities. However, the ability of immigrants and minorities to participate in politics is likely to depend on factors beyond the control of political parties. Support by government for immigrant civic integration and for immigrant-led groups is urgently needed.

The issue of immigrant and ethnic minority representation is likely to achieve a high political profile in the run up to the 2009 local government elections where voting rights depend on residency rather than citizenship. In the run-up to the 2004 local government elections, non-governmental organisations engaged in an immigrant voter register campaign and emphasised the need to remove administrative barriers to immigrants exercising their entitlements to vote. Political parties were encouraged to think of immigrants as potential supporters, party members and even candidates. Immigrants proved active in the 2004 election. Six candidates stood as independents. Two were elected, one in Ennis, the other in Portlaoise. None of the six political parties successfully stood such a candidate in 2004.⁵ The danger, if this trend continues, is that political parties will foster the alienation of immigrant communities from the mainstream of Irish society.

At present non-Irish citizens (except those of the United Kingdom) cannot vote in general elections. The experiences of other countries suggest that many immigrants entitled to do so may not take out Irish citizenship, especially those from other EU countries of origin. It is likely therefore that a number of large immigrant communities are in danger of becoming politically marginalized in the long term. Arguably the current relationship between citizenship and the franchise poorly serves the political needs of highly diverse twenty-first century nation-states like the Republic of Ireland.

The choices now facing Irish political parties range from narrow pragmatism to forward-looking leadership that opens them to the diverse society that Ireland has become. International research indicates that political parties draw on a continuum of approaches. At one end is the 'elite' model that views parties as rational actors who promote top-down change, where it is perceived as necessary to attract votes. The second 'societal change' model emphasises how parties and other political institutions react to new challenges in a bottom-up process. These approaches are not mutually exclusive.⁶ It is important that immigrants seek to join political parties and campaign for change from within. It is crucial that parties encourage them to join, and seek the political support of immigrant communities.

Here the experiences of parties in other countries should be learned from. Different political parties will have different ideologies and structures. It is not suggested that any one model of good practice can be applied to all. However, it is clear that any serious commitment to promoting the inclusion of immigrants and members of ethnic minority groups within Irish political parties requires a number of elements. Firstly, there needs to be leadership and strategic coordination. Secondly, the outcomes of recruitment policies need to be monitored. Thirdly, minorities within parties need to be supported and mentored. For example, UK initiatives have included a high profile state-funded cross-party leadership programme aimed at ensuring the ongoing emergence of electoral candidates from different ethnic groups, and reforms of practices within political parties aimed at tackling ethnic under-representation.⁷

5 One candidate stood unsuccessfully for the Progressive Democrats.

6 M.C Kittilson and K. Tate, *Political Parties, Minorities and Elected office: Comparing Opportunities for Inclusion in the U.S and Britain*, Centre for the Study of Democracy (University of California, Irvine, 2004) , pp2-3 <http://repositories.cdlib.org/csd/04-06>

7 A. Rushanara and C. O'Cinnede, *Our House? Race and Representation in British Politics*, (London: Institute of Public Policy Research 2002)

3 Recommendations

A strong commitment to integrating immigrants and ethnic minorities into Irish politics is needed: Integration requires political leadership. An Integration Protocol for Political Parties should be introduced. One model might be to extend the existing Anti-Racism Protocol for Political Parties to include (1) commitments by political parties to promote the recruitment of immigrant and ethnic minority members (2) to introduce the necessary data collection and monitoring systems (3) to develop mentoring schemes aimed at supporting candidates from immigrant and ethnic minority communities.

Commitment on its own is not enough: The findings of this study suggest that efforts of parties to integrate immigrants and ethnic minority communities will not be successful unless monitoring systems to track progress are put in place. An evidence-based approach to political integration is crucial. Strategic goals are needed but so is the information that shows whether initiatives aimed at promoting inclusion are working.

Government leadership in promoting the civic integration of immigrants is crucial: a number of political parties have adopted a manifesto commitment to bring in a Minister of State with responsibility for Immigrant Affairs. There is an urgent need for immigrant civic integration programmes and to provide support for immigrant-led groups and organisations.

There is a need to foster political inclusion beyond citizenship: a renewed debate is needed on how the franchise might be reciprocally extended to citizens of other EU countries living in Ireland. There is a precedent. Reciprocal voting rights are established in the case of citizens of the United Kingdom. The European Union operates a common travel area within which millions of citizens of member states living in other EU countries enjoy many reciprocal entitlements. In Ireland, as in many other EU countries, there are substantial politically-marginalised immigrant communities from other member states.

4 Immigrants and Political Parties in 2007

Each of the six political parties was asked what policies or good practices the party adopted to encourage members of immigrant communities and ethnic minority groups to become party members. Each had been previously asked the same question in 2004. At that time none of the six could identify any specific measures aimed at encouraging members of immigrant communities and ethnic minority groups to become members. By February 2007 this overall position had changed only to a limited extent. Most had taken little or no specific action to become more open to immigrants and ethnic minority groups. None were in a position to assess how successful any actions taken had been. (Figure One).

Figure One

2007	Specific current measures aimed at encouraging members of immigrant communities/ethnic minority groups to become party members	Extent to which these have been successful
Fianna Fáil	Party in the process of preparing all party membership material for translation into Chinese, Polish and French languages.	Not quantified.
Progressive Democrats	None.	Not applicable.
Labour Party	Advertisements targeted at immigrants. A forum within the party for new immigrant members has been established. A workshop on immigrant participation held at Party Conference. Training for Constituency Equality Officers.	Not quantified. Some anecdotal examples.
Fine Gael	Party documents translated into several different languages according to the prevalence of ethnic minorities in a particular electoral area. Stated aim of encouraging 'ethnically non-Irish people' to join the party so as to reflect the demographic diversity of Ireland.	Not quantified.
Green Party	Some initiatives by individual party members.	Not quantified. Some anecdotal examples.
Sinn Féin	An 'outreach group' established in Dublin. Party has developed 'strong ties' with ethnic minority and immigrant groups and their representative organisations'.	Not quantified. Some anecdotal examples.

Figure One summarises the response of the six parties. The approaches of the different parties to immigrant and ethnic minority recruitment range from laissez faire (immigrants can join if they want to but they will not be encouraged), to informal (encouragement of immigrants left to party activists on the ground), to having formal structures and policies aimed at promoting inclusion.

Fianna Fáil stated that it 'fully expect'[ed] Fianna Fáil to attract members of the African, Eastern European and South American communities that have come to live in Ireland. It stated that it was 'in the process of preparing all Fianna Fáil membership material for translation into the Chinese, Polish and French languages'. This, the response concluded, 'should enable the party to appeal to ethnic communities'. The party stated that it does not ask new members to identify their ethnicity when applying for membership. As such it was difficult for the party to determine how many members are from minority backgrounds.

Fine Gael described how during the 2004 local and European elections, party literature was published in several different languages according to the prevalence of ethnic minorities in a particular electoral area, so that voters who were new to Ireland or who had limited English language skills could be reached. Fine Gael stated it also ran voter registration campaigns in many urban areas where there were sizeable numbers of new residents from immigrant communities. It further stated that the party has been engaged

for a number of years in encouraging ethnically non-Irish people to join the party so that the party could continue to reflect the demographic diversity of Ireland. Fine Gael stated that a number of its candidates at local and national level throughout the country were from immigrant or 'ethnically non-Irish backgrounds'. No specific individuals or communities were identified. However, the party statement argued that its policies proved effective in 2004, when, 'for example, large numbers from the Filipino, Chinese and Polish communities were registered to vote in Dublin. Many of those people would likely otherwise have been denied the franchise to which they were entitled.' The party stated that it does not record the ethnicity of members in the same way that other personal data is recorded. As such, it had no specific statistical information on the number of members of the party from immigrant communities or ethnic minorities. It stated that anecdotal evidence would suggest that there is a noticeable increase in the number of active members who are newly resident in Ireland or who are members of ethnic minorities.

The Progressive Democrats identified no specific measures aimed at encouraging members of immigrant communities and ethnic-minority groups to become party members. It emphasized that party membership was open to anyone legally resident in Ireland.⁸ It also reported that 'at least one' candidate in 2004 local government local elections was a member of an ethnic minority.

The Labour Party identified a range of measures aimed at 'connecting with members of immigrant communities, encouraging them to join the party' including developing 'good party contacts' with NGOs representing immigrants. The party had produced leaflets and other material in some of the languages of the new immigrant communities. It had addressed meetings of new immigrants for recruitment purposes. The party has established a forum (Labour Diversity) within the Equality Section of the party for new immigrant members. The Equality Section has a constitutional function within the party. It ran a workshop at the Party Conference aimed at promoting immigrant participation and one on the needs of immigrant children in post-primary education. The party has advertised for membership in publications targeted at new immigrants. However, it was not possible to evaluate to what extent efforts to promote the inclusion of immigrants and ethnic minority communities had been successful. Anecdotal information suggested that there were a significant number of party members who were recent immigrants and that in some constituencies (Kildare North was the example given), they play an active role in the organisation. Labour reported that the most senior voluntary position held by a recent immigrant is that of Vice Chair of the Louth Constituency Council.

The Green Party stated that it has no specific policies to encourage members of immigrant communities and ethnic-minority groups to become party members. However, it noted some constituency groups had taken 'sporadic' local initiatives aimed at recruiting Travellers and immigrants. The main focus of the 'equality agenda' within party structures was still upon gender issues. It was intended to revisit the party's Strategic Plan after the 2007 general election. At that stage, a greater focus on responsiveness to immigrants within the party was anticipated. The Green Party noted that successful efforts depend, for the most part, on the interest and efforts of particular individuals within the party who drive recruitment and participation. Supports across the party for such efforts are currently limited.

Sinn Féin reported that it had a policy commitment to establishing special party working groups in each region to address outreach and solidarity with new communities. So far, a group had been set up in Dublin with a dedicated Equality Officer attached, but its work was still at an early stage. It stated that further regional outreach groups were envisaged.

A number of parties suggested that there would be a greater focus on reaching out to immigrant communities after the 2007 general election. Fine Gael, the Labour Party, Sinn Féin and the Green Party each stated that they would focus more on immigrant recruitment after the 2007 election. Sinn Féin stated that it hoped to run candidates from immigrant and ethnic minority communities in the 2009 local government elections and would consider putting a target quota in place. In off-the-record conversations, officials from some political parties observed that attracting immigrants would be more important for them in the 2009 local government elections. 2009, as one put it, might be something of a 'tipping point'.

⁸ Until 2003 the constitution of the Progressive Democrats contained a provision preventing non-Irish or non-EU member state citizens from becoming party members. Following publication of *Positive Politics* in 2003 the party promptly amended its constitution..

5 Promoting Inclusive Politics

The self-assessment of a number of parties that responded to this study was that they were not doing enough to integrate immigrants and ethnic minority groups. The draft report, though critical of the responses to date of political parties, was positively received. As put by one of the parties, the report offered considerable ‘food for thought.’ As put by another; ‘overall the report reads as a fair and accurate assessment, and unfortunately we cannot disagree with your principal finding that none of the political parties as yet take the issue of affirmative action on recruitment and inclusion seriously enough.’

None of the parties were found to have a clear strategy for reaching out to immigrant communities. In most cases it took a number of requests over a three-month period before responses to the survey were forthcoming. Parties had to clarify their positions internally before responding rather than, as might be expected in if there were clear worked-out policies, merely stating their position. Rather than build on previous work it was as if they were thinking about it for the first time. Some of the questions put to the parties were the same ones that were put to them in 2003 and 2004. In 2003, none identified any measures aimed at attracting immigrants and members of ethnic minority communities as party members. In the 2004 follow-up survey, all stated that they had embarked on one or more of the following: (a) translation of materials (b) advertising targeted at minority communities and (c) anti-racism training.⁹ Yet political parties are currently without the means to evaluate how well their efforts to reach out to immigrant and ethnic minority communities are working. Two political parties identified a need for advice and support in developing appropriate recruitment monitoring systems. As put by one of these:

We are in the process of constructing a new party membership database and would favourably consider inclusion of a field to help track recruitment, participation and promotion of members from new communities.

The second of these reported that it had held discussions about whether members’ ethnicity or nationality should be recorded. It identified the need for advice on the best way to go about the development of appropriate monitoring systems.

A number of parties suggested that the timing and scale of their future responses would be shaped by pragmatic electoral considerations. In other words they would be gradual, slow, and reactive rather than proactive. As put by one political party:

It will obviously take time for such communities to become established members of society and of the party and it will most likely require a few election cycles before such members find themselves in a position to contest an election or propose themselves for election.

Available evidence from other EU states suggest that there is an urgent need for Irish political parties to be proactive in building the capacity of immigrants and ethnic minority communities to participate.¹⁰ The experiences of other EU countries suggest that it would be a mistake to believe that immigrant political representation is likely to increase automatically over time.¹¹ Research in other countries suggests that without the necessary structures of opportunity, immigrants can remain marginalised and political participation rates can even decline over time.¹²

9 B. Fanning, F. Mutwarasibo and N. Chadamoyo, *Negative Politics: Positive Vision: Immigration and the 2004 Elections* (Dublin: Africa Centre, 2004)

10 Anver Saloojee, *Social Inclusion, Anti-Racism and Democratic Citizenship* (Toronto: Laidlaw Foundation, 2003), www.laidlawfdn.org

11 Marco Martiniello, *Political participation of immigrants in the EU* (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2003) <http://fra.europa.eu>

12 Rahaan Maxwell, *Integrated Yet Alienated; Ethnic Minority Political Participation in Britain and France* (Paris: Polis, 2005) www.epsnet.org

Currently much of what is being done within Irish political parties to reach out to immigrants and ethnic minority communities depends upon bottom-up initiatives within some constituencies. Yet the available evidence from other countries suggests that top-down commitments and leadership within political parties are crucial in developing the necessary opportunity structure. The findings of a number of studies emphasise the importance of the ‘top-down’ political context in explaining the patterns of ‘bottom-up’ mobilisation of minorities. Regardless of the trends or timings of the immigration flow or of the status of rights that they possess in a given country, the collective mobilisation of immigrant groups is largely shaped by the national political contexts in which they find themselves.¹³

Political parties and government need to proactively foster political participation. Good practices in other countries included mentoring schemes and communications training aimed at building the capacity of immigrants and ethnic minority communities to participate.¹⁴

Action by government is crucial. One obstacle to political integration found in other countries has been minority alienation from state institutions.¹⁵ The experiences of other countries and indeed of Northern Ireland suggest that it is crucial to build trust in the political system. Where there is low political participation there is a greater potential risk of confrontational forms of activism by minority communities.¹⁶ Non-participation may foster alienation that in turn perpetuates non-participation.

Figure Two summarises existing good practices by Irish political parties and sets out proposals for building upon these so as to foster greater participation of immigrant and ethnic minority communities within Irish political life.

13 A 5-country comparison of France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland concluded that the cross-national differences of migrant participation patterns were best explained by the top-down institutions of the settlement country. Patrick Ireland, ‘Reaping What they Sow: Institutions and Political Participation in Western Europe’, in Paul Stratham (ed.) *Challenging Immigration and Ethnic Relations Politics: Comparative European Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp.233-282

14 Pippa Norris, *Building political parties: Reforming legal regulations and internal rules* (Harvard: International IDEA, 2004), p 29

15 Antoine Buyse and Katharine Gricevich, *Breaking the Cycle of Indifference: Participation of Ethnic Minorities in Local Politics* (Humanity in Action Foundation, 2003), <http://www.humanityinaction.org>

16 Thom Duyvené de Wit & Ruud Koopmans (2005) ‘The Integration of Ethnic Minorities into Political Culture: The Netherlands, Germany and Great Britain Compared’, *Acta Politica*, 2005, 40, pp50–73, Miki C. Kittilson & Katherine Tate, *Political Parties, Minorities and Elected Office: Comparing Opportunities for Inclusion in the U.S. and Britain*, (Centre for the Study of Democracy, 2004) <http://repositories.cdlib.org>

Figure Two

Current Positive Practices	Recommendations for further action to facilitate participation
Anti-racism protocol ratified by all Irish political parties.	Extend protocol to introduce new commitments to political integration.
Ad-hoc and bottom up initiatives in some constituencies by some parties.	Top-down commitments and leadership is crucial. Parties should develop a strategic approach to the recruitment of members from immigrant communities and ethnic minority groups. Parties can learn from and strategically support local initiatives.
Some parties have begun to establish equality structures and posts.	Develop appropriate data collection systems to monitor the effectiveness of measures aimed at promoting inclusion.
Advertisements aimed at immigrants. Translation of political party material (to aid grassroots mobilization and participation).	Develop comprehensive structures to support and mentor immigrants and members of ethnic minority groups within parties. Promote immigrant voter registration.
Some internal discussions and some engagement with immigrant community organizations.	Build comprehensive engagement with immigrant and ethnic minority communities.
Voter registration campaigns (to aid grassroots mobilization and participation).	Extend links with ethnic minority organizations and undertake further out-reach initiatives at grassroots level.

6 Party Commitments to Integration

Each party was asked to outline its vision for the integration of immigrants within Irish society.¹⁷ To some extent the responses drew recognisably on the specific ideological identities and traditions of the parties. Yet much of what the parties stated overlapped in emphasising the importance of integration. Crucially, each party has a vision of inclusion. Crucially, all six parties are pro-immigration and pro-immigrant and are opposed to discrimination. These are strong foundations for a progressive and positive integration debate. For example Fine Gael, the Progressive Democrats and Sinn Féin each emphasised past Irish experiences of emigration as a basis for thinking about responsibilities towards immigrants.

Fianna Fáil stated that it has, since its foundation in 1926, always welcomed members from diverse backgrounds. The fact the Party's first leader, Eamon de Valera, was himself an immigrant was not lost on current membership. In a staunchly Catholic country of the 1940s and 1950s, members of the Jewish and Protestant communities joined Fianna Fáil. Today, the Party was 'wedded to the concept of a pluralist and tolerant society. True to the Party's republican ethos, equality of opportunity is a central tenet of party policy'.

Sinn Féin also emphasised a republican ideal of inclusion and integration and stated that the new cultural diversification had huge potential to change the Irish national dynamic for the better. It emphasised the need for unequivocal opposition to racism. It argued that respect for diversity, inclusion and equality were all integral to republicanism and necessary for national unity and that bigotry, cultural supremacy and racial nationalism were antithetical to its understanding of Republicanism.

The Fine Gael response drew heavily on a speech by the party leader Enda Kenny on 23rd January 2007 which outlined the party's vision for the integration of new communities within Irish society¹⁸ This emphasised the need to focus on the rights of immigrants but also on their responsibilities and those of Irish society more broadly in securing successful integration. Fine Gael emphasised that people who come to Ireland from abroad, whether for economic or other reasons, should have the right to be free of discrimination and have their contribution to this country recognised. However, immigrants, the party argued, have a responsibility 'to integrate into our community, comply with our laws and respect our cultural traditions'. Irish society, in turn had 'a responsibility to facilitate and encourage this integration to the best of our ability'. The Fine Gael response drew attention to the dangers of marginalising immigrant communities:

Fine Gael is committed to being a party for all the people who share this island, whether of Irish nationality or not. Fine Gael wants to see new members of Irish society coming to Ireland as equal members of the community and living and contributing to that community. We do not want a situation to evolve whereby ghettos become established or where members of a particular ethnic minority become cut-off from the rest of society as this will only stunt their ability to live and work in Ireland as members of a wider community.

Integration, Fine Gael argued, presented a huge challenge but also a huge opportunity. Ireland has 'a chance to get this response right and to avoid the mistakes that were made elsewhere'.

The Labour Party stated that there was a lively debate in the party about the respective merits of multicultural and intercultural approaches to integration. Labour emphasised the cultural rights of immigrants and refugees, the importance of responding to their needs with regard to education, languages and housing and the need for a vigorous public campaign to combat racism and discrimination to promote an ethos of tolerance and pluralism.

¹⁷ The contents of this section summarise specific responses of the six parties and policy documents etc. on party websites which were specifically cited.
¹⁸ Enda Kenny, Speech to the Fine Gael Parliamentary Party on the 23rd of January 2007

The Progressive Democrats argued that neither segregation nor assimilation were desirable objectives. The party advocated an inter-cultural approach 'which guarantees equality and parity of esteem'. As put by Liz O'Donnell:

We should encourage a process of mutual respect and adjustment. Encourage newcomers to accept basic Irish values while in turn encouraging Irish people to accept and respect what newcomers bring to Ireland.

However, a loose aspiration to multiculturalism was described as a 'recipe for disaster'. Here the PDs pointed to widespread rioting in France in 2005 and events in the Netherlands in emphasising the crucial importance of getting integration policy right. The PD response stated that the party welcomed anyone who is legally resident in Ireland and believed that they should not only have the right but should be encouraged to fully participate in the social and political life of the state up to and including citizenship if they so wish. As put by Liz O'Donnell on behalf of the PDs, the challenge of integrating immigrants into Irish society was a 'good news situation. There is no downside economically or socially. If there is, it will be because of a failure of governance'. A 'laissez-faire or ad-hoc policy approach' would fail. So too would expectations that immigrants should abandon their cultures. The role of leadership was emphasised: 'Leadership is actively and constantly needed to challenge xenophobic tendencies when new issues arise which scapegoat or blame migrants or begrudge them benefits to which they are entitled.'

7 Integration and Political Leadership

The six political parties each responded differently when asked what policies or good practices had been adopted by the party to promote the integration of immigrants within Irish society. While not all parties agreed with each other on all issues (such as on responses to asylum seekers) a broad consensus could yet be identified about a need for comprehensive initiatives to address the needs of immigrants so as to secure their successful integration within Irish society. The initiatives proposed by the various parties are not mutually exclusive. Collectively these could form the nucleus of a broad integration strategy.

The Green Party stated a commitment to undertaking the following measures if in Government:

- Set up a Ministry of State for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs in the Department of the Taoiseach with responsibility for driving a robust, high-level cross-departmental process that would co-ordinate the work of all departments and agencies that have a brief in relation to immigration and integration policy;
- Promote long-term multi-cultural integration strategies as a key element of national immigration policies;
- Fund awareness campaigns that educate the Irish public about the role of immigration in Irish society, on the changing nature of Irish national identity and the contribution of immigrants in Ireland, and establish a national forum to facilitate this debate;
- Ensure cultural sensitivity training is provided for public service workers;
- Fund the services offered by ethnic-led non-governmental organisations working with the immigrant community, in particular those which provide for the educational, cultural and linguistic needs of migrant workers;
- Remove restrictive legislation surrounding work permit holders so that they can be reunited with their families after three months, provide equal status between work permit holders and visa holders and allow partners of permit holders the automatic entitlement to work following reunification;
- Underpin the right to work in Ireland with the principle of 'permanence' that recognises that workers are people with families who can become permanent members of society if they so wish and introduce legislation entitling any person legally resident in Ireland for three years or more to apply for permanent residency.

Fine Gael stated that if in government it will appoint a Minister of State for Immigrant Affairs who will be attached to the Department of the Taoiseach. This new ministerial role will include responsibility across all relevant government departments. It would also revamp the allocation of language support resources so that schools with higher demands receive appropriate support. There was a need, it argued, to undertake a national audit to find out the true extent of this problem and to establish whether other measures, such as providing additional language support outside normal school hours, were needed and what extra teaching resources were required.

Fine Gael also emphasised the need to tackle the tragically high number of immigrants who are being killed or injured on our roads by; addressing the loophole that allows foreign registered cars to be re-registered here for two years without checks being made for roadworthiness, updating the Rules of the Road for the first time in 10 years and making it available in the necessary new languages of the new Irish, and pursuing changes to EU rules so that penalty points can be effectively applied to all licence-holders irrespective of nationality or residency. It also emphasised the need to rigorously enforcing severe penalties for employers who abuse their position and pay immigrants below legal rates.

Sinn Féin argued that Ireland needs a positive immigration policy ‘which develops positive criteria for non-EU immigrant selection based on skills and other suitability factors, not just the mere fact of Irish descent or European nationality’. Sinn Féin also emphasised the need to end the dispersal and direct provision policies that strip asylum seekers of their dignity and deprive Irish society of their potential contributions to our economy. It noted that many were skilled, educated workers who were prevented from making a valid contribution here while awaiting their refugee status. It argued that all migrant workers should have the same rights, benefits and social protections as Irish workers, without discrimination.

The Labour Party emphasised a focus on the cultural rights of immigrants and refugees, the need to address barriers to education, the need to address the housing needs of immigrants and the need for a vigorous public campaign to combat racism and discrimination and promote an ethos of tolerance and pluralism.

Fianna Fáil stated that in government it had promoted inclusiveness and community development. Through various measures in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, namely the introduction of the National Action Plan Against Racism, integration has been promoted. Under the new National Development Plan, some €36.25m has been earmarked to be spent on an Integration Programme. This Programme aims to facilitate initiatives which promote the integration of all legally resident immigrants.

The Progressive Democrats similarly pointed to these commitments within the programme for government. It stated that it was currently completing a major policy document on integration. It also emphasised its commitment to expanding the numbers of language support teachers for children whose first language was not English.

8 Political Inclusion beyond Citizenship

Ireland and the United Kingdom are the only EU Member States which so far give rights to vote in national elections to nationals of any other EU Member State.¹⁹ Ireland gives the right to vote, but not stand, in Dáil elections to UK citizens. It does not give UK citizens the right to vote in referendums or Presidential elections.

The text of the Ninth Amendment to the Bunreacht na hÉireann which was passed by referendum in 1984 gives a general power to the Oireachtas to legislate to extend rights to vote in Dáil elections to non-citizens. These provisions were only introduced after a case had been brought before the Supreme Court which contested a 1983 Bill which would have originally extended the franchise to UK citizens not only to vote in Dáil elections, but also in elections for the President and in referendums.²⁰ This Bill was intended to extend the existing legal position which already gave UK citizens the right to vote in local elections (along with all resident non-nationals) and in European Parliament elections (in the latter case, of course, in advance of introduction of Article 19 EC). A primary motivation for the 1983 Bill was to introduce some element of reciprocity in relation to the electoral rights granted under UK law to Irish citizens.

In finding that the Bill violated the Constitution, as it stood, the Supreme Court concluded that Article 16 of the Irish Constitution in the form in which it then existed provided a complete code limiting the electorate for the Dáil elections to Irish citizens, and Irish citizens alone. There could be no possibility of extending by ordinary legislation the franchise to other groups of electors, as had been contended by Attorney General Sutherland, who was tasked with arguing the case for a Bill which had been piloted through Parliament by the Fine Gael/Labour coalition government before being challenged before the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court based its argument on a conception of the national suffrage oriented around a concept of national popular sovereignty. It found that this conception of sovereignty underpins the Irish constitution.

The Court went on to distinguish between a provision regarding the basic political organisation of the state, such as Article 16 on the suffrage, and provisions on fundamental rights such as freedom of association and expression, granted ostensibly under the Constitution to citizens alone, but which the Courts had interpreted in certain circumstances as protecting the rights of non-citizens also. Consequently, Article 16 was interpreted as providing an exhaustive definition of the suffrage, which meant that the introduction of electoral rights for UK citizens (and any other non-citizens) would require a constitutional amendment.

After the referendum passing the Ninth Amendment to the Constitution, the Electoral (Amendment) Act 1985 was passed amending the suffrage for Dáil elections to cover UK citizens, and to create a power for a minister to extend this on the basis of reciprocity in the event that other EU Member States confer the right to vote in their parliamentary elections on Irish citizens. Thus:

(1B) Where the Minister is of the opinion that—

(a) the law of a Member State relating to the election of members of, or deputies or other representatives in or to, the National Parliament of that Member State enables citizens of Ireland, by reason of their being such citizens and being resident in that Member State, to vote at such an election, and

(b) the provisions of that law enabling citizens of Ireland who are so resident so to vote are the same, or are substantially the same, as those enabling nationals of that Member State so to vote,

the Minister may by order declare that Member State to be a Member State [whose citizens may vote in Dáil elections].²¹

19 The Republic of Ireland grants electoral rights to all non-nationals in local elections (voting and standing), and has done so since 1972: Electoral Act 1992 s.10.
20 *In the Matter of Article 26 of the Constitution and in the Matter of The Electoral (Amendment) Bill*, 1983 [SC No 373 of 1983] [1984] IR 268. UK citizens continue to be excluded from voting in Presidential elections and referendums. These are powers reserved under the Constitution to citizens alone, by interpretation of Article 6 of the Constitution.

21 S.2 of the Electoral Amendment Act inserting a new ss.1B into s.5 of the Electoral Act 1963 (now Electoral Act, 1992, s.8(2)-(7)).

This was an interesting development on two counts: first because while the political act of extending the suffrage to UK citizens can be regarded as recognising the historical connection between, and the overlapping citizenships of, the two states of the UK and Ireland, as well as the rights granted by the UK to Irish citizens,²² only the condition of reciprocity is applied for the future to other EU Member States. The second curiosity is that it requires only a ministerial order to extend the suffrage beyond its current boundaries, the relevant parliamentary consent having already been given. As it stands, with the reciprocity requirement in s.8(3) of the Electoral Act, 1992, the trigger for action must in principle come from another Member State, or from common action amongst the Member States. The Irish Parliament,

looked forward to the day when member states will be prepared to confer on each other's citizens the right to vote at parliamentary elections. [The Irish Government] would welcome this development and, in anticipation of it, this Bill proposes to enable the Minister by order to extend the Dáil vote on a reciprocal basis to nationals of other member states.²³

It is against this legal and political backdrop that it is important to discuss the issue of extending electoral rights in national elections to all EU citizens. While the issue has not recently been actively debated in Irish politics, it had received some support from within a number of opposition parties before this study was conducted. Some even suggested that it could be an issue which should be taken up unilaterally by Ireland, in the absence of common action amongst the Member States.²⁴ The logic of EU electoral rights does seem to point in the direction of an extension along these lines, and there is certainly some bottom-up pressure from those affected, yet it does not seem likely that there will be legal developments aimed at extending electoral rights to non-nationals to vote in parliamentary or general elections at the EU level in the near future, and there is currently no evidence that any Member State is ready to take the initiative.

In this study Irish political parties were also asked to what extent and how, in their view, do existing electoral rights for non-nationals (including EU and third country nationals) allow for their vision for civic participation to be realised.

Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael chose not to respond to the question. The Labour Party stated that it had no formal position on the matter.

The Progressive Democrats stated that this was an area currently under discussion as part of its policy document (on integration). Its overall response to the survey referred to a statement by Liz O'Donnell. She argued that there was need to look at both the symbolic and legal benefits of citizenship: 'Research shows that citizenship can act as a tool for inclusion or a tool for exclusion when it comes to cultural or ethnic diversity. We must make sure Irish citizenship is the former.'

²² Introducing the original Electoral (Amendment) Bill 1983 into the Dáil, the Minister stated that 'the aim of this Bill is to give a further measure of practical expression to what has been referred to as the unique relationship which exists between this country and our nearest neighbour, and to acknowledge and reciprocate the voting rights enjoyed by Irish citizens. It is my hope that measures such as this, reflecting close ties between neighbouring peoples, will make their contribution to promoting peace and reconciliation throughout these islands', Debates *Dáil Éireann*, Volume 345, 19 October 1983, Col. 251. The case for excluding British citizens from the right to vote in presidential elections, Seanad Éireann (upper house) elections and referendums was highlighted by the speaker from Fianna Fáil, Bobby Molloy TD, precisely because there cannot be reciprocity in the UK with a non-elected Head of State and (thus far) Upper House, and (at that time) no tradition of referendums, Debates *Dáil Éireann*, Volume 345, 19 October 1983, Col. 253.

²³ Minister for the Public Service (Mr. Boland), Debates Seanad Éireann, Volume 108, 27 June 1985, Col. 1193

²⁴ Interviews conducted by Jo Shaw in the Oireachtas on 3 March 2005 with TDs representing Sinn Féin and the Labour Party; a TD representing the Green Party was broadly supportive of the suggestion in the light of wider Green Party policy, some of which is highly critical of developments within the EU notably in the defence field, but a Senator from the Progressive Democrats, the junior coalition partner of the Fianna Fáil government was much more sceptical.

The Green Party stated that existing electoral rights for non-nationals do not allow for the Green Party vision of civic participation to be realised. The Green Party considers that if a person has been living legally in Ireland for three or more years he or she should be able to participate in Irish elections. On the question of the desirability of extending the franchise the Green Party stated that if a person has been living legally in Ireland for three or more years he or she should be able to participate in Irish elections. Sinn Féin argued that democratic rights and the right to vote in particular must be protected and extended. It stated that 'participation' involved more than standing for office or voting. The right to participate must include the right to organise, the right of people to be involved in shaping or at least to be consulted regarding decisions that affect them, and the equal right to be heard by those in positions of decision-making power – that is, to access and to influence decision-makers. The party's position on this fuller right to participate would be inclusive of non-Irish nationals. Sinn Féin stated that it fully supports the right of all those who have been legally resident in Ireland for 6 months or more to participate in local elections (the current position), and would be favourably disposed to considering extension of the franchise for non-Irish nationals to general elections.

Appendix 1: Questionnaire Template

Political Parties and Immigrant Civic Integration: Study undertaken by the Migrant and Citizenship Research Initiative (MCRI) at University College Dublin

Part One: Access to Institutions

1. What policies or good practices has the party adopted to encourage members of immigrant communities and ethnic minority groups to become party members?
2. To what extent have these been successful?
3. What is the (name of party) vision for the integration of immigrants within Irish society?
4. What policies or good practices have been adopted by the party to promote the integration of immigrants within Irish society?

Part Two: Civic Participation

5. To what extent and how in the view of (name of party) do existing electoral rights for non-nationals (including EU and third country nationals) allow for the (name of party) vision for civic realisation to be realised?
6. What is the thinking of (name of political party) on desirability of extending the franchise?

Explanatory note to Q5 and Q6

Article 19 EC provides that every citizen of the Union residing in a Member State of which he is not a national shall have the right to vote and stand as a candidate in municipal elections in the Member State in which he resides.

The Electoral Act 1992 gives the right to vote and stand in local elections to all qualifying residents, regardless of nationality.