



Immigration Control Platform

An Feachtas um Smacht ar Inimirce

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Preliminary Messages

Members, please accept our apologies for the very late issue of this newsletter which should really have been in December.

Some members may like to know that we have recently refreshed our website. We have a new webmaster who is extremely enthusiastic and efficient. We have also put a PayPal facility on our website.

General Election

In the forthcoming election we have a candidate / candidates standing (John Donnelly is confirmed for Dublin North) and monetary or manpower contributions are very welcome.

AGM

The AGM was held in October. An Executive committee was elected.

The following motions were passed

1. That Immigration Control Platform write to all the political parties represented in the Dail asking them to state their positions on immigration from Bulgaria and Romania, who will gain entry to the EU on January 1st 2007; that they ask the parties to state what restrictions or limits they intend putting in place and to ask them to state if they intend to adopt an unrestricted "open door" policy.

2. That a referendum be held to amend the constitution as follows:
"The government shall ensure through legislation, policies and planning that the percentage of foreign residents shall not exceed 10% of the population" [i.e. the current percentage as shown by the Census of 2006]; this amendment to allow for recognition of EU Treaty agreements.

NESC Reports

In September 2006 NESC (National Economic and Social Council) issued two reports – one of their own called Migration Policy (hereafter NESC) and one commissioned from the IOM (International Organisation for Migration) called Managing Migration in Ireland (hereafter IOM). This newsletter consists largely of extracts of interest from those reports.

Why Labour Migration?: Economically motivated migration is generally explained by demand-pull factors in the destination area, supply-push factors in the origin area, and network factors that link them.

Public policy can influence the nature and interaction of demand-pull, supply-push and network factors. Demand-pull factors are most amenable to management by governments at the beginning of labour flows, explaining the aphorism that the easiest way for a government to start a labour migration flow from a particular area is to encourage, allow or tolerate the recruitment of migrants there. Over time, government policy may lose its effectiveness as migrant supply creates its own demand in destination areas in ways that make government efforts to reduce migrant inflows difficult. For example, middle-class households who once did their own house work can hire gardeners and domestic helpers, creating more jobs and new industries, while migrant networks in construction, agriculture, and some manufacturing and services can "take over" recruitment and training mechanisms. If employers adapt to the language and nature of the migrant work force, they may no longer seek local workers to fill vacant jobs.

Governmental efforts to "re-nationalize" what have become migrant work forces are generally unsuccessful. In France in the early 1980s and in the oil-exporting Gulf countries today, government policies aimed at training natives and subsidizing their wages to "better compete with" migrants have generally failed because many employers preferred the migrants to whom they had become accustomed. (IOM).

GNP: The major conclusion from research is that immigration expands the size of the economy as measured by GNP, but has little or no impact on average living standards as measured by GNP per capita. This is expressed in the aphorism that immigration adds "mouths to feed and hands to work", in other words it increases the size of the national cake but gives you more people to eat into it. Some analysis would lead to the conclusion that immigration carries small positive benefits (economic: ICP) for receiving countries, with the major beneficiaries being migrants whose incomes rise and the owners of capital in the receiving country. (IOM). (Moore McDowell has previously pointed out this fact of the benefit going to the owners of capital: ICP).

Global Factors Driving International Migration: Research identifies four fundamental factors that drive migration between low income and high-income countries: wage gaps; relaxation of poverty constraints on migration in low-income countries; the share of young adults in sending and receiving countries; the size of the migrant population residing in receiving countries. All of these factors are creating pressure for growth in migration from Africa to developed countries. (NESC). (the second factor here is an admission of the unfortunate and troubling fact that when people in Africa become less poor they can afford to migrate to Europe.

The third factor points to a burgeoning youth population, particularly in North Africa. The fourth factor means that the immigrant population already present acts as a focus for more: ICP).

Labour Market Test: The granting of work permits has been subject to a labour market test; employers are required to have sought to find workers within the EU. However, the report points out that “in management of the work permits regime, there has been significant and continuing toleration of failure of the labour market test – demonstrated in the finding by FAS in its review of the test that, in late 2002, the majority of work permits were issued for work in unskilled occupations for which there appeared to be a sizeable supply of local labour” (IOM).

Recruitment / Employment Agencies: The regulation of the private migrant worker recruitment industry may be an important policy tool that could affect employers' costs at which both EEA and non-EEA workers are recruited. The experience of other immigration countries has shown that under employer-led immigration policies, such as Ireland's before April 2003, private recruitment/employment agencies can become a powerful and often driving force in determining the size and composition of labour immigration. This sometimes happens because of the illegal recruitment practices of unscrupulous recruiters, for instance, charging migrants to be recruited, which lower the cost at which migrants are made available to employers. In other cases, an unregulated private recruitment industry can generate a dependence on particular employment channels for migrant workers, i.e., the ready supply of cheap workers provided by recruitment agencies creates a demand for such workers by employers whose business practices gradually become dependent on migrant workers that are available at very short notice. (IOM).

Enforcement: as of February 2005, only three employers had been convicted for violating the Employment Permits Act 2003. The failure to effectively prosecute employers who illegally employ migrant workers is widely agreed to be one of the most important factors leading to irregular immigration and irregular work and, as a potential consequence, to the failure of labour immigration policies. This is because, in contrast to all other immigration control policies, employer sanctions serve the important purpose of addressing the demand for irregular migrant workers. In the absence of appropriate policies to minimise demand, the policies aimed at minimising supply (border control, deportations), are likely to be much less effective than they could be. (IOM).

“Student Visas”: nesc welcomes the move to restrict the right to work to students who are completing full-time courses of at least one year's duration that lead to a recognised qualification. **However, the new measures would not appear to be effectively implemented and the Council believes that this is one of the areas where there is a critical need for more effective enforcement.** (ICP emphasis).

Nesc is concerned at the lack of co-ordination that up to now has been a feature of the system of student visas and the work permit system. Employers who are refused a work permit could employ a non-EEA student without satisfying the usual work permit requirements. student visas were issued by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform without reference to the Department of Enterprise, Trade

and Employment. The Council welcomes the Government plans to extend the work permit system to students. (NESC).

NESC also refers to government plans to introduce a scheme whereby non-EEA students who have studied and attained a sufficiently high level of educational attainment here, for example, a primary honours degree or higher qualification, would be permitted to remain in Ireland for a defined period in order to seek employment. "It is envisaged that on receipt of a job offer in sectors where skill shortages exist, a graduate student would be eligible for either a Green Card or temporary work permit".

NESC welcomes this proposal but ICP does not. Both reports have indicated how ineffective the labour market test is. Why would we expect anything different in this regard? ICP expects students to return home at the end of their studies.

Family Reunification: NESC says "family reunification is potentially the single largest channel in future years through which non-EEA nationals will enter Ireland". It acknowledges difficult tensions between allowing family reunification to those who understandably desire it and maintaining control over immigration.

"family reunification, which is not regulated as an integral part of an overall migration policy, can give rise to a number of problems. Chain migration may be set in motion if family members are admitted who have their own dependants (e.g., older married children, married siblings, parents still supporting siblings of the sponsoring migrant). The scale of inflow of dependants may confine policy to playing catch-up rather than leading; after struggling to cope-successively-with the surge in asylum seekers, rapid expansion of work permit holders and major inflows from new EU Member States, family members would constitute a fourth wave. Marriages of convenience may increasingly be attempted. The pool of migrants willing to undertake lower-skilled work in the economy may grow disproportionately. The proportion of the migrant population with poor language skills and who are inactive could increase sharply, compounding the challenge of integration. A higher proportion of the migrant population with family dependants will increase their consumption of public services". (NESC).

The Experience of Other Countries: The report says "Integration of migrants is one of the main factors determining the overall success or failure of migration. While many countries have used migrant labour to meet labour shortages, few European countries have achieved successful long-term integration into economic, social, cultural and political life. this is especially the case with low-skilled migrants or those perceived to be very different". (NESC). (This raises the obvious question why Ireland would be any different: ICP).

Comment: Two things came across very strongly out of both reports:- the abuse of student visas to immigrate to Ireland and the failure of the labour market test which is supposed to mean that you only get a work permit if you can't find a worker in the EU. Another concern was the danger that the ready availability of migrants could reduce pressure to raise the skills of the resident population and tackle the obstacles to the participation of Ireland's most marginalised citizens, including welfare-to-work disincentives.