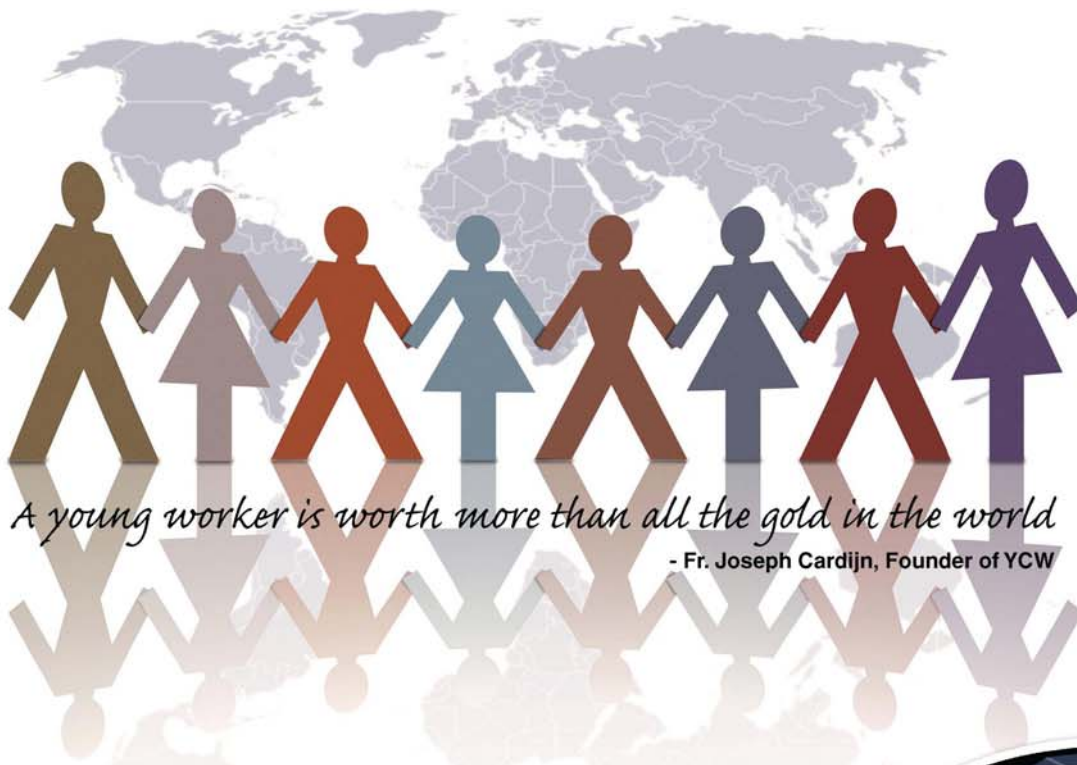


What's the Story?

Experiences of young migrant workers
in relation to Work, Faith & Social
integration in Ireland



Young Christian Workers Movement



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Saothraithe Óga Criostai**

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Purpose of the Research

The researchers were asked to focus on the following issues relating to migrant workers:

Faith:

Is there a commitment to Faith by immigrant workers arriving in Ireland?

Is a Faith Community sought out upon arrival in Ireland?

What is the role of that Community in assisting immigrants?

Is it a support/Block to integration? (Does it mean community only mix within their own community?)

Work:

Current job versus qualifications from home.

Experiences of work in Ireland.

Knowledge of Rights and Entitlements.

Experiences of Racism/negativity.

Difficulties regarding integration in workplace.

Social:

Living conditions i.e. renting, tenant, owner. (establishment of roots long/short term stay in Ireland planned?)

Integration in community life, Politics, Organisations etc.?

What barriers have been experienced (eg. Language, cultural)?

Has it been easy/difficult to keep own culture while living within another?

These questions formed the focus for questionnaire design, focus group meetings, as well as one to one discussions.

“A young worker is worth more than all the gold in the world.” Joseph Cardijn, YCW founder.

Researchers

The Young Christian Workers Movement and the researchers would like to express sincere thanks to all of those migrant workers and foreign nationals who participated in this research project. We would like to give particular thanks to those who went out of their way to help us access relevant people, and to those who helped us to strengthen our links with a variety of migrant workers from various countries. Without the help and support of foreign nationals living in Ireland, accessing the two hundred or so individuals who took part in this project would have been extremely time consuming.

YCW

The Young Christian Workers Movement is an international youth movement which values the dignity and worth of each young person. It enables its members to challenge social exclusion and take action to bring about change in their home, workplace and social life.

Researchers

Marcus Hopkins is a contract researcher involved in educational research in Ireland, the UK, Kosova and Colombia. Amongst his academic qualifications are a Master's Degree in Educational & Social Research and a PhD given in recognition of research related to peace education in Ireland.

Data collection via questionnaires and focus groups from Polish migrants was done with the assistance of Warsaw native Natalia Wizimirska. She has a Masters Degree in psychology, and she is currently studying for an M.Phil degree with the *Irish School of Ecumenics* at Trinity College, Dublin.

Questionnaires were distributed amongst eastern European migrants by a Russian contact known to the main researcher for a number of years. This person also provided a number of contacts for one to one meetings.

Trade Unions could meet National Chaplaincies of the Catholic Church on a regular basis with YCW acting as a conduit.

Recommendations

Relating to faith, the report recommends that:

- The Catholic Church engages in research with the Polish run Catholic church in Dublin to determine how it has attracted so many people, and to share the learning with parishes throughout Ireland.
- Catholic & Anglican parishes should engage in more effective outreach towards migrant workers.
- That Catholic Church looks into the possibility of encouraging simple social activities immediately after Mass.

Relating to work, the report recommends that:

- Trade Unions meet National Chaplaincies of the Catholic Church on a regular basis with YCW acting as a conduit.
- Trade Unions develop new ways of engaging inter-culturally with migrant workers, and of making the trade union movement in Ireland better known to migrant workers.
- Trade Unions offer literature and website information in several languages.

Relating to social needs, the report recommends that:

- The plight of children of parents working illegally in Ireland is urgently addressed by the churches.
- That YCW looks into the possibility of providing training in inter-culturalism aimed at community groups, unions and parishes, the main focus being on how to engage migrant workers into Irish run organisations.
- YCW promotes the creation of drop-in advice centres for migrant workers that focus on employment and legal issues, as well as other forms of support, such as helping migrants cope with the loneliness of arriving in a new country.
- YCW offer language classes that focus on issues that are core to the work and ethos of YCW.

This action research project is designed to illuminate the immediate needs of migrant workers in Ireland. It is intended to be a catalyst of positive change rather than an academic piece of research; yet the research is based on academic methodologies and experiences

Although the majority of migrant workers (85%) were happy enough to recommend Ireland as a place to work, the report highlights some major concerns.

Executive Summary

This action research project is designed to illuminate the immediate needs of migrant workers in Ireland. It is intended to be a catalyst of positive change rather than an academic piece of research; yet the research is based on academic methodologies and experiences

The objectives of the research are set out in page 2, hence this summary concentrates on themes and recommendations gleaned during the research itself.

The first thing to point out is that the vast majority of migrant workers spoken to are happy living and working in Ireland, with most of those spoken to being paid the minimum wage rate or higher. Irish people were regarded as being very friendly towards migrants. Standards of accommodation were very good. Incidents of racism were relatively low, although some Irish employers as well as migrant workers felt that racial tensions could grow, especially if there is an economic downturn.

Although the majority of migrant workers (85%) were happy enough to recommend Ireland as a place to work, the report highlights some major concerns.

The most worrying theme to emerge relates to non-EU migrant workers who arrived in Ireland in the late 1990s and early years of the twenty first century. These workers worked for several years for employers who had been granted work permits to employ these individuals. However, because of the high number of 'new EU' nationals seeking employment in Ireland, the Government introduced new restrictions on the granting of work permits to non-EU nationals. As a result, some migrant workers who had been in Ireland for several years were no longer entitled to remain in the country.

The problem highlighted in this report is that because many of the children of these workers had developed Irish accents and a strong sense of Irish identity and culture, parents were aware that their children had become 'Irish' and had little knowledge or affinity with their country of birth. Faced with the choice of leaving Ireland and taking their children to a country and culture that was alien to the child, many parents chose to remain in Ireland illegally, some anguished by their lack of choice, their children crying when they thought they were to leave the only country they really knew. As these children are not entitled to work in Ireland, there is a danger that after completing their schooling they will have little choice but to join the illegal workforce

The Methodist and Pentecostal churches seemed to be far more advanced than other Churches when it came to encouraging inter-culturalism as well as providing practical ways of getting Irish and foreign nationals to engage together.

Many community groups and organisations felt that migrant workers were not interested in engaging with them in any way; whilst many migrant workers felt that Irish run community groups, political parties and unions didn't really want foreign national participants.

Political parties, community groups and Trade Unions all came in for criticism from migrant workers for not making greater efforts to engage on an equal basis with foreign nationals.

Nearly everyone who participated in the research said that they were paid the minimum legal wage or above. However, when confidence was built between the main researcher and key migrant workers who acted as 'points of access' to other foreign nationals, it became clear that some people were working for longer hours than they were being paid for. As an example, one woman working in the hotel industry claimed that she was being paid the minimum wage for her 30 hours a week; but she actually had worked 40 hours, the last 10 being unpaid. Others said that in reality, the minimum wage per hour actually worked was about €5.00 for many migrant workers, especially for more vulnerable workers. On paper however, employers appeared to be complying with minimum wage legislation.

19% of research participants said that they had experienced some type of religious or spiritual growth since arriving in Ireland. However, in the main, churches didn't seem to provide any social or emotional support to migrant workers, and did little in the way of encouraging integration between Irish people and any of the migrant worker groups. Exceptions to this would be the mosques as well as some Methodist and Pentecostal churches, all of which seemed to be far more advanced than other Churches when it came to encouraging inter-culturalism. The Methodist and Pentecostal churches also provided practical ways of getting Irish and foreign nationals to engage together. In a couple of cases in Dublin, Catholic migrants had actually started to go to Protestant churches, not for religious reasons but because of the social support that the Protestant churches were offering. The Polish Catholic church in Dublin was one of the exceptions as far as Catholicism was concerned, offering a variety of networking and social opportunities after Mass. As worshippers here were mainly Polish, opportunities for improving inter-culturalism between Polish migrants and Irish people was minimal, although a number of Irish people do attend Mass at the Polish church.

Many community groups and organisations felt that migrant workers were not interested in engaging with them in any way; whilst many migrant workers felt that Irish run community groups, political parties and unions didn't really want foreign national participants. Similarly, some migrant workers perceived that Irish Government Departments were not that interested in the unique needs of migrant groups, especially if the migrant worker found him or herself in some sort of difficulty (Several migrants suggested that the Gardai were an exception to this, individual Garda adopting a firm yet

common sense approach to a variety of problems). Some accused Government Departments of racism, although in most cases this was more likely to be a misunderstanding of the bureaucratic nature of the Civil Service. Political parties, community groups and Trade Unions all came in for criticism from migrant workers for not making greater efforts to engage on an equal basis with foreign nationals. In essence, there was a call from foreign nationals for Irish people to treat them as individual persons, not as mere migrant workers.

In addition, criticism of the availability of migrant worker support organisations was raised; some only being open during hours that were unsuitable to many workers.

Although many migrant workers had Masters Degree level qualifications, lack of fluency in the English language was the main obstacle to sourcing well paid employment, as well as a major barrier to better integration with Irish people in general. However, migrants pointed out that the same difficulties would apply to well qualified Irish workers seeking work in a non-English speaking country.

Because it was anticipated that data collecting information from foreign nationals would be difficult, potential research participants were approached on a 24/7 basis. As a result, the researchers engaged with foreign nationals at whatever times were felt to offer the best chance of access. In many cases, this proved to be in the evening and at weekends.

In order to reduce the effects of language being a barrier to participation, the researchers took the time needed to build the trust of fluent speakers of Russian, Latvian & Lithuanian. These people then acted as 'points of access', helping to introduce us to a variety of migrant workers, as well as helping with translations. In addition, one of the two researchers was a Polish national, a factor that made accessing the Polish community in Ireland so much easier.

Methodology

The research was done using a participative action research methodology. Because of the innate difficulty of collecting data from foreign nationals¹, especially data relating to employment, family and emotional issues, 'points of access' were developed by using foreign nationals previously known to the researchers to initially empathise with non-Irish migrant workers, and then to collect meaningful data. In order to build trust and to encourage participation, participants were encouraged to answer questionnaires in their native tongue. In addition, focus group meetings were facilitated in Polish, Latvian & Lithuanian. In Co. Leitrim, an opportunity arose where a point of access was developed who gained the researchers access to migrant workers from Russia, Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania & Estonia. A focus group in Co. Leitrim was part-facilitated in Russian, a language which all of the migrant workers present could communicate in². Where necessary, translations of the questionnaires were done by native speakers of Polish, Russian, Latvian and Lithuanian. The research focuses mainly on the Dublin area, but includes by way of comparison, data collected in Counties Leitrim, Donegal & Monaghan. Potential research participants were approached on a 24/7 basis, the researchers engaging with foreign nationals at whatever times were felt to offer the best chance of access, whether that be in the evening, weekends or during standard working hours.

Over one hundred in depth questionnaires were completed, resulting in a total of over four thousand questions being answered by people in the 18-30 age group, or in some cases older people who had first moved to Ireland when they were aged 18-30. Eight focus groups were also facilitated, five in Dublin, one in Donegal and two in Co Leitrim. A number of in-depth one to one interviews took place. In total, just over 200 foreign nationals took part in the research over a three month period. Of these, 53% were male, 47% female. In order to ensure that the research attracted the widest possible range of migrant workers,

¹ From McVeigh, c2006, *Building an Inclusive and Diverse Westmeath*, Westmeath EQUAL Development Partnership & Westmeath Employment Pact and unpublished HSE documents.

² During the existence of the Soviet Union, Russian was a major language in Latvia, Estonia & Lithuania, as well as in former communist countries such as Poland. As a result, many nationals from these countries have knowledge of the Russian language. However, the younger the person is, the less likely it is that they have this knowledge, Russian language being seen by many non-Russians coming from countries that were once a part of the Soviet Union as an oppressive language. It should also be borne in mind that because of historical and political reasons, the term 'Soviet Union' (and USSR) is disliked by many migrant workers who are nationals of countries such as Latvia, Estonia etc.

It is important to note that 'points of access' were developed from contacts already made before the research began, this being deemed essential in our attempts to access people at a fairly deep emotional level.

"I want local people to treat us as equal people, human beings, not just a part of the workforce."

(Latvian participant. Religion, Orthodox)

advertisements were placed in shops known to be frequented by foreign nationals, and people were stopped at random on the street. In addition, data was collected through contacts in unofficial support networks set up by migrant workers. The Polish Catholic church in Dublin also became a major source of data, clergy at the Church being extremely helpful in allowing the researchers access to a variety of Polish people, and allowing the researchers use of church offices for a number of focus group meetings.

It is important to note that 'points of access' were developed from contacts already made well before the research began, this being deemed essential in our attempts to access people at a fairly deep emotional level. If these contacts had not already been nurtured, the amount of time spent on accessing foreign nationals would have been considerably more than the data collection time allocated to this project. As a direct result of the trust that had been previously built, the researchers managed to gain access to some migrant workers who in normal circumstances would have avoided all contact with us. As a result, research data comes from legal migrant workers, as well as migrant workers who gave information suggesting they were working in Ireland illegally.

Northern Ireland did not come under the remit of the research, but the researchers point out that there are considerable issues facing cross-border workers from a variety of EU and other backgrounds who either live or work in the border areas North and South, and who cross the border each day for employment purposes. In addition, those migrant workers resident in Ireland who need visas to be in Ireland are in many cases excluded from employment opportunities in Northern Ireland as a visa for Ireland does not include the right to enter Northern Ireland where a UK visa is required. As a result, many non-EU migrant workers living in the border counties (Donegal, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan, Louth) cannot avail of the same work opportunities north of the border that their fellow EU border county residents can enjoy. Migrant workers living in the border counties who are excluded from Northern Ireland are potentially more vulnerable in the employment market in the border region than EU migrants who have far greater choice in where they work, and who are not imprisoned as far as employment is concerned by the Irish/Northern Irish border. Those who live in Donegal are most vulnerable, a county that has a far bigger border with Northern Ireland than it has with the rest of the south.

The research relates to migrant workers who were born outside of the common travel area that exists between Ireland and the UK (Ireland, the UK, the Channel Islands and the Isle

Northern Ireland did not come under the remit of the research, but the researchers point out that there are various border issues facing non-EU migrant workers living in border areas. For some in west Cavan for example, crossing the border to Enniskillen, the nearest large town, is illegal.

of Man), an area first legally recognised under the Treaty of Amsterdam where citizens of Ireland and the UK are entitled to freedom of movement between each State. As a result, the research does not involve British nationals resident in Ireland, nor Irish Travellers, a group legally recognised as a distinct ethnic group in Northern Ireland, but not recognised as such in Ireland. The main target groups for the research were young migrant workers aged 18-30 who had moved to Ireland for economic reasons during the last few years.

In addition to the above primary research, secondary research was performed via the Internet and via Government departments such as FÁS and the Central Statistics Office.

The research contract was from May 2007 to August 2007, hence there is no intention or possibility of creating a depth of research that a far longer time period, such as currently being carried out by universities such as UCD and Trinity College. Instead, this YCW research is a snap shot of current issues aimed at highlighting the immediate needs of migrant workers in a rapidly changing Ireland.

Background

According to data taken from the census of 2006, Ireland is being transformed into 'an increasingly multicultural society, Islam now being the third biggest religion in Ireland, ahead of Presbyterianism & Methodism. The student population of Irish schools is rapidly changing, with more than 165 different languages now being spoken by children of newly arrived immigrants³, as are the congregations of the Catholic Church, where Mass has been said in Polish in over 100 parishes, and where central & eastern European Catholics are creating a new sense of vibrancy in the Church, perhaps reversing years of decline. Figures from the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment⁴ show that in 2007, work permits were issued to citizens of over one hundred different countries, whilst citizens of all EU countries except Romania & Bulgaria have a legal right to live & work in Ireland. As increasing numbers of people from diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds choose to work and/or settle here, YCW saw a need to investigate the social, economic and religious needs of migrant workers now living in Ireland.

Figures taken from the Census of 2006⁵ indicate that the population of Ireland has increased from 3,917,203 persons in April 2002 to 4,234,925 persons in April 2006, an increase in population of 8.1% in four years, and an increase based largely on inward migration into Ireland. Census 2006 figures indicate that 420,000 foreign nationals are currently living in Ireland, with continental Europeans along with Africans and Asians being the fastest growing groups. Over 600,000 people presently living in Ireland were born elsewhere: nearly 25,000 coming from Lithuania, over 63,000 coming from Poland, over 42,000 from various parts of Africa, and over 55,000 from Asia, to give just a few examples (see table below).

However, anecdotal evidence gleaned during this YCW research suggests that these figures could be deceptive and considerably less than the true figures. According to one Dublin based Imam, there are over 3,000 Nigerian Muslims living in Dublin alone, whilst Polish workers in Dublin claimed that the true number of Polish workers in Ireland was more likely to be in excess of 200,000 rather than the official figure of just 63,000. This claim is given extra credence from groups of migrant workers such as the group of ten Polish architects spoken to, nine of which said their name was not included on the Census, or the group of ten Lithuanians who said that none

³ Irish Independent, Tuesday, January 23, 2007

⁴ www.entemp.ie/labour/workpermits/statistics.htm

⁵ Central Statistics Office, www.cso.ie

of them had allowed their name to be included on the Census form, such governmental forms being treated with deep suspicion by many migrant workers, especially those coming from former communist countries or those coming from countries run by regimes perceived to be oppressive. Further adding to evidence that the official number of migrant workers are less than the reality comes from evidence gleaned from local business people in Co. Leitrim who claimed that a Lithuanian employment agency funded by the Lithuanian government had been recruiting Lithuanian staff living in Co. Leitrim and Co. Roscommon, such was the effect of the high number of Lithuanians who had moved to Ireland in recent years, this migration causing fairly major economic difficulties in that part of eastern Europe.

There is also the possibility that the term 'usually resident' as used on the Census was interpreted by migrant workers as meaning those who had always been resident in Ireland or those who intended to remain in Ireland on a permanent basis. In fact language use was a major theme throughout the research, school being interpreted by many Polish people as including university, and 'friend' meaning a very good friend rather than an acquaintance one may socialise with occasionally. During the YCW research, groups of Polish, Lithuanians and Russians said that the term 'usually resident' would be interpreted by them as meaning a person who had always been resident in Ireland, and hence a term that didn't apply to them, at least at a time when they were not sure how long they intended to stay in Ireland.

The apparent confusion over the true number of migrant workers living in Ireland also appears when one compares official Irish government data: 200,000 Personal Public Service (PPS) numbers being issued in 2006, whilst estimates from the Central Statistics Office suggest that numbers taking up residence are significantly lower⁶.

Finally, adding to the overall confusion, many migrant workers living in the border region do not appear on the Census data because they reside in Northern Ireland, but work south of the border, and vice versa. Parts of Co. Donegal and Co. Monaghan are particularly prone to cross border working due to their long borders with Northern Ireland. Some Northern Irish based migrant workers working south of the border are employed by Northern based firms and are registered for UK National Insurance which in many cases means they do not need to register for an Irish PPS number.

⁶ Irish Times, Monday, January 15th 2007

“I shall never forget it. The bell rang and I opened the door. When she [a candidate in the 2007 General Election] saw that I was black, her face dropped. Oh, so you don’t have a vote then? She turned and walked quickly away.”

Identity

A theme that arose during the research is what term should we use when discussing ‘migrant’ workers? For many ‘migrant’ workers, the term ‘migrant’ is wrong because they have already made Ireland their permanent home. Some of these people, especially those from Africa, seem to prefer the term ‘new Irish’. On the other hand, many of the Polish people we spoke to oppose this term stating that they are Polish, not Irish. The term non-national, frequently used in the media, is offensive to many, the argument being that virtually everyone is a national of at least one country. Although terminology may appear to be a fairly minor issue to indigenous Irish people, it is a topic of concern to many of those non-Irish workers who engaged in this research project and who have an innate human need to feel a respected part of the society they now live in.

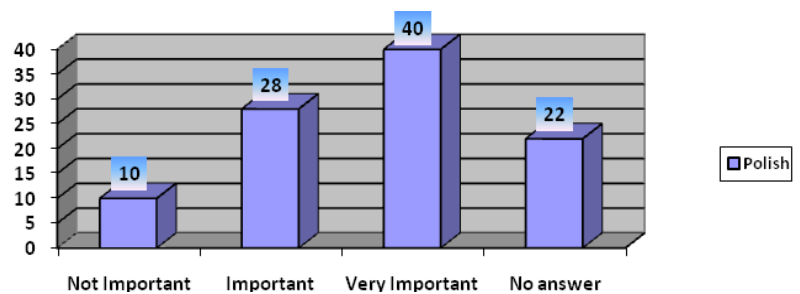
The need to be a part also explains why at one focus group, there was a plea for full voting rights to be based on residency rather than nationality, the plea being for adult migrants who had lived in Ireland for a certain number of years to be allowed to vote.

“Not being able to vote makes me feel like a second class person, someone who does not belong. I am very happy to be in Ireland, yet at the same time I cannot say that I live in a democratic country. If I were in a democratic country I would be able to vote. Ireland is my home now; I have been here for many years. So why do they say I cannot vote? I can claim citizenship, and then I could vote, but that’s not the point. I am a human being living in this country, so I think I should be able to vote in the country where I have lived for so long, irrespective of my nationality. This is really important to me. At the last general election [2007], over 10% of adult residents [migrant workers] in Ireland were denied the democratic right to vote.” (New Irish long term resident born in Africa)

“I shall never forget it. The bell rang and I opened the door. When she [a candidate in the 2007 General Election] saw that I was black, her face dropped. Oh, so you don’t have a vote then? She turned and walked quickly away. But then she looked back and said to me, perhaps I’ll come back at the local elections. She was trying to be nice, but she made me feel second class. Because I couldn’t vote, my opinions were irrelevant to her [General

Election candidates] (New Irish African Muslim, Dublin).

A number of Irish people briefly spoken to about the above comments mentioned that they would be firmly opposed to non-Irish nationals being allowed to vote in Irish General Elections. Does this suggest that foreign nationals working in Ireland are ‘naturally’ regarded as in some way ‘second class’ citizens? Undoubtedly the same applies in many other countries where foreign nationals are denied access to certain State Benefits, voting etc. Hence this isn’t a comment on Irish acceptance of migrant workers, but more a comment on how human beings of all nations have at times, an inbuilt ‘resistance’ to the full inclusion of ‘foreigners’ into their society: a resistance which isn’t based on any desire to racially discriminate, rather an evolutionary style of resistance that is an innate part of protecting a certain community or nation. However, whatever the reasons, it should be recognised that lack of voting rights has caused upset for some foreign nationals living in Ireland, hence any comments relating to voting rights need to be treated with a degree of sensitivity.



Importance of National Identity: Polish. Figures in %

One person said that national identity gives him a sense of protection in a cruel world, whilst another suggested that the importance of national identity has increased for some migrant workers since they have arrived in Ireland.

“Religion is not important to me, but God is. God is everything” (Polish Catholic)

“My Catholic religion is an inseparable part of my life” (Polish Catholic)

“Religion gives me strength in my life!” (Polish Catholic)

“Religion is very important in my life because it gives me a support” (Polish Catholic)

“Religion is important because in Sunday Eucharist I can deepen my faith listening to the Word of God” (Polish Catholic)

“Contact with the Catholic Church is important to me. It helps me in those difficult moments. It gives me hope” (Polish Catholic)

“Religion is important to me. It answers existentially significant questions. (Polish Catholic)

“Religion helps maintain family values, faith, sacredness” (Polish Catholic)

Religion

Many people assume that because of rapid demographic change in Ireland caused by the recent arrival of tens of thousands of migrant workers; the percentage of non-Catholics in Ireland must have risen quite dramatically. However, although the number of Protestants has risen as a direct result of immigration from places such as Africa, the vast majority of migrant workers come from countries such as Poland and Lithuania where the populations mirror that of Ireland in being overwhelmingly Catholic. Only 6% of those Poles taking part in this research project were protestant, 94% Catholic, a figure that is slightly higher than that in Poland itself where 90% of the population define themselves as Catholic⁷. Coincidentally, 94% of Lithuanian participants were also Catholic, a figure quite a bit higher than that in Lithuania itself where Catholics account for 79% of the population.⁸



According to the Polish church in Dublin, over 100 Catholic churches have offered Mass in Polish, these 100+ being geographically spread

throughout the country.

The above photograph taken whilst the main researcher was working in the Balkans shows a church destroyed during fighting in Kosovo. (the surrounding village was also obliterated). Although this may appear to be irrelevant to the YCW migrant worker research project, it should be borne in mind that the migrant workforce in Ireland comprises a wide variety of nationalities and political leanings. In some cases, nationals from countries that have recently been at war with each other or embroiled in civil war are living in fairly close proximity to each other. In many cases, Irish people appeared to be fairly oblivious to the potential of violence and racial discrimination between individuals and groups from these countries who are currently living in Ireland. A similar situation exists, or has the potential to exist, between certain members of the Russian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Latvian and other former Soviet Union countries, including nationals from former communist States such as Poland.

⁷ Figure taken from www.wikipedia.com

⁸ Ditto. Also our sample size is low, hence deviation.

“I am a Church Minister [Methodist], so religion is very important to me. Being a Minister is like a second Identity”

“Religion is unimportant to me. It is more important to be able to work & live” (Typical response from Russian participants)

“I go to church” (Response from several Orthodox Latvians)

“Religion is not important to me” (Response from several Lithuanian Catholics)

“Outside, the Irish tend to categorize people. This doesn’t happen inside my church” (Polish Protestant)

“In the Irish Pentecostal church, people dance & jump! It’s far more unrestrained than in Poland. It’s not an obstacle though, just different!” (Polish Protestant)

Although it may be unfair and indeed biased to discuss a particular church, the church of the Polish Chaplaincy in central Dublin deserves special treatment as it has become a focal point for so many Polish Catholics in Dublin and further a field

In the case of some Orthodox Christians, nationalistic differences seemed to be acting as a barrier to worship. Anecdotal evidence from one trusted Russian Orthodox source known to the main researcher for several years suggested that there were political difficulties between a small number of Bulgarian Orthodox Christians and a small number of Romanian Orthodox Christians in certain areas in Ireland.

Where racial problems created a need for emotional support, this type of need was met by micro peer-support groups and friends rather than through the churches or other official channels. In most circumstances, the type of help on offer was only available from well intended individuals who had little, if any, experience of helping people deal with traumatic events related to racism, discrimination or any resulting spiritual/religious doubt. Considering the high percentage of migrant workers who are practicing Catholics, the Catholic Church in Ireland would appear to be an obvious place for advice. However, the level of emotional type advice that some people would need would demand a high degree of fluency in English, or fluency from the churches in a range of non English/Irish languages.

In questions relating to how important religion was, the Polish community showed the greatest enthusiasm, 55% saying religion was very important to them, 27% saying it was important, and just under a fifth saying it was unimportant. It is important to stress here that this research concentrates on migration from central and eastern Europe. Migrants from Africa also appeared to be very enthusiastic about their religions, although the sample size for this group is small. Of those seen at focus groups, nearly all stated that religion was very important to them. Taking all participants into account, 39% said that religion was very important to them; another 39% said that it was important, whilst 20% said it was unimportant. The Polish enthusiasm for the Polish Catholic church in Dublin is best summed in the following statement:

“I know that God cares about me, that He leads me on His ways. When I didn’t know where to find a Polish church in Ireland, I felt bad. When I came here at Easter, to this Polish church for the very first time, I had to cry. I felt like a lost sheep that had found its home!” (Polish Woman)

Lithuanians seemed to feel that religion was less important to them than nationals of other countries, a surprisingly high 89% saying that religion was of no importance to them. All of the Lithuanians apart from one who participated in the project were Catholic. Latvian Catholics in Ireland weren’t as overtly

Despite the success of the Polish Church in Ireland, our focus group meeting with members of the Protestant Polish community in Dublin suggested that the Pentecostal church had an even better developed network for migrant workers.

The Catholic Church in Ireland was missing a golden opportunity to engage with migrant workers on topics related to social issues such as social inclusion, employment, family, pastoral & emotional care etc.

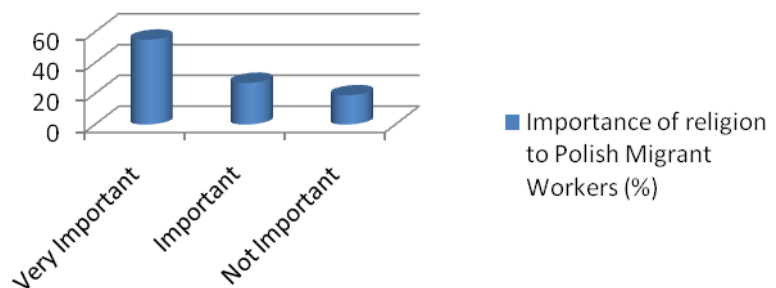
enthusiastic as Polish Catholics, but around half said that they went to Mass on a regular basis. The lack of interest in religion shown by the Lithuanians is strikingly different to that of Catholic Polish people in Ireland; Poles creating a new confidence and vibrancy in many Catholic churches in Ireland.

Some people indicated that belief in God was far more important than adherence to any religion. In one case, being *not* religious was very important.

Nineteen percent of participants stated that their religion had become more important to them since arriving in Ireland, helping them to come to terms with the practical and emotional difficulties faced whilst building a life in a new country. A lone Polish Protestant was the only participant to say that religion had become less important since moving to Ireland.

Some participants found finding the time to worship harder in Ireland than in their original country. Others found worshipping in English difficult, some suggesting that church services could be run bi-lingually, a translator being used in conjunction with the Irish priest. A Polish migrant who also suggested this stressed that such a translation service in Polish should be provided by the Polish laity, and not by the indigenous Irish population. If implemented, this could remove the language barrier of religious worship without creating yet another demand on local clergy. Those churches offering printed material in a variety of languages were praised by migrant workers in general.

Importance of Religion to Polish Migrant Workers (%)



Although it may be unfair and indeed biased to discuss a particular church, the church of the Polish Chaplaincy in central Dublin deserves special treatment as it has become a focal point for so many Polish Catholics in Dublin and further

a field. Run by Fr. Jaroslaw Maszkiewicz, the church seems to get regular attendance in excess of 1,000 people. Several worshippers mentioned that after Mass social activities such as people staying for coffee and the ability to glean advice on secular issues such as employment was of particular importance. This aspect of the church mirrors that of a large Polish church in Manchester in England, where a well known bank has even been known to offer advice to Polish worshippers after Mass⁹.

This research offers no opinion as to why this particular church attracts so many Polish people. Instead, it suggests that other churches could perhaps benefit by taking an interest in this particular church: Irish churches learning from the experiences of Polish clergy and; parishioners here. Why does this particular church attract so many Polish people in Ireland; some making lengthy journeys to attend?

However, it should be mentioned that the Polish church in Dublin seems to offer a strikingly similar blend of Mass followed by optional secular activities, to that offered by many 'Irish Catholic' churches serving the Irish community living in England when so many Irish people were migrant workers.

Despite the success of the Polish Church in Ireland, our focus group meeting with members of the Protestant Polish community in Dublin suggested that the Pentecostal church had an even better developed network for migrant workers. In addition, Methodist migrant workers tended to praise the Methodist churches for the way in which they encourage interculturalism; foreign nationals feeling a full part of the Methodist community.

Although the majority of Catholic migrant workers were very happy to worship in Irish churches, and were grateful to those churches who provided leaflets in Polish etc. as well as English, there was a general feeling that the Catholic Church in Ireland was missing a golden opportunity to engage with migrant workers on topics related to social issues such as social inclusion, employment, family, pastoral & emotional care etc. Without doubt, when it came to helping migrant workers develop social networks, find accommodation and jobs, the Pentecostal churches; Methodist churches and the Mosques were far better developed than the catholic churches in Ireland. The question is what can the Catholic Church do to improve this situation at a time when clergy are already overstretched & overworked?

⁹ BBC Radio 4, Interview with Polish migrants in UK, 27/8/07

Legislation Affecting Migrant Workers & the Need for Advice & Support

The migrant worker who we fully trust was of the opinion that some migrant workers are in effect being paid just €5 an hour, yet should there be an inspection from the employment authorities, the employer could 'prove' that the person concerned was being paid the minimum wage, their time sheet showing that they'd worked 30 hours a week, an not the actual 40 that they had worked.

It also appears that none of the exploited workers being referred to were members of a trade union, the reason being that they had no knowledge whatsoever of the trade union movement in Ireland.

Considering that most migrant workers came to Ireland for economic reasons, it is perhaps no surprise that over 90% of research participants were aware of the minimum wage rate in Ireland, and that virtually all of those participants who were legally working in Ireland were being paid at least the legal minimum wage. However, during a discussion with one of the 'points of access' developed during the research, payment of the minimum wage was brought into question.

The main researcher had built up a great deal of trust between himself and this migrant worker, and it wasn't until the end of the data collection period that the person concerned made the claim that although migrant workers were being paid the legal wage (or higher), it was easy for an employer to pay vulnerable workers far less than the minimum wage. If an employee worked for say 40 hours a week, the employer would only pay them for 30 hours, any complaint being met with the response of 'take it or leave it', we can easily get someone else to take your place'. The migrant worker who we fully trust was of the opinion that some migrant workers are in effect being paid just €5 an hour, yet should there be an inspection from the employment authorities, the employer could 'prove' that the person concerned was being paid the minimum wage, their time sheet showing that they'd worked 30 hours a week, an not the 40 that they had actually worked.

It also appears that none of the exploited workers being referred to were members of a trade union, the reason being that they had no knowledge whatsoever of the trade union movement in Ireland. Some of those involved have lived in Ireland for over five years; most were not EU citizens. When asked why they hadn't sought the help of a trade union, there seemed to be a fear that an employee would be dismissed from employment should they be known to be a trade union member. It should be stressed that this fear was partly based on a lack of knowledge and lack of contact with trade unions in Ireland. The YCW employed researcher is somewhat puzzled as to how he has managed to make contact with these exploited migrant workers in a very short research timescale, and yet these same workers are alleging that they have never had contact whatsoever from any trade union representative during their time in Ireland. This is particularly puzzling as some of those concerned have worked for relatively well known and long established Irish businesses.

“Yes, I’d recommend Ireland because of the good wages and relatively low living costs. Irish people generally have a positive attitude toward incomers too”

“I wouldn’t recommend Ireland to everyone anymore; not unless you have a very good knowledge of English and good qualifications

“Yes, Ireland is a very interesting place. There are many kind and friendly people. Many nationalities are worth getting to know, and one can live calmer and more carelessly here than in Poland”

To show a further complication, it comes as no surprise to those employed below the minimum wage in the way referred to above, as in most cases, the employee has been recommended to the employer and the potential employee has already been told about the payment ‘conditions’. To further highlight the complex nature of what it is alleged is happening, our migrant worker contacts stress that this is not an example of racism, but an example of simple exploitation against vulnerable individuals of any race, with certain vulnerable Irish workers potentially included.

However, the researchers would like to stress that in general, the majority (85%) of those who participated in this research project were happy enough with their employers or with Ireland in general to recommend Ireland as a place to work. Obviously this does not defend the discriminatory and exploitative actions of a minority of employers.

However, the three quarters of participants who would recommend Ireland remain happy, examples of what was said being

“Yes, I’d recommend Ireland because of the good wages and relatively low living costs. Irish people generally have a positive attitude toward incomers too”

“I’d recommend Ireland because of the friendly attitude of my employer, keeping to employment regulations, sensible laws and relatively good wages”

“Yes, Ireland is a very interesting place. There are many kind and friendly people. Many nationalities are worth getting to know, and one can live calmer and more carelessly here than in Poland”.

Surprisingly, this young lady (aged 21-25) was not alone in commenting favourably on Ireland’s weather, the lack of extreme heat or cold being mentioned by several people.

It is worth noting that despite the very high number of migrant workers who would recommend Ireland as a place to work, a number of people at focus groups and on questionnaire responses said that the work situation was changing; responses such as:

“I wouldn’t recommend Ireland to everyone anymore, not unless you have a very good knowledge of English and good qualifications”

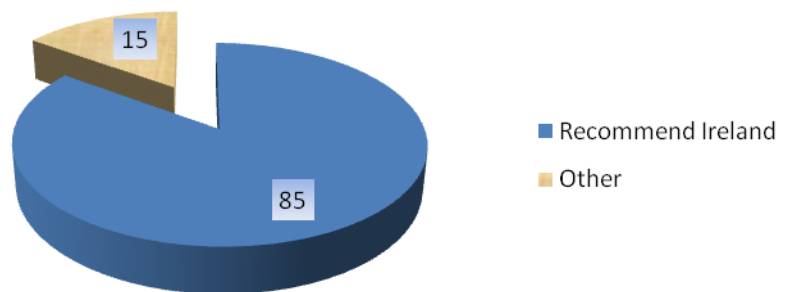
“Myths about a paradise in Ireland are slowly fading now”

The comment “it’s far harder to get work now” came up several times, whilst one respondent who’d been here since 2005 but who was now unemployed said, *“Myths about a paradise in Ireland are slowly fading now”*

Another more recent arrival (2007) said:

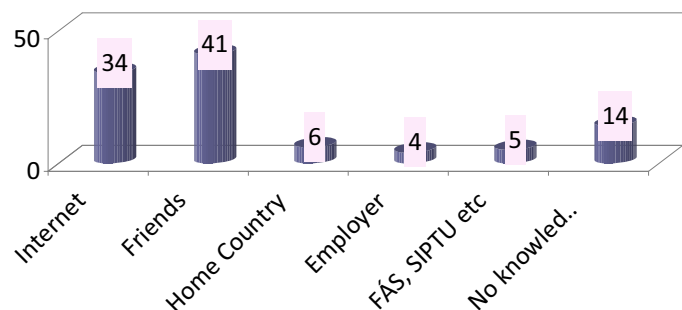
“No, I wouldn’t recommend people to come to Ireland. In Ireland the young do what they like [lack of parental control, lack of respect for authority]. There are some beautiful places, but there are many neglected and shabby places too”.

Recommend Ireland as a Place to Work (%)



85% Recommend Ireland as a place to work.

Where Knowledge of Employment Rights was Sourced in % (inc multiple responses)



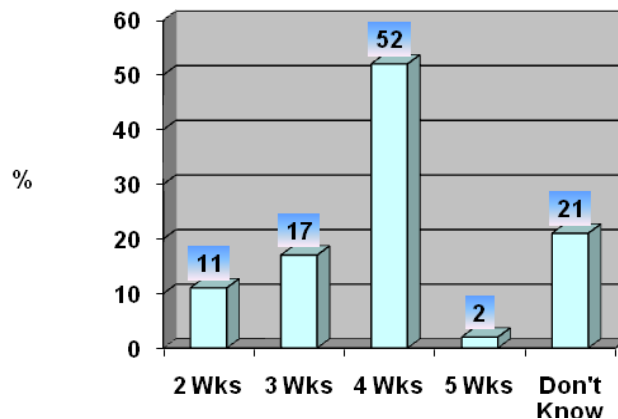
14% of participants had little or no knowledge of employment legislation in Ireland, minimum wage rates excepted.

75% of migrant workers found out about their employment from friends or the Internet.

Only 5% used organisations such as FÁS or Trade Unions to find out about their employment rights, although this figure doesn't take into account usage of FÁS and Trade Union websites.

When it came to knowledge of a workers right to paid leave there was confusion as to yearly entitlements, 54% saying 4 weeks or more, 46% saying three weeks or less or that they didn't know. Considering that 41% of those questioned had found out about their rights through friends, it is perhaps understandable that so many underestimated their entitlements.

Knowledge of Holiday Entitlement in %



There was a general feeling that there was a need for migrant user friendly 'one stop' type information centres where migrant workers could easily obtain basic details of employment rights, welfare rights, the Irish health system, basic Irish law etc. In one case, a Russian woman with minimal financial means had to pay a solicitor €100 an hour for legal advice relating to her being evicted from her home. In another case, a South African worker avoided going to hospital after an accident at work because he didn't know if he was entitled to a free medical assistance, and he didn't have the means to pay. He later discovered through his employer that he was entitled to a Medical Card.

Confusion was also expressed as to medical entitlements of continental EU students studying in Ireland, some EU students in Dublin claiming that the advice they had received from their universities had been very misleading. In addition, several non-EU migrant workers had been told by their employer that they would have no difficulty travelling to Northern Ireland, despite the fact that they didn't have a visa to visit the UK¹⁰.

¹⁰ Northern Ireland is a part of the UK as far as visa requirements are concerned, and anyone requiring a visa to visit the UK needs a UK visa in order to visit Northern Ireland. The same applies in the opposite direction, where someone holding a UK visa in Northern Ireland may, depending on

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Although all of those participants working legally in Ireland were paid at or above the minimum wage, there was a perception¹¹ that Irish workers doing the same job were being paid more than migrant workers. Even amongst those foreign nationals employed in highly paid professional fields, where the worker spoke fluent English and was highly qualified, there was still a perception that their Irish colleagues were being paid more. Although this perception applied across the board with all nationalities spoken to, it was particularly striking from Lithuanian and Latvian participants, where two thirds of Lithuanians and all of the Latvians felt that that Irish people were paid a higher minimum wage than non-Irish employees.¹²

Considering the resistance and suspicion that many migrant workers seem to have in engaging of State run bodies, the idea of the ‘one stop’ shop may be particularly suitable to church groups.¹³ The ‘Polish’ Catholic Church¹⁴ in central Dublin was attractive to many Polish people worshipping there because of its after Mass coffee shop, where parishioners could avail of advice by default from fellow Polish migrant workers. Perhaps a Church or Church run organisation would allow for a more emotionally intimate understanding of migrant worker needs than a State run body, especially a Church organisation where staff or volunteers understood the need for pastoral care as well as for factual advice, especially in cases where advice is sought because an individual or family is seeking advice because they have emotional concerns related to an employment issue. In cases where the migrant is working illegally, the Church may be the only place where advice can be safely sought. Discussing illegal workers is obviously contentious, but the fact remains that there are

their nationality, need to be in possession of an Irish visa before they can cross the border into the south.

The research does not conclude whether or not the perception was based on truth or hearsay.

The question asked to participants was ‘Is the minimum wage different for Irish people? (see appendix) From comments made to the researchers, it seems that a yes answer meant that in reality Irish workers were being paid more than non-Irish workers for doing exactly the same job. It doesn’t mean that migrant workers think there is a *legal difference* in the minimum for Irish workers, and the legal minimum for non-Irish workers. Polish participants however, seemed in the main to answer the question in legal terms.

For convenience, the word church is used throughout this research to include all places of worship or religious study, whether that be in churches, chapels, mosques etc.

The term ‘Polish’ Catholic Church is used to define this particular well known Irish Catholic Church where the majority of the congregation are Polish.

many illegal workers in Ireland. From a Church perspective, these individuals, probably the most vulnerable of all the migrant workers, are at least entitled to some sort of pastoral support.

The need for support from non Governmental organisations seems to be especially important for those who for various reasons, are working illegally in Ireland. For obvious reasons the State cannot provide ongoing support for illegal workers, yet a sizeable number of illegal workers appear to be working throughout Ireland. Again for obvious reasons, engaging in research with illegal workers is particularly difficult, the need to build the necessary trust for deep engagement taking much time and relying on previously built 'points of access' with persons who are deemed to be very trustworthy by the illegal worker. The following shows the necessity of gaining such access, despite the difficulties and ethical considerations of such engagement:

“When we had work permits, at least we could work legally in Ireland. Even so, because our permit was issued to our employer, and not to ourselves, we could be grossly exploited. I live in a small town, so if I upset my employer he would tell every other employer not to employ me. Some of my friends were bribed, their employer demanding sexual favours; such was the power of the work permit. If they said no, the employer would threaten to sack them and then tell the Police that they were working illegally. That was the problem with the work permit. We couldn't just leave and get a new job. Legally we could only work for the employer that owned our work permit. And people ask why do people work in Ireland illegally!”

“I've lived in Ireland for five years, me and my daughter. She loves Ireland, and she can speak fluent Irish now, as well as English. She loves Gaelic football! You've heard her, she even has an Irish accent! So when I found out that I couldn't work in Ireland anymore [due to changes in Irish employment legislation on work permit availability for non EU citizens after accession States such as Poland joined the European Union], I had to think first of my daughter, then of me. My daughter thinks of herself as Irish, and all of her friends are Irish. My duty to my daughter is important, so I stay in Ireland, and do what I can to survive. That's why I live with a man. Do I love the man I live with? That's irrelevant to someone in my position. I have

“My daughter thinks of herself as Irish, and all of her friends are Irish. My duty to my daughter is important, so I stay in Ireland, and do what I can to survive. That’s why I live with a man. Do I love the man I live with? That’s irrelevant to someone in my position. I have to survive. It sounds bad I know, but you don’t live in this type of world. I have no choice. I need to provide for my daughter. No, I don’t love the man I live with, but he feeds us and houses us so I have no choice”

to survive. It sounds bad I know, but you don’t live in this type of world. I have no choice. I need to provide for my daughter. No, I don’t love the man I live with, but he feeds us and houses us so I have no choice. That’s just the way things are for people like me. That’s the way it is when you can’t approach the State for help.”

Another in-depth conversation took place with a woman who held a work permit for several years, but who still hasn’t been given permanent residency status in Ireland. She had worked out a way of running her own business in Ireland, paying rent on premises, ensuring that tax was paid, yet as far as I could work out, living in Ireland illegally. As in the above conversation, potential problems affecting the children of illegal workers become a core part of the informal discussion. Her biggest fear wasn’t related to employment; in fact her business was doing very well and she was employing people. Instead, her concern related to her son’s future education.

Nearing the age where he would have to choose whether or not to go to university, the mother’s concern was that if she fails to obtain permanent residency in the next year (her and a few friends applied for this over a year ago and are still awaiting a decision), then her son will not be entitled to avail of the same third level education entitlements enjoyed by the school classmates he has studied with since he was eleven (his entire second level education has taken place in Ireland). As a consequence, if the mother fails to achieve permanent residency, this child who carries a very strong Irish accent, will be unable to attend university in Ireland. Because he speaks English and Irish rather than the language of the country where he was born, he is unlikely to be able to study in that country. In addition, if his mother isn’t granted residency rights, then he too will be unable to stay in Ireland legally, and so will be unable to obtain a Personal Public Service (PPS) number. In his situation, he will almost certainly end up working illegally in Ireland, and his lack of third level education will probably act as another barrier to his earning potential, increasing the chance of him being exploited at some time in the future.

Whatever one may think of people working illegally in Ireland, children like the one referred to above are innocent victims, the one above being oblivious to the fact that he may not be able to go to university, and may not even be allowed to work. He’s been brought up as an Irish child, in an Irish school, in an Irish town. Apparently his teachers are surprised when they’re told he’s not Irish. And yet what is his future in this country?

The vast majority of participants knew little if anything about Social Welfare entitlements and only 6% said they received any form of Social Welfare in Ireland.

Migrant workers are of obvious economic benefit to the Irish State, paying direct and indirect taxes whilst the vast majority take little from the State.

What is most concerning about the above child is that he is certainly not alone in his position; there being possibly thousands of others in exactly the same situation.¹⁵ Hence a concern that a new generation of ‘illegal’ workers is about to join the Irish workforce; a generation who may have no choice but to work illegally at relatively low rates of pay, in order to keep the only identity they really know, that of being Irish.

Social Welfare

The vast majority of participants knew little if anything about Social Welfare entitlements and only 6% said they received any form of Social Welfare in Ireland. All of the 6% who received Social Welfare payments had lived in Ireland for at least 2 years; the mean average being just over 4 years. The main explanation as to why none of our participants who had lived in Ireland for less than 2 years were claiming Social Welfare is almost certainly because of the *habitual residency condition* introduced by the Government in May 2004 where most migrant workers (not those from the travel common area operating between Ireland & Britain) were excluded from receiving Social Welfare until they had been resident in Ireland for at least 2 years (see www.welfare.ie). It should also be stressed that migrant workers involved in the research pointed out that they were here to work, not to claim money from the State. As such, migrant workers are of obvious economic benefit to the Irish State, paying direct and indirect taxes whilst the vast majority take little from the State.

The habitual residency condition creates a fairly risky environment for workers who have lived here for less than 2 years, especially at a time when some migrant workers are saying that it is getting harder to gain employment in Ireland. In addition, there is some evidence that some migrant workers migrate between their home country and Ireland on a fairly regular basis, accepting employment in Ireland for a certain length of time before returning home, then at some later stage returning to Ireland. Are these EU ‘commuters’ protected in Ireland? Are they even protected in the country of their birth? Even though EU legislations are theoretically designed to allow for freedom of movement, residency and employment throughout the EU, those who take advantage of this freedom of movement on a regular basis are perhaps making themselves very vulnerable should they ever require financial assistance from the Irish State or any other EU State. A major

The figure of thousands is speculative and not based on any academic evidence, but it is a figure that some foreign nationals were suggesting would not be an exaggeration.

complaint from some participants was that it was extremely difficult to get a definitive type answer to the more unusual type of questions relating to Social Welfare payment entitlements for transient EU workers. This difficulty was heightened by language & accents, some people finding it hard to communicate with Social Welfare personnel and vice versa.

The majority of migrant workers intend to stay in Ireland for a maximum of five years.

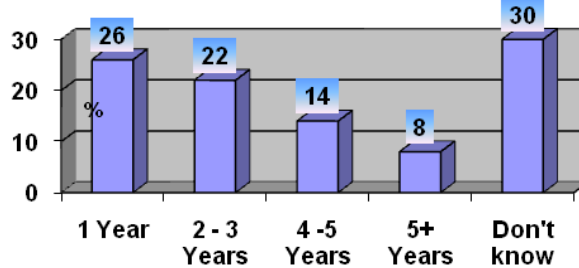
A number of those who participated in the YCW research project have already left Ireland.

“Many Lithuanians return home, where the grass is greener. But many of them come back to Ireland. Once you’ve lived here in Ireland it’s hard to stay away. There’s something about this country!”

Sustainable Population Growth?

The changing and dynamic nature of Irish society from one of mass emigration to the current unprecedented scale of mass net inward immigration is reflected in the statistic from the Central Statistics Office that 18% of the population in 2030 is expected to be foreign born, compared with the present figure of 10.4%¹⁶, and that the population is expected to rise to 5.5 million by 2030¹⁷. However, in the event that many of the newly arrived immigrants remain in Ireland for only a few years, as data gleaned during this YCW research suggests may happen, then the CSO figures relating to foreign born residents may prove to be on the high side, as the majority of participants in this YCW research project have indicated that they intend to stay in Ireland for less than 5 years.

Length of Time Migrant workers Intend to Stay in Ireland



Figures in % rounded to nearest full number

The above figures suggest that at least 62% of the migrant workers who participated in the research intend to leave Ireland within the next five years, and over a quarter intend to leave within the next twelve months. Although it can be rightly argued the YCW research is extremely small in scale compared to CSO research, doubt as to how long migrant workers intend to stay in Ireland has also been expressed by Prof. James Wickham of the Department of Sociology at Trinity College who has said that key questions remain unanswered, such as ‘whether immigrants were likely to remain in the State in the long term, or if the State was experiencing a temporary surge of migration’.¹⁸ Data from the YCW research suggests that in the case of many eastern and mid Europeans, it is a surge that is being experienced, with the majority of workers from these parts of Europe intending to leave Ireland should Ireland’s economic attractiveness to these workers weaken. However, the fact remains that Ireland remains an attractive workplace for foreign nationals. As the table in appendix 2 shows, work permits have been issued to

¹⁶ Central Statistics Office, www.cso.ie

Central Statistics Office, www.cso.ie

¹⁸ Irish Times, Monday, January 15th 2007

“I was visiting my family in Russia the other week, and I was surprised to see how much wages had risen. Taking into account rents, there doesn’t appear to be a big difference between working in Russia and working in Ireland. Things are changing.”

foreign workers from over one hundred countries in 2007 alone (Jan to mid July 2007). Although 26% of those who engaged in this research project say that they intend to leave Ireland in the next year, 26% of participants had also arrived here in the last six months; 58% in the last 18 months, figures that indicate the high fluidity level of inward and outward migration to and from Ireland.

The Transient Nature of the Migrant Workforces in Ireland

One of the reasons why migrant workers knew relatively little about employment legislation and rights compared to the level of awareness of the minimum wage seems to be because so many of the central and eastern European migrant workers initially intend to stay in Ireland on a relatively short term basis; their initial intention being to source employment that will pay enough to justify a certain amount of time away from their country of birth. As a result, many migrants were focused on rates of pay alone.

However, knowledge of employment legislation such as holiday pay was higher with workers who had decided to remain in Ireland for longer than they had initially intended, and especially amongst those who were thinking of settling here on a permanent basis. During one of the focus groups, a claim was made by eastern European workers that some local employers were showing a preference toward employing Lithuanian & Latvian staff as there was a perception that newly arrived Polish workers were asking to take more holidays than they were legally entitled to soon after starting to work with a company. This allegation was made by more than one person, although it should be pointed out that some groups of migrant workers showed what can only be described as racist or discriminatory tendencies towards migrant workers from countries other than their own.

Just over two thirds of migrant workers told us that they only began to look for work in Ireland after they had arrived, a figure that suggests a relatively high degree of confidence in their employability in the Irish workplace. In addition, freedom of movement throughout the European Union for EU citizens makes seeking employment in any other EU State less of a gamble than was the case of people emigrating in the past.

Although higher wages are an obvious attraction to migrant workers, only 18% of respondents quoted wages or work as their main reason for coming to Ireland. Instead, 74%

“What sort of town will this place be when all of us migrant workers have left, and all of these new apartments are empty?”

74% of migrants spoken to indicated that family and friends were their main reason for coming to Ireland

mentioned friends and family who were living in Ireland or moving to Ireland, a figure that shows that the majority of newly arrived migrants would be unlikely to be alone in Ireland. The attraction of family and friends may also explain why so many people gained information related to employment rights from family and friends as well, rather than going to more structured or official sources.

Known as step migration, the effects of family and friends on encouraging other migrants to move to the same country has been recognised for many years. Notable for Ireland is the nation’s history of emigration; with many Irish people having been encouraged to join family and friends in the USA, Britain and elsewhere. Although step migration into Ireland isn’t a new phenomenon, the recent and current scale of step migration into the country is.

As far as demographic planning is concerned, step migration might ensure that migrant workers in Ireland will be less inclined to leave the country for purely economic reasons; unless family and friends choose to leave as well. As a result, claims by many migrants that they intend to stay in Ireland for less than five years may prove to be false, as was the case for many Irish people living ‘short term’ in Britain for far more years than they originally intended; some staying forever.

However, there is always the possibility that the economic situation in countries such as Poland and Lithuania will improve due to EU membership, and that the emotional draw of the ‘home country’ will encourage families and friends to return to their original country, just as many Irish families have left Britain in recent years to return to Ireland. The fact that 74% of migrants spoken to indicated that family and friends were their main reason for coming to Ireland shows how important family and friendship ties are to many migrants; something shared with Irish people. Should some of these families and friends start to return ‘home’, will the draw of these people be too much for other migrant workers in Ireland to resist? If so, what happens to the Irish economy and the Irish property market? As one migrant worker said, “What sort of town will this place be when all of us migrant workers have left and all of these new apartments are empty?”

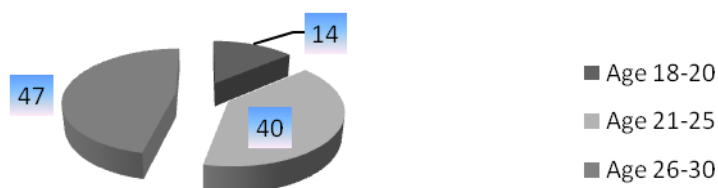
However, family ties for those with young children may result in significant numbers staying in Ireland as their children will have grown up in Ireland. Just under 30% of the migrants involved in the research already have children living in Ireland. Others will marry Irish partners; hence these people too may stay. The danger for everyone is that nobody really knows.

However, somewhat surprisingly, none of those who engaged in the research owned a property in Ireland, although the high price of Irish property coupled with so many migrant workers being paid the minimum wage would explain this particular piece of data.

Couple the above to the possibility of seasonal working throughout the EU, freedom of movement and cheap air travel allowing EU workers to travel to whatever State is offering the best opportunities at the time, and this unprecedented situation of freedom of movement within the EU, cheap air travel and Ireland's economic boom of recent years, and it is easy to see how all of these factors combined makes social planning particularly difficult in Ireland at the present time. On top of this, there is plenty of anecdotal evidence suggesting that a significant percentage of migrant workers are completely unknown to the authorities; many because they only intend to stay on a very short term basis.

The age profile of migrant workers is another factor in determining future migration. The following table relates to the age profile of the YCW target group, the 18-30 age group.

Age Profile of Participants Aged Under 31 years (%)



Age 18-20 = 14% Age 21-25 = 40% Age 26 - 30 =47%
(% rounded up)

One possible sign that a person or family intends to stay in this country is property ownership. However, somewhat surprisingly, none of those who engaged in the research owned a property in Ireland, although the high price of Irish property coupled with so many migrant workers being paid the minimum wage would explain this particular piece of data. Also, the research concentrated on eastern and central European migrants. Anecdotal evidence from Africans who engaged in the research suggest that African migrants are more likely to want to buy a home in Ireland than those from Poland and former Soviet Union countries that have a fairly recent history and culture of State owned property ownership

However, despite the above comment, 37% of participants stated that they owned a home outside of Ireland, presumably

37% of participants stated that they owned a home outside of Ireland, presumably in the country where they were born.

in the country where they were born. This appears to be a high figure considering the research concentrated on the 18-30 age group. In addition to this, 37% of participants, (coincidentally the same number as who owned homes abroad (presumably in their country of birth), but in some cases different people) stated that they intended to buy a property outside of Ireland. In total, 41% of participants either owned, or intended to buy property abroad. This would appear to be a high figure if it is assumed that migrant workers have come to stay in Ireland for the long term, and suggests that a reasonable proportion of migrant workers do not intend to stay in Ireland forever. Nearly a third of Polish migrant workers were intending to buy abroad, whilst just over a half of the Lithuanian participants were planning to do the same, nearly all of these Lithuanians already owning a home abroad.

23% of migrant workers have experienced some form of racism.

African's seem to fair worse, skin colour being too much of a visible sign for some racists to resist.

Racism

According to data from the questionnaires, 23% of migrant workers have experienced some form of racism. Polish migrant workers seemed to have a better time, with only 8% of participants claiming to have experienced racism. Lithuanian participants in particular seem to have suffered racial abuse, 71% of participants from that country having experienced racism. Include the illegal workforce, and the figures become increasingly worrying. Some racism could be from younger Irish colleagues larking around, unaware that their actions are causing distress, whilst other incidences could have far more sinister roots. Yet even the more innocent acts of larking around have caused deep distress, "They threw on me a plastic bottle with a drink. They were laughing at me" an incident which another Polish employee also suffered, this time a cup of milk shake being thrown over him. At least one of the incidents happened in a company where Trade Union membership was high, and where one of those abused was a member of a Trade Union. Although these incidents may seem fairly minor, they can be extremely traumatic for migrant workers who are already feeling vulnerable and alone in a new country.

One man who has been in Ireland since 2005 and who works as a waiter said that he had suffered from abusive language, physical abuse and humiliation from customers because he was Polish. However, despite these incidents, Polish people seem to fair better than some other migrant groups. This could relate to Poles being in Ireland in such large numbers, a total figure in excess of 200,000 being estimated by many Poles in Ireland. The fact that over 90% of Polish people in Ireland are Catholic could be another factor, the indigenous population having no need to perceive a fear from a foreign religion.

African's seem to fair worse, skin colour being too much of a visible sign for some racists to resist. Even when passing the offices of YCW one evening, an aging drunk Irishman shouted out to two passers by "** off back to where you come from. This is Ireland and you're not welcome in my country", an outburst that actually resulted in two white Dubliners telling the guy in no uncertain terms where to go. Good in terms of decent Irish people having the guts to openly stand up against racism, but still a traumatic experience for the black guy who had been abused. In addition, there seemed to be growing media reports highlighting alleged racism against black taxi drivers in Dundalk and other places.

In some cases, certain Irish employers appeared to be 'positively racist', showing a preference towards employing foreign nationals.

In another incident in a provincial Irish town, a fight broke out between Irish youths and Polish youths, the catalyst being an allegation that one of the Irish guys had lost his job because a Polish worker had agreed to work at a lower rate of pay. So even though the questionnaire responses show 'only' 8% of poles have experienced racism, there are forms of racism such as this that may not be perceived as being 'racist' as such by participants. One guy for instance stated that "I haven't experienced racism myself, but I felt somehow reluctance from Irish people to make close friends with Polish people." Another said:

"No I haven't experienced any racism against me, although one can feel a barrier when amongst Irish people. For them, Polish are like people of a different category, people who shouldn't question their job conditions but should just accept any offer."

However, despite the above, levels of racism and discrimination appeared to be far lower than that anticipated at the start of the research. Indeed, in some cases, certain Irish employers appeared to be 'positively racist', showing a preference towards employing foreign nationals. During one focus group meeting, it was mentioned that although certain migrant workers had experienced racist or discriminatory behaviour from their line manager, that the line manager had not been Irish.¹⁹ Similarly, there were several instances where racial tensions seemed to exist between nationals of different countries, Polish workers in particular being targeted by non-Polish participants of the research. Potential reasons for this varied, ranging from the high number of Polish people working in Ireland compared to other nationalities to the legacies of the old Soviet Union and its relationship with former communist countries such as Poland, and relationships between Russia and countries that were formerly a part of the old Soviet Union. Even political and religious tensions between Chechnya and the rest of Russia were apparent in one in depth interview, the person in question having no time at all for the Muslim community living in the Irish town where he was working; this being due to his personal experience of Muslims in Chechnya several years ago, and nothing at all to do with the Muslims living in the same Irish town as him,

¹⁹ These cases are few, but several of the participants mentioned that English managers working in Ireland were far worse than Irish managers in this regard. Those complaining about English managers in Ireland mentioned that their experience of Irish managers was the opposite, Irish managers being extremely friendly towards them. English managers were mentioned in both questionnaire responses and at one of the focus groups, such comments coming from Lithuanian workers.

“I think that for some of Lithuanians, there is a different type of racism. We sometimes find it hard to take orders from managers who are not as experienced or as qualified as we are! Many times I’ve seen my manager asking people to do things in a certain way, and I just think to myself it would be so much more effective if they did it in another way. I know people from other nationalities who think the same, but they just do as they’re told. And I know that if I applied for promotion I’d be overlooked in favour of Irish staff”

(Lithuanian woman)

The research illuminated some degree of racism by some migrant workers towards asylum seekers.

none of whom came from Chechnya or any neighbouring country.

The reason for mentioning tensions between different migrant worker nationalities is to stress that during the research, it was fairly obvious that racism and discrimination related to migrant workers in Ireland is an extremely complex issue. Whilst a number of Irish employers and Irish people undoubtedly act in a discriminatory or racially prejudiced way against migrant workers, the research suggests that this issue affects far fewer workers than originally anticipated before the research began, although this is said with a strong caveat: it is extremely difficult to access the experiences of illegal workers and workers who are personally more vulnerable than the norm for whatever reason. It is these workers who are the most difficult to engage with who possibly need the most help; ie those suffering sexual exploitation, those illegally trafficked into the country etc.

In addition, most complaints about discrimination related to discrimination from non-Irish workers. The fact that around 85% of participants stated that they would recommend Ireland as a place to live and work shows a very high level of satisfaction with Ireland, the Irish job market and Irish people in general. However, offering advice on how Trade Unions and Movements such as YCW tackle the problem of for example, Polish versus Lithuanian tensions in Irish society and the Irish workplace is, to say the least, very difficult.

Although the research project didn’t include the needs of refugees and asylum seekers, it should be pointed out that some Irish people were confused as to the difference between migrant workers and foreign nationals who had come to Ireland for non-economic reasons. In addition, the research illuminated some degree of racism by some migrant workers towards asylum seekers. In some cases it appeared that some non-EU migrant workers were perhaps a little jealous of asylum seekers who had gained refugee status and who were therefore granted residency status in Ireland together with the right to work.

Several Lithuanian workers felt that although they had experienced some form of racism in Ireland, the same situation or worse would be experienced by any migrant workers choosing to work in a foreign country.

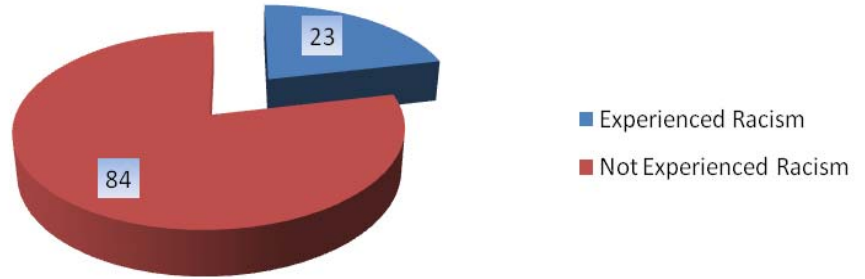
“Racism? No! Definitely not. Irish people are wonderful! I love it here”(Russian man)

***“I’ve only experienced mild racist comments, and it’s always been from older people”
(Lithuanian)***

“Yes, there is racism, and I experience it every day”(Polish worker)

Where there was an experience or perception of racism, in nearly all cases it seemed to relate to an employer. The exception was possibly racism towards black people, where their colour made them an easy target on the street.

Migrant Workers Experiencing or Perceiving Racism (%)



23% of migrant workers experienced racism

Polish Migrant Workers Experiencing or Perceiving Racism Against Them (%)



8% of Poles experienced or perceived racism

Lithuanian Migrant Workers Experiencing or Perceiving Racism Against Them (%)



29% of Lithuanians experienced or perceived racism

www.lietuvis.ie

www.nashagazeta.com

www.multinewsireland.ie

www.vaveeva.com

www.immigrant.ie

www.mrci.ie

www.immigrantcouncil.ie

www.ictu.ie

www.ycw.ie

Migrant Worker Networks

The Dublin based 'Africa Centre was founded in the year 2000 by a group of activists in the African immigrant community who wanted the community to have a voice and promote their active participation in Irish society.'²⁰ Ireland's multicultural newspaper *Metro Éireann*²¹ is published in Dublin each week, and is available nationwide highlighting issues faced by migrant workers throughout the island. *Polish Neighbour* is published in Warsaw but is aimed at Irish people living in Ireland, the editor moving frequently between Poland and Ireland,²² and claiming to be the first English language magazine about Poland and Poles.

The Lithuanian community in Ireland (and Britain) is served by *Lietuvis*, a weekly newspaper set up in 2004 with a circulation of 5000 in Ireland and the same in Britain (www.lietuvis.ie); whilst the Russian community is served by *Nasha Gazeta*, another weekly newspaper aimed at Russian speakers and Russian nationals living in Ireland and Britain (www.nashagazeta.com). At the time of writing, there were rumours that at least one more Lithuanian newspaper was about to be published in Ireland. The African community are served by *The African Voice* newspaper. In addition, a new free newspaper, *Multi News Ireland* has just appeared, providing 'multi-lingual news for foreign people in Ireland' (www.multinewsireland.ie).

www.vaveeva.com is a website styling itself 'the complete survival guide to living and working in Ireland', and there is also www.immigrant.ie, a noticeboard website for migrant workers and others.

The *Migrant Right's Centre* (www.mrci.ie) is a Dublin based drop in centre for migrant workers; although only open 9am-4pm Monday to Thursday, times that would pose a problem for many of the migrant workers who participated in the YCW research. Despite the limited hours, this type of organisation would no doubt be of use to YCW etc. in helping to deepen the understanding of migrant Rights in Ireland.

The *Immigrant Council of Ireland* (www.immigrantcouncil.ie) has published a directory of 47 migrant led groups,; a directory that could be useful for groups such as YCW, the Churches and Trade Unions in signposting migrant workers to specific advice and support.

²⁰ www.africacentre.ie

²¹ www.metroeireann.com

²² *Polish Neighbour*, May 2007

The list shows that the various migrant communities in Ireland have the ability to create and operate extremely effective networks and organisations. It also begs the question ‘why do migrant workers feel the need to set up and join such organisations?’

As mentioned previously, many of the migrant workers spoken to felt that organisations such as trade unions hadn’t been particularly effective in advertising themselves to migrant workers. Similarly with Irish community groups, where many migrant workers felt that they weren’t really welcome, language and cultural differences often acting as a barrier. As a result, migrants themselves set up their own support groups, most of these being done on a voluntary ad hoc basis.

ICTU, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (www.ictu.ie) has a very user friendly (but English Language only) website outlining legislation affecting migrant workers. The only problem with the website was ICTU’s use of the term non-national, a term referred to elsewhere in this research document as being offensive to many foreign nationals; but a very useful website nonetheless.

Whilst the above publications and organisations provide information related to living and working in Ireland, none seem to offer help to migrant workers who are experiencing emotional or spiritual problems. In addition, there seemed to be a demand for general legal advice rather than advice based solely on employment legislation. Advice on family law and laws related to safety when a spouse/partner was being subjected to domestic violence was mentioned by a couple of migrant workers spoken to.

The above is by no means exhaustive, and completely excludes the many unofficial self help groups, some of whom were of great help in the making of this research, showing exceptional generosity of time, resources and personal contacts.

What the above list shows is that the various migrant communities in Ireland have the ability to create and operate extremely effective networks and organisations. It also begs the question ‘why do migrant workers feel the need to set up and join such organisations?’

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When asked what could community groups, trade unions or political parties do to help remove barriers to interaction with migrant workers, a common answer was based on the need for targeted marketing of migrant workers, this being done by dedicated staff or volunteers. It was also stressed that such a recruitment drive would have to be sustained, not just a one off promotion. There was genuine interest in joining political parties, unions etc, but there was a general perception that relevant information was not readily available. The need to

Should political parties, trade unions and community groups attempt to engage with migrant workers in the focused and sustained ways that are being asked for, then migrant workers would undoubtedly become active members.

engendering mutual trust was mentioned as being important, unions, churches, political parties and other groups needing to identify themselves with social problems that directly affect migrant workers, exploitation being mentioned as an obvious example. What was asked for was for unions, community groups and political parties to be more understanding of the needs of migrant workers (and vice versa) and for all to show more positive and willing attitudes towards foreign nationals.

Even though the above findings come from people attending focus groups and completing questionnaires in a very short time frame, the accuracy of opinion is perhaps confirmed by the fact that the Irish government has just announced that new State funding is being made available to encourage political parties and trade unions to recruit ethnic minorities into their ranks.²³ Sporting bodies are also to be included in the plan. Hence, criticisms from this YCW research project related to a lack of commitment from indigenous organisations and groups towards migrant workers isn't just the criticism from just one project, but from government and other researchers too; a report by UCD researchers earlier in 2007 stating the efforts of political parties in Ireland in targeting migrant members was minimal.²⁴

Should political parties, trade unions and community groups attempt to engage with migrant workers in the focused and sustained ways that are being asked for, then migrant workers would undoubtedly become active members; as they have become members of support groups set up by migrant workers themselves. In many cases, these migrant workers groups were initially set up because of the perceived or actual barriers that many migrants faced when looking for some sort of social or support group to join.

²³ Metro Éireann, Vol 8 Issue 48 20-26 September 2007
Metro Éireann, Vol 8 Issue 48 20-26 September 2007

There seems to be a suggestion from this particular focus group that if language classes taught by a trained teacher, and also by members of the church, then the language class would automatically become a tool of intercultural learning and better understanding between the indigenous Irish church goer and migrant workers and vice versa.

A scenario seems to exist where Irish run community groups feel that foreign nationals have no interest in participating, whilst many foreign nationals feel that the same groups have no real interest in foreigners

Multiculturalism & Interculturalism

Over the last few years, the fact that the make up of Irish society has become more multicultural than ever before is quite obvious. Of more importance to this YCW research is interculturalism, or how and if different cultures interact with each other. In a sense, multiculturalism is a somewhat passive change, people from different cultures coming to live and work in Ireland causing a multiplicity of cultures that exist alongside indigenous cultures. Viewed from this perspective, multiculturalism is the visible sign of mass inward migration, indigenous Irish people becoming a part of this new multicultural society in a passive way, the change happening without the need for the indigenous population to encourage such change. Instead, the change is encouraged through societal factors such as EU membership, strong economic growth etc.

Groups such as YCW are considering offering English language classes to migrant workers. Several participants of the research said that this was a great idea, but they also queried the effectiveness of this type of class in creating the level of proficiency needed to gain high paid professional type work.

“It sounds like a great idea, but just how much can one learn in let’s say, eight two hour evening class sessions? The meaning behind it is good, but there’s no way that that type of class will result in someone speaking relatively fluently. People learn through interaction with Irish people on the street, at work, in the shops, wherever.” (Polish Worker)

“It seems obvious to me that if someone wants to get a good job in Ireland, then they need to be able to speak English. Surely people thinking of coming here to work should become proficient in the language before they arrive, not after?” (Sikh Worker)

However, during one focus group discussion, participants were asked what they would like the Church to offer them, and language classes featured quite highly. In this particular group, there is a good possibility that the request for the Church to offer language classes was based not only on the need to improve language skills, but on the social and cultural interaction that such classes could create between migrant workers and Irish people. In many ways this mirrors some of the European Union funded programmes running in the border counties where Catholics and Protestants are encouraged to

Some of the more evangelical churches seem to be ahead of the rest in this regard, using Bible study classes as a way of teaching the English language to migrant workers

participate together on courses such as Internet & Email, with reconciliation between the two groups being formed unwittingly due to their joint participation in the training programme²⁵. There seems to be a suggestion from this particular focus group that if language classes taught by a trained teacher, and also by members of the church, then the language class would automatically become a tool of intercultural learning and better understanding between the indigenous Irish church goer and migrant workers and vice versa. Some of the more evangelical churches seem to be ahead of the rest in this regard, using Bible study classes as a way of teaching the English language to migrant workers; a non-denominational group of Christians offering a joint Bible Study & Language class in Co Leitrim to give just one example²⁶. This particular class is run in a local Family Resource Centre rather than in a church.

Regarding community groups, there seems to be genuine attempts by community groups to recruit foreign nationals. At an opportunistic focus group of twenty Irish community group representatives, the claim was made by all of those present that foreign workers had no interest in participating, the 'proof' being that when events were advertised to migrant workers none would attend.

At another focus group meeting in a similar area, migrant workers said that community groups in Ireland were run for the benefit of Irish people, and that foreign nationals were not really wanted. Some foreign nationals said that they felt that any invitation would be more tokenistic than meaningful. As a result, a scenario seems to exist where Irish run community groups feel that foreign nationals have no interest in participating, whilst many foreign nationals feel that the same groups have no real interest in foreigners.

For details of EU Peace funded training programmes, see

www.seupb.org

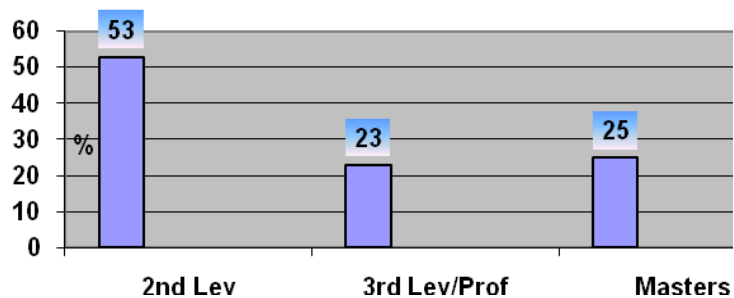
²⁶ *Leitrim Observer*, 5th October 2007

90% of participants said that a good knowledge of the English language was the most important thing when seeking work in Ireland

Academic Qualifications

90% of participants said that a good knowledge of the English language was the most important thing when seeking work in Ireland, although it was pointed out that this was less important when seeking employment in places such as meat processing plants where there was less need for good written and spoken English. The fact that Ireland is a predominantly English speaking country²⁷ quoted by many Polish migrants as a major reason for coming to Ireland in the first place, the country giving migrant workers an opportunity of good wages, as well as an opportunity to learn or to improve on their English. Interestingly, Fermanagh College which attracts students from both sides of the border, runs basic Polish language courses for Northern Irish and Irish employers, the aim being to encourage employers to offer a friendly first welcome to the many Polish migrant workers in Fermanagh and surrounding counties north and south of the border. This initiative of Fermanagh College (now South West College after the merger of Fermanagh, Omagh and Dungannon colleges)

Education



3rd level and Masters level can be confusing as the degree courses of many continental EU universities last 4 years as opposed to the usual 3 years in Ireland. The nearest Irish equivalent to these 4 year degrees is a Masters Degree. ‘School qualifications’ was a term used by many participants that includes university education.

²⁷ Throughout the research, several people commented on their surprise that the Irish language isn’t spoken more widely. Nobody suggested that they thought Irish would be the main language used in Ireland, but they did find it surprising that Ireland wasn’t as bi-lingual as many continental European countries are. In addition, some parents said how proud they were that their children could speak better Irish than many of the Irish children.

Because of the different types of academic qualifications available throughout the EU and elsewhere, it proved hard to determine the exact nature of qualifications.

Although the above would appear to suggest that Ireland doesn't offer employment opportunities to overseas graduates as might be hoped, it should be borne in mind that many of the migrant graduates spoken to lacked a proficiency and fluency of the English language that such jobs would demand.

During one of the focus group meetings, some participants stated that they knew people who refused to list all of their academic qualifications when applying for work. The main reason for this was a fear that local managers of well known companies would be less inclined to employ workers who they felt could know more about the job than themselves.

Because of the different types of academic qualifications available throughout the EU and elsewhere, it proved hard to determine the exact nature of qualifications. However, it would appear that just over a third of the migrant workers who completed the questionnaire have a university degree, with just over half of these being at the equivalent of an Irish Master's Degree. Two thirds of participants only had second level type qualifications, or short term employment related qualifications such as *Safe Pass*. Despite the fact that just over a third were qualified at third level or above, only 7% were employed in what would be regarded as professional type employment, although most of these were employed in banking and construction and to be receiving high salaries, although as one financial analyst said, "high yes, but not as high as my Irish colleagues."

Although the above would appear to suggest that Ireland doesn't offer employment opportunities to overseas graduates as might be hoped, it should be borne in mind that many of the migrant graduates spoken to lacked a proficiency and fluency of the English language that such jobs would demand. However, in certain industries, especially in large retail stores, there was a perception amongst those spoken to that experienced migrant workers with a good knowledge of English and appropriate qualifications were being overlooked in favour of Irish staff; experience and qualifications gained abroad having little currency in the Irish workplace.

The time taken for migrant workers to find their first job in Ireland was short, the majority finding employment in less than a month of first trying.

There was concern that the availability of easy to find work was lessening, and that future migrants into Ireland needed to be aware of this perceived change.

Employment

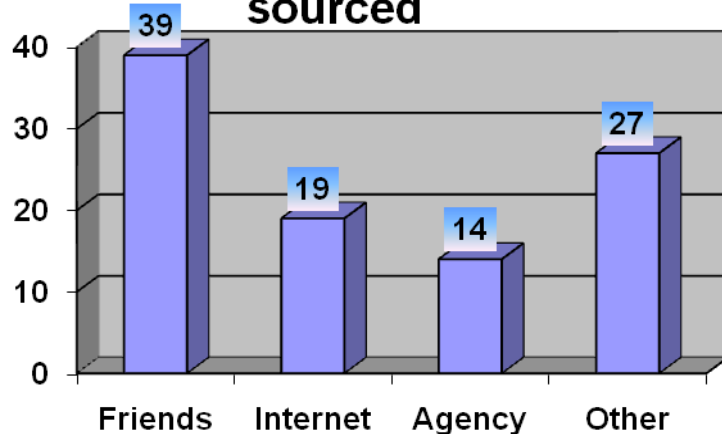
The time taken for migrant workers to find their first job in Ireland was short, the majority finding employment in less than a month of first trying. As far as most Irish people are concerned, the main face to face contact with migrant workers comes via shops, cafés and other places where foreign workers are interacting directly with Irish customers. However, migrant workers are employed throughout Irish industry, and in all employment types, from those needing little in the way of qualifications or proficiency in the English language to well paid professional positions. Dublin's financial market was attractive for those with relevant experience, qualifications and language skills, as were professional opportunities within the health service. In the construction trade employment covered all areas of expertise from labourers to architects, with one group of Polish architects out-sourcing design work to Warsaw based architects via the internet.

The speed with which many found employment was also one of the main reasons migrant workers had for recommending Ireland as a place for other migrant workers to come to; 46% finding employment within 2 weeks of looking. However, there was concern that the availability of easy to find work was lessening, and that future migrants into Ireland needed to be aware of this perceived change. Eight percent of participants took longer than 3 months to source employment. For those seeking any type of work, opportunities were readily available in all of the areas where the research took place. In some cases, such was the need for workers that Irish employers were either advertising abroad for staff or even sending Irish staff to other EU countries to recruit directly.

The majority of those questioned found out about employment opportunities through friends or family in Ireland. Because of the high number of Poles in Ireland, there is a greater chance of Polish people getting jobs through Polish contacts than nationals of other countries; the larger Polish population creating a greater networking opportunity for Polish workers.

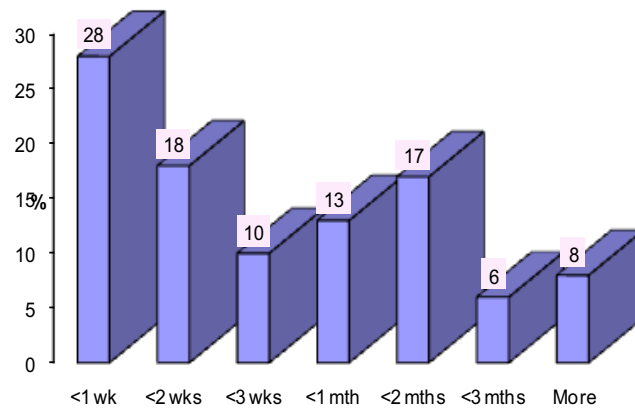
Nearly 40% sourced employment through friends & family. 46% found employment in under two weeks; figures that show the importance of step-migration into Ireland.

How employment was sourced



Figures in %. 'Other' includes advertisements in shops, cafe bars & newspapers, as well as cold calling

Time Taken to Source Employment



% of those responding

The report recommends that the Catholic Church engages in research with the Polish run Catholic church in Dublin to determine how it has attracted so many people, and to share the learning with parishes throughout Ireland.

This research report recommends that Catholic Church looks into the possibility of encouraging simple social activities immediately after Mass. The creation of coffee clubs for example, has the potential to offer peer support for those needing emotional, employment or legal advice from people they feel they can trust, at a time when they can easily access such support.

Conclusions

Regarding religious practice, the Catholic Church in Ireland should be proud of the success of the Polish Chaplaincy in Dublin; taking advantage of the experiences of the clergy and laity running the church in Dublin 8. So many worshippers stressed the importance of social activities after Mass that such activities must surely be an attraction to encourage greater participation within the Irish Catholic Church by various nationalities as well as by indigenous Irish people.

However, the reasons for the success of the Polish church in Dublin need to be looked into by the Catholic Church in Ireland: is the Polish church's success in Dublin due to the fact that traditional Catholic parishes in Ireland are failing to meet the needs of Polish and other migrant workers? This report recommends that the Catholic Church engages in research with the Polish run Catholic church in Dublin to determine how it has attracted so many people, and to share the learning with parishes throughout Ireland. In addition, why was there a sense that (the Polish catholic church excepted) Pentecostal & Methodist churches, as well as mosques, had far better developed support networks aimed at migrant workers than the Catholic Church has?

This research report recommends that Catholic Church looks into the possibility of encouraging simple social activities immediately after Mass. The creation of coffee clubs for example, has the potential to offer peer support for those needing emotional, employment or legal advice from people they feel they can trust, at a time when they can easily access such support. Such clubs would also encourage greater intercultural engagement between Catholics of any nationality living in Ireland. Bearing in mind the need to ensure that the already overloaded workload of the clergy isn't increased even more, laity could be encouraged to market, operate and support such sessions. If both Irish and non Irish people were involved in the running of such extra-church secular activities, a natural form of intercultural engagement could take place between indigenous and non-indigenous Irish residents, thus helping to build greater harmony and cooperation between all Catholics in Ireland whatever their nationality. Similarly within the Protestant churches, although some participants have pointed out that many protestant churches already run various types of 'secular' extra-church activities.

In theory, trade union membership would seem to provide obvious protection and information to migrant workers, yet of those participants taking part in this research, less than 11% stated that they were members of a trade union. For some reason, half of the Lithuanians living in one town who

A recommendation would be that trade union literature or other forms of representation are made readily available to migrant workers (in Polish run shops for example), and that local trade union representatives make themselves known to migrant workers wherever they can.

participated in the research felt that their employer could stop them from joining a union. The Lithuanians living in this town worked for a variety of employers. In addition, a very high percentage of other eastern Europeans²⁸ living in the same rural town didn't know whether or not an employer could stop them from joining a union. At a focus group meeting in Dublin, there was a feeling that the trade unions weren't doing enough to proactively recruit migrant workers, a claim being made that the unions were very open to migrant worker recruitment whenever the migrant approached the union; but that unless this happened, then the unions themselves didn't do enough to proactively attempt to engage with migrant workers. At a focus group in Carrick on Shannon, those present, knew absolutely nothing about trade unions in Ireland.

As a result, a recommendation would be that trade union literature or other forms of representation are made readily available to migrant workers (in Polish run shops for example), and that local trade union representatives make themselves known to migrant workers wherever they can. In addition, it would be worthwhile if the unions could somehow approach newly arrived migrant workers in their native language. This would also apply to websites such as that of ICTU, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, where a potentially very user friendly information section aimed at foreign nationals becomes rather less user friendly as it is only available in English; a major barrier for those vulnerable migrant workers who don't speak English.

The urgency for trade unions to better engage with migrant workers, especially those migrant workers who may for a number of reasons be more vulnerable to exploitation than most, seems to be being addressed by the Irish Government who have recently announced funding for trade unions and other bodies to help make the recruitment of migrant workers into these organisations far more effective²⁹.

This report also highlights a way in which an employer can appear to be paying staff at the legal minimum wage or above whilst in fact paying far less than the minimum wage. Those making the allegation claim that they have never been approached by a trade union official, this despite the fact that they were working for a long established Irish business, some working on a face to face basis with Irish customers. The researchers would encourage the Irish trade union movement to attempt to access those migrant workers who appear to be

²⁸ Not Polish people, who refer to themselves more as central Europeans, not eastern Europeans.
Metro Éireann, Vol 8 Issue 48 20-26th September 2007

The researchers would encourage the Irish trade union movement to attempt to access those migrant workers who appear to be difficult to access by developing a recruitment process that operates on a 24/7 type basis in places where migrant workers are known to socialise

It would be effective if trade unions developed their own 'points of access' to various migrant worker communities, the advertising of trade union membership and services being done through trusted fluent speakers of the language(s) used by the target group(s)

difficult to access by developing a recruitment process that operates on a 24/7 type basis in places where migrant workers are known to socialise. In addition, better use could be made of the growing number of migrant worker focused newspapers in Ireland; *Metro Éireann* probably being the best known. Similarly, placing advertisements in foreign owned shops catering for migrant workers would be a simple way of attempting to engage with workers in specific geographic locations.

Similarly, it would be effective if trade unions developed their own 'points of access' to various migrant worker communities, the advertising of trade union membership and services being done through trusted fluent speakers of the language(s) used by the target group(s). Trade union fluency in Polish, Lithuanian, Latvian, Russian, Chinese & French (for some Africans) is almost essential should the Irish trade union movement be looking to include vulnerable workers from these countries amongst its membership, as is the ability to recruit informally at times traditionally deemed to be unsociable.

Although the researchers were aware that SIPTU and the Polish union Solidarity were working together in Ireland, a type of partnership that will be of benefit to Polish migrant workers, awareness of this arrangement seemed to be low within the Polish community who participated in this research. In general, Polish people seemed to perceive few difficulties with their employers. However, although virtually all of the Polish workers realised what the minimum wage was, nearly two thirds failed to realise how much paid holiday leave they were entitled to. Couple this to the fact that the vast majority of migrant workers were finding out about employment rights via family and friends and the Internet rather than through official or union sources, and it would appear that trade unions should be far more availed of by migrant workers than they are at present.

In addition, some participants felt that trade Unions should take more proactive measures to ensure that employers understand their rights in regards to stopping subtle and unthinking types of racism in the workplace. Related to this is a need to address the perception, true or false, that even though migrant workers are being paid at perfectly legal rates, Irish workers doing exactly the same job in the same company are often paid more.

It should perhaps be stressed to trade unions and employers that most of those who complained about racism claimed that racism was mainly met in the workplace.

The need for ‘drop in’ type centres offering a wide range of advice to migrant workers was a topic that was fairly core to many of those who engaged in the research

Language classes could be used as a way of encouraging migrant workers to engage with organisations such as YCW, trade unions etc.

The need for ‘drop in’ type centres offering a wide range of advice to migrant workers was a topic that was fairly core to many of those who engaged in the research. Such centres would need to be available in the evenings and at weekends, thus opening up access to the many migrant workers who are working Monday to Friday 9-5 type hours. Such centres need to be able to cope with emotional as well as legal needs. The centres would also need to be seen to be non-State controlled; such is the high level of suspicion of various types of government control by many migrant workers. Access to free Internet use, language classes, coffee etc would be a way of building trust between such centres and migrant workers; creating an ambiance that makes it obvious that the drop-in centre is not part of a State run organisation.

Language classes were asked for by many migrant workers, but with the strong caveat that such classes may not meet the expectations of learners, proficiency in English being a long term goal and not one that cannot be achieved through classes alone. There were also suggestions that such classes should be run by educational bodies such as the VECs or specialist language colleges.

However, language classes could be used as a way of encouraging migrant workers to engage with organisations such as YCW, trade unions etc. For example, specialised classes aimed at informing workers who speak only a little English of their employment rights could allow trade unions to build better communications with migrant workers whilst at the same time building language skills. Similarly with YCW, a course that somehow links YCW’s Christian message with language learning. Advertising of such classes should be done through the use of multi-lingual leaflets and newspapers such as *Metro Éireann* or *The African Voice*; and in places where migrant workers are known to frequent.

There seemed to be a will from Irish run community groups to encourage foreign nationals to engage in these types of groups, but there were claims that despite trying, foreign nationals showed little if any interest in joining Irish run groups. At the same time, there was perception from foreign nationals that Irish run community groups had shown little interest in engaging with non-Irish people. The recommendation here would be similar to that given to the trade unions: attempt to recruit using foreign nationals as recruiting agents; advertise in places where foreign nationals are known to frequent; encourage participation by providing services that are of interest to both Irish and foreign nationals.

The fact that many Irish run organisations find it difficult to engage with migrant workers and vice versa, suggests a need for some type of training in inter-culturalism; the focus of the training being on how to better engage with foreign nationals. The main objective of the training would be to help groups increase the number of migrant workers and other foreign nationals participating. A suggestion from this research is for a group such as YCW to seek funding from the Department of Integration or the Department of Education to provide this type of training to trade unions and community groups.

The potential plight of adolescent children of non EU parents who were encouraged to apply for Irish work permits and who now find it increasingly difficult or impossible to renew their permits needs to be addressed. Many of these children have Irish accents, speak fluent English as well as Irish, and relish Irish culture and sport, being educated in Irish schools. Yet these children, many of whom see themselves as being Irish, are not legally allowed to reside in the State through no fault of their own. Parents are in a quandary of not knowing whether or not to return to the country of their birth, or staying in Ireland illegally because their children see themselves as being Irish, and have been brought up as Irish, having little affinity with the home country of their parents. As these children are not entitled to a PPS number, the only way in which these children can stay in Ireland when they leave school is to join the illegal workforce. Unlike their classmates, they cannot avail of the grants or welfare allowances that many Irish school leavers can. Hence the potential for an illegal 'Irish' workforce who are almost denied access to third level education in Ireland. Because of the contentious nature of illegal workers, the plight of these 'illegal' children of such workers needs to be taken up by powerful bodies such as the Churches, or the EU.

Finally, although access to most migrant workers proved to be relatively easy due to the 24/7 nature of recruitment, there is a concern that the more vulnerable migrant workers; those who for whatever reason are unregistered with the State, are excluded from this type of research as their precarious legal status discourages them from interacting with anyone who isn't known and trusted by them.. How to access those working long hours in jobs where they have no contact with the public needs long term planning. How to access workers who have been illegally trafficked into the country poses a similar but perhaps more dangerous problem. Although the research provides a fairly rosy picture of migrant working life in Ireland, the plight of illegal workers is of particular concern, but a concern based on anecdotal evidence of just a handful of people due to the difficulty in approaching and

gaining the trust of such people. Research on how best to encourage the voice of these people is urgently needed, as is the need to highlight the potential issues through the media.