

## High demand, cheap supply: Irish immigration policies and the role of the state (1992–2007)

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One factor which contributed to Ireland's economic growth during the 'Celtic Tiger' era was access to a cheap flexible labour supply. The Irish state played a central role in facilitating and shaping this labour supply, through its formulation of immigration policies and its role in influencing labour market structure, thereby influencing the nature of the workers who entered the Irish labour market. Placing the analysis of Irish immigration policy within the unfolding global systems of flows of people and capital prevents the classification of Ireland, or any country, as a unique experience. Economically driven moves by the Irish state, specifically in terms of labour supply, are evident in the recruitment drives supported through the Celtic Tiger and with the expansion of the European Union in 2004. This paper outlines how Ireland's immigration policy during the Celtic Tiger shaped the labour market by determining which workers did what jobs. It also discusses the nature of the Irish state and how this contributes to immigration policy outcomes.

**Keywords:** Ireland's immigration policies; nature of state; transnationalisation of labour; labour supply; nature of work

### Background

Much of the research on migrant workers and immigration can be loosely grouped into two disciplinary categories; traditional sociologists and economists tend to look at patterns in abstraction from the context (Borjas 1994, Castles 2007), while the second much smaller group of geographers, some sociologists and anthropologists have addressed spatial patterns (Schmitter Heisler 2000, Ellis 2006, McDowell *et al.* 2007, Samers 2008). Key research from geographers has addressed patterns of spatial distribution of recent immigration emphasising the importance of these patterns globally as well as chronologically (Pratt 1999, Sassen 2002, 2003, Samers 2008, Wills *et al.* 2010):

Exploring the ways in which local places have been reshaped through globalised flows of immigrants, the ways in which identities have been reconfigured within these flows and the ways in which these follow on from globalised flows of emigrants from previous periods are all profoundly geographic questions. (MacÉnirí and White 2008, p. 162)

Despite the recent nature of rapid immigration and the even more recent return to net emigration, Ireland is part of wider global trends and government policies must account for this phenomenon. Growing labour shortages in many sectors of the economy from the mid-1990s were addressed when immigration became a source for labour. In order to

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understand the processes associated with immigrant supply and demand, Ireland must be placed within the unfolding global systems of flows of people and capital (Sassen 1998, 2002, Samers 2008, 2010). This inherently geographical perspective on migration research allows all countries including Ireland to be placed within these global systems rather than any one being interpreted as exceptional or disconnected (Sassen 2003, Herod 2011).

The economic period of immense growth termed ‘The Celtic Tiger’ (1995–2006) was a time of high net immigration. The labour market expanded rapidly, offering jobs in all sectors and for all skill levels. A wide range of literature has addressed various aspects and dimensions of immigration and work during this period (Barrett *et al.* 2002, Feldman *et al.* 2008, Gilmartin 2008, 2011, MacÉinrí and White 2008, Barrett 2009, Fahey and Fanning 2010). While acknowledging this extensive work, the current article aims to address, from a geographical perspective, what is arguably a gap in the literature on the role of the Irish state in facilitating and determining the nature of jobs for immigrants and the origins of these immigrants. It begins by outlining the economic context leading to increased immigration; this is followed by a discussion of the nature of the Irish state and its specific role in terms of processes of immigration and the employment of immigrants.

### **Economic context**

Ireland joined the European Union (EU) in 1973 as the ‘Sick man of Europe’ (Nolan *et al.* 2000), with structural funds from the EU directed into improving the infrastructure of the nation. Economic growth linked to European Economic Community investment led to an increase in net in-migration during the 1970s. Many of the migrants were returnees who had emigrated in the 1950s, 1960s and 1980s (MacÉinrí and White 2008). There was once again a return to economic recession and high net out-migration in the 1980s (King and Shuttleworth 1995). From the early 1990s factors at the global, European and national levels had a direct impact on the birth of the ‘Celtic Tiger’.

In the late 1980s the Irish Government entered into a social partnership form of government, driven by the problems that the state finances were in, and the need to draw the trade unions into agreements with the government (Roche 2007). The Programme for National Recovery, launched in October 1987, was the culmination of almost a year of talks between the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and the then Fianna Fáil government. It was a three-year deal through which the trade union movement committed to industrial peace in return for pay increases, tax reform and government action on unemployment. Social partnership subsequently led to the Programme for Economic and Social Progress (1991–1993) and the Programme for Competitiveness and Work (1993–1996), which have been credited with being driving forces behind economic growth. Some would argue (Allen 2003) that the successive deals under both brought the ICTU closer to the government, and that the governance model resulting from the social partnerships was essentially a tool of the policies of top-down state-led approach to growth (Roche 2007). The stable labour relations resulting from social partnership did, however, allow for a competitive edge in attracting foreign direct investment (FDI; Murphy *et al.* 2008). In addition, the EU policy focus was on high growth of labour productivity, and these policies were designed to encourage export- and FDI-oriented inflows in strategic directions into high-tech sectors such as information technology (IT) and pharmaceuticals. The ability of policy-makers to create a suitable climate for FDIs increased as the EU ‘embraced’ free market ideology (Nolan *et al.* 2000). The Irish state

had adopted a liberal approach to the regulation of the market and an emphasis on FDI, thus facilitating Ireland's integration into the rapidly evolving neoliberal world economy.

Growth was driven by an increased emphasis on tertiary industries through FDI (Nolan *et al.* 2000), specifically the high-tech and pharmaceutical sectors (van Eggeraet 2010). These tertiary sector policies were urban-based initiatives, with the demand for workers in the urban areas' labour market growing faster and disproportionately to rural areas. The services sector also began to grow and accounted for 73% of the economy in 2006 (CSO 2000, 2010).

With economic growth came labour shortages, which were particularly evident initially in the IT and pharmaceutical sectors (Breathnach 1998), linked to FDI. As the market continued to grow, the services sector expanded rapidly and in particular those businesses providing various forms of professional support to the growing number of multinationals located in Ireland. A good example of this market expansion can be seen in the hospitality sector and business services providers, sectors which are considered to be major indicators of growth as an economy develops (Cholewinski 2005, Cangiano 2008). Ireland was moving from a more traditional-, rural- and agricultural-based society to one which was increasingly dominated by the service sector. By 2006, agriculture accounted for 5% of the national economy, whereas the service sector accounted for 73%.

By the end of 1996, some 8000 people working in Ireland had been born outside the country (0.22% of the total population). This does not take into account returned Irish workers who emigrated in the recession of the 1980s or those defined as American-Irish, British-Irish or Australian-Irish. Many of the returnees came back under government recruitment campaigns such as the 'Jobs Ireland Campaign'. The 2006 Census recorded the number of non-Irish-born workers employed in Ireland at the height of net immigration at 401,460 or 12.3% of the population. With the recent economic downturn (since early 2008), immigration has started to fall from its 2006 level, but the proportion of non-Irish nationals working in Ireland still remains high. The Quarterly National Household Survey for October to December 2012 suggested that the total number of non-Irish nationals working in Ireland was 472,900 or 13.14% of the population. With much focus on emigration, the continued role of immigration and the reality of a large foreign-born component of the labour market has tended to be neglected. From 2002 to 2012, over 860,000 people moved to Ireland, while over 550,000 people left Ireland. The net figure for in-migration is thus an average of around 28,400 more people moving to than leaving Ireland on an annual basis (Gilmartin 2011).

### **Ireland's political and economic policies as drivers of economic growth**

The 'extraordinary malleable character of neoliberal statecraft' (Brenner and Theodore 2002, p. 345) means that new geographies of state regulation are emerging, all of which involve reorganisation rather than any rolling back of the state. States therefore depart from the utopian template provided by the ideal free market theory (Harvey 2005). The data in this paper highlight the direct role of the Irish state in relation to immigration and labour market policy. Discussion in this section will centre on the nature of the Irish state and compare this with other states.

### ***Ireland as an open global economy***

Ireland's political and economic policies are informed by its position as an open global economy and its place in the international context. Ireland's success was dependent on

achieving competitiveness in internationally traded sectors (Grimes and White 2005). The strategy of economic development pursued in Ireland since the 1960s has involved the opening up of the goods and capital markets as part of the long-term process of EU integration. However, there is a great deal more to Ireland's success than liberalisation of markets. The state has been deeply implicated in the liberalisation of the markets, managing both economic development and the welfare state. Ireland's economic development is a combination of 'the most dramatic changes have taken place under the guidance of neo-corporatist arrangements' (Nolan *et al.* 2000, p. 2), with the added role of the Irish state in terms of two important external forces – FDI and the EU.

Bradley (2000, p. 11) argues that 'Ireland is a case study of the effects on a small developing host economy of export-orientated FDI'. FDI into Ireland went into the computer, instrument engineering, pharmaceutical and chemical sectors. Today, 'economic activity is what defines the landscape on which all other institutions, including political institutions, must operate' (Ohmae 1995, p. 129). So Ireland's real challenge as a small economy was to increase the potential value of what its citizens could add to the global economy. The skills and capacities of the Irish labour force facilitated the increased demand in providing them with the required workers (MacÉinrí and White 2008).

Ireland was one of only three EU countries, along with the UK and Sweden, to allow free movement of workers from the EU accession countries of 2004. It was not until 2010 that free labour market movement was extended by all existing EU countries to the 10 new countries which had joined the EU in 2004. Quotas initially filled by asylum seekers and work permit holders were now easier to fill from within the EU. Initially, asylum seekers were given free movement in Ireland in the labour market but from 1999 laws changed and they are now held in hostels awaiting decisions on their status (Fanning *et al.* 2000, Lentin 2007). The number of work permits issued, and their nature, has also become more restricted since 2004.

### ***The state's structural approach to immigration***

Any contemporary analysis of the state's role in immigration policy needs to come from an examination of organised interests of the various actors in the labour market (Hollifield 2004). This microeconomic framework sees the state as being led by powerful controllers of labour and capital. Capital is a key player in the control of labour, and the 'side' that the neoliberal state will take between business and labour (Harvey 2005).

Two elements are key in any discussion of the role of the state and immigration policy in Ireland during the Celtic Tiger: the first centres around social partnership, mentioned earlier, but with a specific emphasis on immigration and the second on recruitment. The social partnership model was created in the late 1980s before the birth of the Celtic Tiger and prior to major shifts in the Irish labour market. Hence, immigration fell outside the scope of social partnership, and meant that the state took the lead in the organisation of labour migration. Evidence would suggest that the main trade unions in Ireland are ambivalent to immigrant labour (Krings 2009), with their first priority being the public sector, given that, of the 34% of Irish employees who are union members, 83% work within the public sector (D'Art and Turner 2011). Data presented in Table 2 indicate that the public sector plays a very small role in the employment of non-nationals.

The Irish state's involvement in determining immigration and its role in the local labour market in Ireland can be seen in the state's role in recruitment. The recruitment drives and the direct state involvement in these drives are outlined later.

### State policies and migrant workers

Since 1990, Ireland has experienced various waves of immigration, the nature and demographic features of which are outlined in [Table 1](#). It is important to note the nature of each wave of immigration with initial government-led recruitment campaigns and asylum seekers being the key players from 1990 to 2002. The next chronological step was the work permit scheme (WPS) dimension of recruitment, until EU expansion and accession of 10 countries (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovak Republic and Slovenia) in 2004. Although these time frames are broad, their connection with the economic processes at the time are directly relevant to the paper.

People entering Ireland to join the labour force came through the WPSs, the Green Card scheme and through full labour market access for the 2004 EU accession countries. In addition, the 'Jobs Ireland' campaign introduced in 1997 aimed to encourage Irish emigrants to return home and was financed through government grants. The jobs that the campaign focused on were primarily in high-skilled sectors including IT and finance, sectors with large labour shortages. This campaign continued until 2002 when it was decided it had 'successfully achieved its objectives' (O'Byrne quoted in Fanning 2007). Meanwhile, to fill growing labour shortages, a WPS, modelled on that of major post-Second World War industrial countries such as France and Germany, was introduced in 1999; the number of such permits issued jumped 700% between 1999 and 2003 (Ruhs 2005, p. 15). Workers were dependent on the employer, as was their freedom of movement. Although not specifically an official source of labour, initial asylum seekers who arrived in the early 1990s (see [Table 1](#) for details) were allowed to work. However, as other sources of labour became available this changed dramatically and asylum seekers were denied the right to work, as discussed earlier.

In 2004, the Irish Government chose to allow full access to the labour market for workers of the new EU accession countries. It was anticipated that this new flow of labour would fill the gaps in the labour market, and was a policy not applied to the 2007 accession countries of Bulgaria and Romania. Hence, rather than having a more liberated and enlightened position, the Irish state's approach to immigration policy appears to illustrate a more interventionist approach to work migration (Ruhs 2005). Indeed, the approach that the state has taken with regard to economic development and labour market policies can be argued to reflect developmental states such as the Asian Tigers (Ó Riain 2000, O'Sullivan 2000, Brenitz 2007). These states:

stake out a place for themselves within the institutions of embedded liberalism by aggressively mobilizing society to compete in international markets, while retaining a high degree of ongoing coordination of market strategy through state-society ties. (Ó Riain 2000, p. 196)

Placing Ireland within the context of global immigration trends, its recent history as a receiving country makes it comparable to the Asian Tigers or to Israel (Ó Riain 2000). However, its European geographical location and economic ties also allow similarities to be drawn with southern Europe (Peixoto 2002, Triandafyllidou 2003, Barbieri and Scherer 2009). Spain, Portugal and Italy had traditionally been sending countries, but respective economic booms led to an increase in inward migration. Unlike the traditional receiving countries such as the UK, France and the USA, immigration policy in these southern European states was not a priority until economic expansion and hence the link with the labour market (Peixoto 2002). In the following section, processes in the Ireland's labour market are linked to state immigration policy.

Table 1. 'Waves' of immigration to Ireland 1990–2006.

Country or region	Start of the 'wave'	'Nature' of immigration – who and why?	Legalities of group's immigration	Main industries/occupations
Irish returnees	1990s–1998s large number. Smaller number 1999–2001 when recruitment campaign <sup>a</sup> ended	Young graduates who had left in 1980s and whose skills the government saw as useful	None as they still possessed Irish citizenship	IT and financial sectors. The aim was to build up the knowledge economy
UK	No clear start date. Immigration connected to heritage and strong historical ties	Large number of retired people. Over 50% live in rural areas, particularly in Co. Cork and Kerry	No restrictions due to EU and also historical connection with Ireland	Almost identical distribution across industries and occupations to Irish
EU-15 (Members of the EU prior to May 2004)	A large number after 2001, however, immigration started in earnest at the beginning of the Celtic Tiger	Aged 20–40, third-level graduates, equal male and female and live in urban areas (particularly Dublin and Cork). Exception is Germans: 40% live in rural areas	No issues due to EU original 15	Mainly in business industry as employee with the majority being law, business and humanities graduates
USA	USA nationals, have a similar chronology to EU-15 members	Government recruitment campaigns. 30% lives in rural areas	US citizens must acquire work permits through their employer	Business, financial. Manufacturing and health – socio-economic group is professional/managers
Asylum seekers	Bosnia (1992) Kosovo (1999) Somalia (2002) Sudan (Darfur –2005)	About 1300 Bosnians arrived in 1992; most have remained splitting time between Ireland and Bosnia. 1000 Kosovars in 1999 but most returned following peace agreements in 2001. Somalis number around 1000 and mainly reside in Dublin. Sudanese from Darfur also reside mainly in Dublin and number about 2000	Asylum seekers may be granted refugee status or eventually citizenship. There are a large number of Sudanese doctors in Ireland who have legal status – doctors number at 3000	Housed in Cherry Orchard Reception Centre and other reception centres. Eventually housed in private housing, funded by the State. Doctors on highly skilled work permits  Initially they do not have the right to work, but once they have refugee status or citizenship they can apply for jobs. There were 18,000 new asylum seeker applications in 2002 and 2003  Their numbers are small, but many are engaged in entrepreneurship and live and work in close proximity to each other. Sudanese doctors mainly in rural or smaller town areas

Table 1 (Continued)

Country or region	Start of the 'wave'	'Nature' of immigration – who and why?	Legalities of group's immigration	Main industries/occupations
Nigerian, South African and other Southern African nations	Different reasons for coming to Ireland, but most began coming in 1999. There has been a steady flow since then with the Mauritians being the most recent group. Many of the initial flows applied for asylum, with a large proportion gaining citizenship	Socio-economic figures illustrate that there are distinct groups of migrants from sub-Saharan African countries. The initial groups were not only asylum seekers, but also many labour migrants. There are more female than male African migrants	Some on work permits if employed in health or business industries. Asylum seekers granted refugee status and many of them also granted citizenship (through children born in Ireland)	The largest areas of industry are health and retail, with a large percentage in manufacturing. The socio-economic status is highly concentrated in the semi-skilled
Arab states and Turkey	No specific 'start' to the immigration of nationals from the Arab world; many came in the late 1990s. The Turkish Irish Educational and Cultural Society claim 2000 (including Irish-born). Many Turks came in the early 2000s	Families coming for job opportunities	Work permits for the majority. A small number of Kurds living in Turkey claim asylum status	The majority of Arab nationals are employed in the health sector. Turkish workers were mainly employed in the construction industry. Highly covered case of the exploitation of Gama workers in 2004
China	Chinese began coming to Ireland in 1997. This increased rapidly from early 2000 to around 12,000 in 2006	The majority of Chinese in Ireland came as students; either to English language schools or technology or computer colleges	As students they can work 20 hours a week. Many gained the right to remain through the birth of a child	The majority of the Chinese work in the hotel and restaurant industry. In recent years many have begun to engage in small businesses
Philippines	The recruitment of nurses began in the late 1990s. There were around 500 nurses in 1999, but this has increased to over 11,000	Filipinos come on work permits and the majority have a primary degree	Work permits mean that that the worker is tied to their employer	Almost all Filipinos work in either the health or the manufacturing industry, with 60% working in the health sector as nurses

Table 1 (*Continued*)

Country or region	Start of the 'wave'	'Nature' of immigration – who and why?	Legalities of group's immigration	Main industries/occupations
South Asia	Pakistani doctors began coming in the early 1990s, while Indian nurses and IT professionals arrived post-2002. Bangladeshis are a more recent arrival from post-2004	Pakistani and Indian nationals are primarily skilled qualified professionals. Bangladeshis come to Ireland on student visas	Highly skilled workers acquire work visas or the introduction of the Green Card scheme in 2005. Bangladeshis are legally permitted to work 20 hours a week	Pakistani and Indian nationals are predominantly in the health industry Bangladeshis are in the hotel and restaurant industry
Brazil	Brazilians arrived in Ireland in large groups in 1999 to work in the meat packing factories in County Wexford. Others have followed in larger number since 2002	The Brazilians are mainly young single people or couples	Work permits were provided for the actively recruited factory workers, and others followed through contacts	A third of all Brazilians initially worked in the meat packing factory in Gort; although this is now closed a large community has remained there and work in the local area. Other Brazilians work in the food and drink processing sector mainly in the Dublin area
Poland, Lithuania and Latvia	Large numbers of eastern Europeans began coming to Ireland from 2002, but it was with the May 2004 expansion of the EU when the largest number arrived in Ireland	Most are young and are either manual or semi-skilled. They work all across the country, although many are in urban areas	Membership of the EU means there are no restrictions	Accession state members work in all industries, allow a large number work in the manufacturing, retail, hotel and restaurant industries. Many of the men worked in the construction industry until mid-2008



Table 1 (*Continued*)

Country or region	Start of the 'wave'	'Nature' of immigration – who and why?	Legalities of group's immigration	Main industries/occupations
Other European	In 2007 Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU giving them access to different labour markets	Like the accession state members, nationals from these countries are between 20 and 40, and are semi-skilled	Romanian and Bulgarian nationals do not need a visa, but need to acquire a work permit to initially work in Ireland	Many of the men work in the construction industry, while females are in the hotel sector. Domestic work is common among females but is harder to locate based on census.

Note: Table compiled from data from the following sources: CSO reports and figures, reports from the Irish Refugee Council, the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism, the MRCI and the Integration Centre.

<sup>a</sup><http://www.entemp.ie/press/2000/130500.htm>.

### **Contextualising Ireland's immigration policies in terms of the labour market**

The involvement of the Department of Enterprise and Employment in the formulation of recruitment policy, specifically the systems of work permits and Green Cards, highlights the importance of the state in connecting labour demand and immigration. In light of these recruitment drives and immigration policies, immigration is viewed as a form of labour supply. There were a number of specific recruitment drives between 1995 and 2004 as outlined in [Table 2](#). The link between economic growth, state action and immigration policy issues is evident, and led to the channelling of workers into certain sectors and jobs specifically linked to country of origin. Similar examples of the channelling of workers into particular sectors and jobs can be found in Australia, the UK and the USA, where it has occurred as a direct result of recruitment campaigns and/or policies that include and exclude certain migrant workers ([Chiswick \*et al.\* 2003](#), [Ellis \*et al.\* 2007](#), [McDowell \*et al.\* 2007](#)). For example, female nurses from India and the Philippines are a source of labour for much of western Europe ([Parreñas 2008](#)), and were/are actively recruited to work in Irish hospitals.

[Table 2](#) draws on figures and data from the Central Statistics Office (CSO), Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI) and the Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland (MRCI [2007](#)) to provide a comprehensive outline of the different policies, permits and visas available to migrant workers in Ireland. The first column outlines recruitment drives or policy which contributed to immigration into Ireland. The direct role of the Irish state is outlined in the second column, with the specific sectors benefiting from the recruitment drives or policies in the third. The fourth column illustrates how each of the recruitment drives or policies is linked to broader theoretical and empirical discussions, while the final column highlights the main groups that are linked to the outlined recruitment drive or policies. Each of these different policies is briefly discussed later.

The initial 'Jobs Ireland' campaign from 1999 to 2002 was very successful in its aim of recruiting recent Irish emigrants to fill shortages in the IT and finance sectors, and indicates the important role of social networks in encouraging the return of these skilled workers. Meanwhile, the most striking evidence of the concentration of workers based on country of birth is the international job fairs and recruitment drives aimed at the health sector and low-skilled jobs in the IT sector. A large number of nurses from South Asia are found in the health sector. In the IT sector, workers were recruited from South Asia to fill the increasing numbers of jobs in computer factories across Ireland; these were mainly computer or software technicians, resulting in their classification as slightly lower-skilled IT jobs.

The two working visa programmes, Working Visa Authorization Programme (WVAP) and WPS, played major roles in increasing the numbers of non-Irish workers in the labour market. These visa programmes existed until 2006 and 2003, respectively. The WVAP aimed at high-skilled sectors saw increasing numbers of North American, Australians and New Zealanders in the Irish labour market. Under the WVAP there was no minimum income restriction but applicants were expected to be from the high-skilled sectors. The permit allowed the worker to work in Ireland for two years, after which time they could reapply. Workers could have a spouse and dependents with them but were tied to the employer under whom the permit was granted. The WPS, on the other hand, was aimed at low-skilled sectors and employers were the main drivers of the scheme until April 2003 when the Employment Permits Act was introduced. Many of the workers granted WPS prior to this time were from eastern Europe, China and some South Asian countries.

Table 2. Immigration policy and link with labour market.

Recruitment drive/policy	State involvement/role	Sectors benefiting	Proposed link to global or transnational division of labour	Specific groups linked to policy change
Jobs Ireland campaign 1999–2002	Government grants <a href="http://www.entemp.ie/press/2000/130500.htm">http://www.entemp.ie/press/2000/130500.htm</a>	Recent Irish emigrants (1980s) to fill demand in IT and finance sectors	Cultural links and family ties still in existence; ‘easy’ network to tap	Irish returnees (1980s)
International job fairs/labour attaché	Expert Group on Future Skills and National Training and Employment Agency initiative with government representative at fairs and in embassy tasked with recruiting, specifically India and the Philippines	Workers to fill gaps in the IT and health sectors	Cultural capital and stereotyping – Bauder (2001)	South Asians in IT Filipino and Indian nurses South Asian and African doctors
WVAP and WPS 1999–2003	WVAP 1999–2006 (replaced with Green Card) targeted at highly skilled sectors. Until April 2003 WPS were almost entirely Employer-led, with workers recruited in any sector from any country outside of the then EU-15. Number of work permit 1999–2003 700% increase	WVAP: IT, health consultants, third-level education and financial sectors. Three of every four permits between 1999 and 2003 in the low-skilled sector. One hundred and fifty different nationalities	Polarisation of migrant work force based on certain social characteristics creating a division between WVAP and WPS	North Americans, Australian, New Zealand in IT, Financial and Educational sectors. Eastern Europeans, African, Chinese and South Asians in low-skilled sectors
WPS post-accession	The interventionist Employment Permits Act published in April 2003 encouraged issue of work permits to EU-10 countries set to join in 2004	Fall in the number of low-skilled sector work permit applications. But the number of new work permits granted to non-EU workers remained constant	Existence of networks of recruitment and preferences for certain workers	Workers in IT and in low-skilled service sector from Africa, China, South Asia and Mauritius

Table 2 (Continued)

Recruitment drive/policy	State involvement/role	Sectors benefiting	Proposed link to global or transnational division of labour	Specific groups linked to policy change
EU accession 2004 and 2007 (full labour market access to EU-10)	With change in the WPS, move on the part of the state to fill low-skilled sector, from within the EU. Romania and Bulgaria joined in January 2007 with restricted employment right but more flexible than non-EU	Almost 100% of EU-10 migrants employed in the low-skilled sector. Similar figures for Romania and Bulgaria	A move in Ireland and western Europe in general to 'eliminate' immigration from outside its borders. 'Easy' supply of labour willing to work hard.	Workers particularly came from Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania
Recruitment in accession countries	Employer-led specifically from large chains actively recruiting workers to come to Ireland and the UK to work	Low-skilled sector particularly in food and agricultural sectors	This policy is linked to the previous explanation	See previous row
Green Card system – replaces WVAP	Introduced in May 2005	Recruitment based on expected earnings. Threshold set at \$86,000 (€60,000) per annum	A criterion selects only those in high-skilled sector, with high expected earnings	Same nationalities as WVAP in health, financial, education and IT

Note: Table compiled from data from the following sources: CSO reports and figures [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie); <http://www.entemp.ie/press/2000/130500.htm>; <http://www.citizensinformation.ie>; DJEI <http://www.djei.ie>.

The focus shifted away from the WPS following the Employment Permits Acts of 2003 and 2006 which introduced the Green Card scheme, focused on the high-skilled sectors, and the 2004 EU accession of 10 new member states. However, as the labour market continued to expand and labour demand continued to grow, figures indicated the continuing increase of workers from eastern Europe, China and some South Asian countries in the low-skilled sector on the WPS. Although the WVAP was completely replaced by the Green Card Employment Permit, the WPS continues to exist, although it is now called the Work Permit Employment Permit and there have been significant changes including length of visa, spousal rights and freedom to move between employers (DJEI n.d.).

With EU accession of 10 new states in 2004 and the lifting of work restrictions for these countries by Ireland, the UK and Sweden, there was a significant increase in the number of workers entering the Irish labour market. Workers under both the former WPS and the new schemes post-April 2003 were granted a two-year permit tied to the employer and were required to renew it following the two years when they would be given a year's extension if the application was accepted. Changes in the economic situation in Ireland have meant that since 2009 there are now income restrictions attached to the Work Permit Employment Permit and the Green Card scheme hence eliminating employment opportunities in lower paid service sector jobs. Since April 2009 work permits are not available for the following occupations: clerical and administrative staff; general operatives and labourers; operator and production staff; retail sales staff; drivers; nursery/crèche workers, childminders/nannies; hotel, tourism and catering staff except chefs; craft workers and apprentice/trainee craft workers; domestic workers including carers in the home and childminders.

In 2005, the situation for workers in the higher-skilled sector changed dramatically with the introduction of the Green Card permit scheme (replacing the WVAP). This saw workers being evaluated on the basis of salary and certain skills that limited the workers who could apply. The entitlements for workers were the same as under the WVAP; however, after the initial two years workers could now gain a 'stamp 4' to remain working with the same employer without having to renew the Green Card. New criteria were introduced to the Green Card from 10 April 2013; these focus on making residency requirements and documentations more transparent for holders, and intra-company transfer is facilitated. There are, however, strict income requirements under this scheme stipulating that only workers earning €60,000 or more can apply, with a small number of 'knowledge-economy' based exceptions including a restricted list of occupations with annual salaries of €30,000–€59,999 in IT, health care, engineers, financial and research sectors. The result is the concentration of the same workers in IT, finance and health sectors where, given the criteria, other nationalities did not have the opportunity or means to apply. Referring to [Table 2](#), the nationalities concentrated in the sectors under the Green Card scheme include North America, Australia and New Zealand.

## **Conclusion**

By analysing state policies relating to migration, specifically in terms of those migrants entering for labour purposes, the article begins to highlight the unfolding of global divisions of labour in the local labour market. The policies of the Irish state illustrate that immigration during the Celtic Tiger was treated as a form of short-term labour supply, where policies were adjusted and changed depending on the labour market needs. Hence, Ireland's immigration policy changed in parallel with economic growth and the type of

workers who entered the labour market during specific periods. Parallels are alluded to in terms of the approaches taken by the Asian Tigers as well as other traditionally emigration countries, thus illustrating the role of economic growth and the labour market in determining state immigration policy.

In characterising Ireland as an open global economy, the literature has often failed to focus on elements of policy that are still very much organised and shaped by the state. The role of the Irish state in economic development, specifically in terms of labour supply, is evident in the recruitment drives supported through the Celtic Tiger period and with the expansion of the EU in 2004. Both the recruitment drives and the granting of full economic access to the new EU-10 in the Irish labour market were undertaken in a bid to 'deal' with the labour shortage in the IT, finance, pharmaceutical, hospitality and business services sectors.

The approach taken by the Irish state to shaping the composition and structure of the labour market through immigration policy indicates a link with global divisions of labour or the transnationalisation of labour. The state's approach has contributed to the shaping of the structure of the labour market in terms of which workers are in what jobs. Thus, the Irish labour market adapted during the Celtic Tiger to access global patterns of labour mobility but with the strong presence of the state and immigration policy.

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