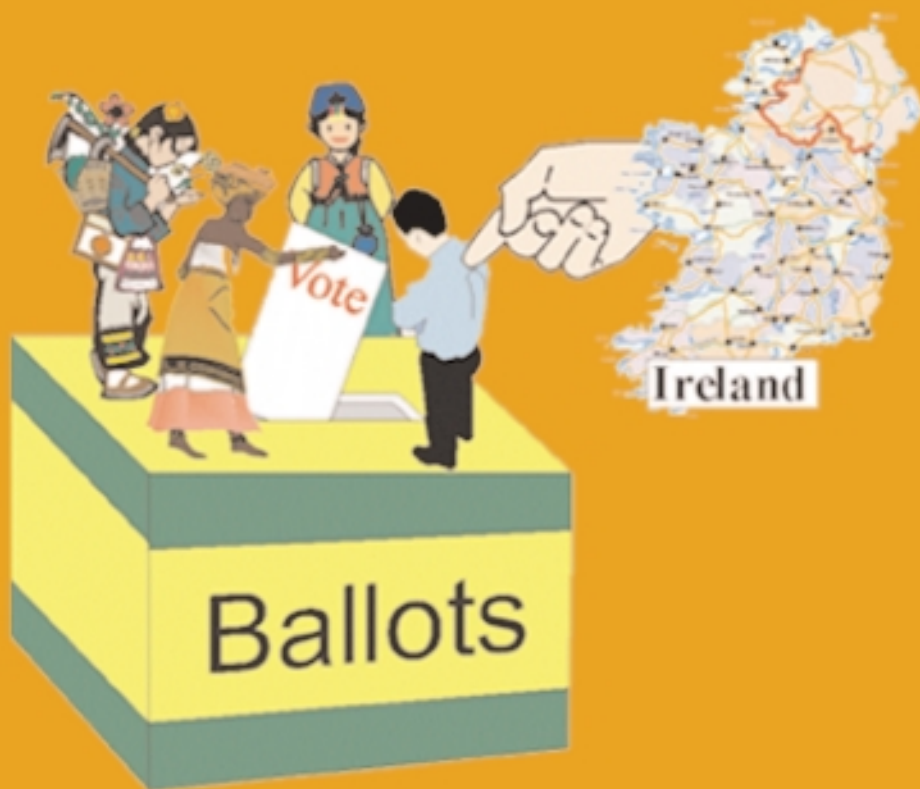


# POSITIVE POLITICS:

Participation of Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities in the Electoral Process

A Publication of the Africa Solidarity Centre



Researched and written by  
*Dr Bryan Fanning,  
Fidèle Mutwarasibo  
and Neltah Chadamoyo*

Cover Design: Dare Ogun

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# Preface

Positive Politics clearly demonstrates that all the political parties in Ireland have no distinct strategies aimed at encouraging and supporting immigrants and ethnic minorities to directly participate in local and national politics. This is a reality that needs to change if inclusive politics – that is, politics reflecting the diverse ethnic and cultural nature of Irish society today - is to become a reality. There is, of course, the other side of this issue, which is, the willingness of immigrants and members of ethnic minorities to actively get involved in local and national politics. It is very much hoped that the issues this report raises will be taken seriously by all political parties, immigrants, and ethnic minorities in this country and addressed accordingly.

Africa Centre is aware that in public domain, it is far from clear how political parties recruit their Irish members. On the other hand, the centre acknowledges that there has been so far no formal research undertaken to investigate whether the immigrants and members of the ethnic minorities are interested in running for political office.

One of the principal objectives of the Africa Centre (AC) is to facilitate and promote the integration of African immigrants in Ireland. We believe that the creation of political structures that would encourage and enable participation by all peoples in Ireland in politics would go a long way towards achieving this. **Positive Politics**, we believe, is a good starting point towards this goal.

On behalf of the Directors and Members of Africa Centre, let me take this opportunity to: (1) thank Dr Bryan Fanning, Department of Social Policy and Social Work University College Dublin and Fidèle Mutwarasibo and Neltah Chadamoyo of the Africa Centre for the time, energy and expertise they committed to this task, (2) wholeheartedly recommend it to all concerned, and (3) encourage all to make positive efforts to translating its hopes into reality. Africa Centre is willing to do anything it can to facilitate and support anyone who wants to work towards this end.

Rev. Dr. Sahr Yambasu  
Chairperson African Centre

# Introduction

This report advocates the need for a positive response to social diversity during the 2004 local elections. It draws upon a survey of policies and good practices amongst Irish political parties relating to immigrants and ethnic minorities. To date, efforts to promote positive political responses to recent social change due to immigration in Ireland have focused on opposition to exploitation of racism for political gain. An important first step in this direction occurred in the run up to the 2002 general election with the endorsement of *An Anti- Racism Protocol For Political Parties* at the behest of the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI). The 2004 local government election presents a vital opportunity to promote greater political responsiveness to citizen and non-citizen immigrant and ethnic minority communities. Many non-citizens have a right to vote and stand in the 2004 local elections (*Appendix One*). Many of these may well be eligible to participate in future general and European elections as citizens. The ethnic profile of the Irish electorate is changing. It is important that Irish politics does not lag behind the membership of twenty first century Irish society. However the findings of the survey warrant extreme concern.

# Summary of Findings

Most of the political parties that responded to the survey have identified no distinct measures aimed at encouraging immigrants and ethnic minorities to become party members. Just one party is standing a candidate from an immigrant and ethnic minority community. Political parties in Ireland, for the most part, offer a narrow definition of ‘Irishness’ much at odds with the present composition of Irish society. As a result they are poorly placed to address racism in Irish society. Irish political parties need to urgently adopt specific policies aimed at encouraging immigrant and ethnic minority communities to become party members and to stand for elections.

There have been a number of positive developments in recent years. In particular the endorsement of an anti-racism protocol for political parties prior to the last general election is to be welcomed. However, the lack of diversity amongst members of Irish political parties is a matter of grave concern. The main political parties, and a number of politicians, have stated their opposition to racism and their support for the integration of immigrants within Irish society. Responses to the survey by political parties drew attention to these. However, positive pronouncements of a general nature need to be backed by specific measures aimed at promoting inclusion.

There is an urgent need to encourage the participation of immigrant and ethnic minority communities in Irish politics for several reasons. Unless political parties respond to immigrant and ethnic minority communities and encourage people from ethnic minorities to become members and candidates in elections they will be poorly placed to address racism in Irish society. If political parties are unwilling or unable to promote the participation of people from such communities they will be poorly placed to provide leadership within a fast changing Irish society. Political parties need to reflect the diverse composition of Irish society. There is an urgent need to foster the inclusion of people from ethnic minorities within political parties and for politicians respond to the needs of such communities.

Risks arising from the exclusion of ethnic minorities from mainstream politics include the persistence of racism within politics and deepening social exclusion on the basis of ethnicity. From time to time, racism in Irish society has been exploited for political gain.<sup>1</sup> There may always be some votes in exploiting

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<sup>1</sup>Fanning B (2002) ‘The Political Currency of Irish Racism: 1997-2002’, *Studies*, vol. 91, PP.319-328.



racism and intolerance. One aim of this report is to signal the electoral benefits of responding positively to the needs of a diverse twenty-first century Ireland. Political parties in 2004 will encounter an unprecedentedly diverse Irish electorate.

## **Recommendations**

The main recommendations of this report are for:

- Increased responsiveness by political parties to immigrant and ethnic minority communities. All political parties should be open to non-citizens living in Ireland. All political parties should review, as a matter of urgency, current practices relating to membership with a view to actively seeking to recruit members of immigrant and ethnic minority communities
- The development of good practices to encourage members of immigrant communities and ethnic minority groups to become members of political parties. Targets need to be set and the implementation of policies must be monitored.
- The extension of the existing Anti-Racism Protocol for Political Parties (*Figure: One*) to include commitments by political parties to promote ethnic minority membership, racism and training for all party members and the selection of ethnic minority candidates along the lines of best international practice.
- The development by political parties of mentoring schemes aimed at developing future candidates from immigrant and ethnic minority communities.

## **Why Positive Politics?**

Irish political parties need to become more responsive to immigrant and ethnic minority communities. The recent film *Gangs of New York* highlights how Irish immigrants were viewed as prospective voters from the moment they arrived in the United States. The reality in many Western countries is that immigrants and ethnic minorities have been marginalized within politics for generations. For example, ethnic minority communities established since the 1950s have only recently become visible in political parties in the United Kingdom. Black and ethnic minority communities continue to be underrepresented amongst councillor and in the House of Commons. In the United States the first black cabinet members were not appointed until 2000.

In Britain some six percent of the population are from black and Asian communities. These comprise about half the total ethnic minority population.<sup>2</sup> However, just 2.5 percent of councillors (530 out of 21,000) were from ethnic minority communities in 2002. Under-representation is even more pronounced in the British Parliament where the twelve black and Asian MPs account for just 1.8 percent of the total.<sup>3</sup> A report on racism and representation in British politics, which was endorsed by the three main political parties, has called for a number of measures to address this under-representation. The report recommended the provision of a high profile state funded cross party leadership programme aimed at ensuring the ongoing emergence of electoral candidates from different ethnic groups. Other recommendations included 'rigorous goals' for minority representation on lists of candidates, the establishment of a unit to provide support and mentoring for ethnic minority candidates and reforms of practices within political parties aimed at tackling ethnic under-representation.<sup>4</sup> The context for these reforms has been widespread concern about the consequences for British society of the ongoing political disaffection and social exclusion of some black and ethnic minority communities.<sup>5</sup>

There is an urgent need for a debate on ethnic minority under-representation in Irish politics. The composition of Irish society has changed considerably in recent years due to immigration. While the 2002 census did not record ethnicity it indicates that some 7.1 percent of the population in the Republic of Ireland are not of Irish nationality.<sup>6</sup> Of Irish nationals some 23,681 (0.61 percent) identified themselves as Travellers in the 2002 Census. There was a question in the 2002 census about nationality, as opposed to ethnicity and 1.3 per cent of those enumerated did not answer it. Of those who did, 91.6 per cent stated they were Irish and a further 1.3 per cent stated they had Irish and another nationality. Of the 5.8 per cent who stated that they were not Irish or part-Irish, about half were British. The remainder came from all parts of the world: 32,801 (EU Excluding UK), 26,235 (other European), 26,515 (Africa), 28,132 (Asia), 29,110 (America

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<sup>2</sup>In the 2001 Census some 12.5 percent of the population of England and Wales described themselves as other than white-British.

<sup>3</sup>Figures relate to situation in April 2002.

<sup>4</sup>Rushanara A and O'Conneide C (2002) *Our House? Race and Representation in British Politics* (London: Institute of Public Policy Research)

<sup>5</sup>See for example Ouseley H (2001) *Community Pride Not Prejudice: Making Diversity Work in Bradford* (Bradford: Bradford City Council). The Ouseley review followed 'race riots' in Bradford and alarm at a rise in support for the British National Party (BNP).

<sup>6</sup>3,584,975 (92.9%) out of a total population of 3,858,495 were defined by the 2002 Census as of Irish nationality.

including South America) and 8,363 (Antipodes).<sup>7</sup> Levels of diversity in the Republic of Ireland do not yet match those of Britain. However, demographic change is occurring at a faster rate in Ireland than in Britain which has experienced ongoing immigration since the 1950s.

Ethnic minority communities are underrepresented in Irish politics for a number of reasons. Many such communities (though not Travellers) are recent immigrants. Many are not entitled to vote in National and European Elections because they do not possess Irish citizenship. However, it is to be anticipated that the percentage of this population who are citizens will rise notwithstanding the ruling of the Supreme Court in *Lobe v. Minister of Justice* (2003) that effectively limited the residency rights of the Irish children entitled to citizenship whose parents are neither Irish or EU country citizens. The issue of naturalisation of immigrants cannot be realistically avoided in a society which in a few short years has attained levels of ethnic diversity common to Western countries that have been experiencing immigration for decades. One way or another the political landscape of Ireland will be one where it is necessary to address the needs of an ethnically diverse population and electorate.

## Political Leadership

The leadership of political parties have generally been critical of perceived efforts by a few individual politicians to exploit racism and prejudice in Irish society for political gain. Yet, mainstream politics in Ireland and elsewhere inevitably reflects, to some degree, prejudices in society and minorities such as Travellers and asylum seekers. The need for positive politics in Ireland is highlighted by the ongoing impact of anti-Traveller racism upon local politics. For example, a 2001 report by the *National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism* referred to ‘generalised and emotive statements and comments being made by a small number of councillors in relation to both Travellers and asylum seekers’.<sup>8</sup> There are indications that some councillors consider it necessary to establish anti-Traveller credentials, or at least be seen as opponents of any measures to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers, for electoral purposes.<sup>9</sup> Similarly some politicians have sought to exploit racism

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<sup>7</sup>Labour migration into Ireland: study and recommendations on employment permits, working conditions, family reunification and the integration of migrant workers in Ireland. Immigrant Council of Ireland 2003

<sup>8</sup>National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (2001) Report of incidents relating to racism reported to the NCCRI May to October 2001 [www.nccri.com](http://www.nccri.com)

<sup>9</sup>Fanning B (2002) Racism and Social Change in the Republic of Ireland (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p.113

against asylum seekers for political gain. In August 2003 the home of an independent councillor in Tramore was covered with racist graffiti.<sup>10</sup>

Irish political parties generally do not reflect the composition of what is now a multicultural society. In this context the Anti-Racism Protocol for Political Parties (*Figure: One*) needs to be extended to cover membership of political parties and the selection of candidates. The experiences of other countries, such as the United States and Britain, suggest that racism in society cannot be successfully challenged unless minority ethnic groups are enabled to fully participate in mainstream political parties. Political parties unable or unwilling to work to include people from across the whole multi-ethnic spectrum of Irish society are ill-placed to contest racism and to provide community leadership in an era of rapid demographic change.

### **Figure One: Existing Anti Racism Protocol for Political Parties**

#### **Preamble**

Political parties who are signatory to this Protocol undertake to ensure that election campaigns<sup>1</sup> are conducted in such a way that they do not incite hatred or prejudice on the grounds of 'race', colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins, religious belief and membership of the Travelling Community<sup>2</sup>. Political parties agree:

- To send a consistent and clear message to their constituents that they reject racism.
- To condemn any campaign materials or statements susceptible to incite hatred or express prejudice on the grounds of 'race', colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins, religious belief and membership of the Travelling Community.
- To guarantee that when engaging in on-going debate in relation to groups which are the potential targets of racism, such as asylum seekers and refugees and Travellers, that such debate is conducted in a responsible way and with respect to the dignity and rights of minority ethnic groups.
- To use appropriate and inclusive language and words when referring to people of different ethnic backgrounds, in order to avoid creating prejudice or confusion.<sup>3</sup>
- To inform all party-political campaigners about the intent and contents of this protocol.
- To request that candidates standing for election sign the appended 'Declaration of Intent'.
  1. *Including local elections, general elections, and elections to the European Parliament.*
  2. *These are the relevant categories in the Equal Status Act (2000) and the Employment Equality Act (1998).*
  3. *For example, the terms 'asylum seekers', 'refugees' and 'economic migrants' are not interchangeable. The use of pejorative terms such as 'bogus asylum seekers' and 'itinerants' should be avoided.*

<sup>10</sup>Councillor Walsh claimed that 'he was targeted by racists because of his support for asylum seekers and refugees'. Irish Times, 16 August 2003

# Findings of Survey of Irish Political Parties

Six main political parties were asked in August 2003 to respond to a number of questions aimed at identifying the extent to which parties have adopted good practices and specific policies aimed at promoting the inclusion of and responsiveness to immigrants and ethnic minorities.<sup>11</sup> The survey asked four specific questions:

1. *What policies or good practices has the party adopted to encourage members of immigrant communities and ethnic-minority groups to become party members?*
2. *What policies or good practices have been adopted by the party to oppose racism in Irish society?*
3. *Has the party selected candidates from immigrant and ethnic minority communities to stand in the June 2004 local elections?*
4. *What initiatives are proposed by the party to canvas for support amongst immigrant and ethnic minority communities in the June 2004 elections?*

The findings were as follows:

## *Specific Inclusive Policies and Good Practices*

No party identified specific policies or good practices adopted to encourage members of immigrant communities and ethnic minority groups to become party members. Currently the constitution of the **Progressive Democrats** prevents people who are not Irish or EU member state citizens from becoming party members. **Fine Gael** stated that it would encourage members of the immigrant community and ethnic minority groups to join the party but did not identify any specific policies or measures aimed at promoting such participation. The **Labour Party** replied that everybody who shares its principles is encouraged to become members of the party but again did not identify any specific policies or measures aimed at promoting such participation. **Fianna Fail** stated that it has recently adopted a new form of membership that allows for direct individual membership in addition to the traditional route through *cumann* (branches). It cited two of the Party's *Coru and Rialacha* (Constitution and Rules) in response to the question. Rule 1.2

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<sup>11</sup>Parties were written to by the Africa Solidarity Centre on 18 August 2003 and 25 September 2003. Letters detailing the research questions were followed up by email and telephone.

states that Fianna Fail will “develop a distinctive national life in accordance with the diverse traditions and ideals of the Irish people”. Rule 1.3 states that Fianna Fail will ‘guarantee religious and civil liberty, and equal rights, equal treatment and equal opportunities for all’. However Fianna Fail also did not identify any specific policies or measures aimed at promoting the participation of immigrant communities and ethnic minorities. The **Green Party** stated that it is currently reviewing its membership policy to ensure that it is relevant to members of immigrant communities and ethnic minority groups. **Sinn Fein** stated that the party has in some constituencies, usually in urban areas, a small number of members and supporters from immigrant communities and from ethnic minorities.

What policies or good practices have the (name of party) adopted to encourage members of immigrant communities and ethnic minority groups to become party members?	
<b>Fianna Fail</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Progressive Democrats</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Labour</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Fine Gael</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Green Party</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Sinn Fein</b>	<b>None</b>

The existing lack of inclusionary specific policies and measures amongst the larger political parties alongside a lack of party members drawn from immigrant and ethnic minority communities point to a risk of institutional racism in Irish politics. The concept of institutional racism describes how minorities suffer from discrimination when racism within society becomes reflected in organisations and institutions. The discriminations experienced by minorities may be unintentional but they are often profound. They emanate from the inability or unwillingness of organisations and institutions to take into account the diversity of society in their policies and practices.

Parties that prevent non-citizens from joining may potentially be open to legal challenge on human rights grounds.<sup>12</sup> In Ireland non-citizens are allowed to vote and to be candidates in local elections. It is unacceptable that they be prevented from joining any political party.

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<sup>12</sup>For example, the British Labour Party overturned a ban on members from Northern Ireland at its 2003 conference following legal advice that it had a weak case on human rights grounds.

## *The Emergence of Policies and Good Practices on Racism*

All parties surveyed have agreed to adhere to the existing anti-racism protocol devised by the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism. This governs the conduct of candidates. There are indications that political parties are developing some good practices aimed at opposing racism in Irish politics. These are to be welcomed.

However, specific measures have yet to be implemented in a number of cases. The **Labour Party** stated that it has a working group with a remit for anti-racism but did not identify any specific measures aimed at opposing racism in Irish politics. It also stated that all candidates must abide by an anti-racism pledge. **Fine Gael** stated that it is totally opposed to racism and has sought the appointment of a Minister at the Department of the Taoiseach to co-ordinate immigrant issues, to combat racism and to promote integration and tolerance. However, again, no specific measures were identified. The **Progressive Democrats** replied that it dedicated a meeting in June 2003 to a presentation by the Know Racism campaign also stating that 'we have a constant supply of anti-racism badges in Head Office which we distribute'. **Fianna Fail** cited its role in passing legislation including the Equal Status Act (2000), which prohibits discrimination on a number of grounds including race and membership of the Travelling Community. Fianna Fail also stated that it had drawn up a programme of anti-racism awareness training for party members in the form of a number of conferences that would take place in the near future. The **Green Party** stated that anti-racism awareness workshops will be available to all candidates later this year and early in 2004. **Sinn Fein** endorsed an anti-racist policy at its 2002 *Ard Fheis* which committed the party to oppose 'racism, discrimination and intolerance of any kind wherever it occurs'. It identified specific inclusionary policies in the areas of education, immigration and asylum.

## *Candidates Selected From Ethnic Minority Communities*

Just one of the political parties that responded have selected a candidate from immigrant communities or from ethnic minorities although a number of parties commented that selection processes had yet to be completed. The fact that just one immigrant or ethnic minority candidate has been endorsed by the six main political parties to date is most worrying.

Has the (name of party) selected any candidates from immigrants and ethnic minority communities to stand in the 2004 local elections?	
<b>Fianna Fail</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Progressive Democrats</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Labour</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Fine Gael</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Green Party</b>	<b>One candidate</b>
<b>Sinn Fein</b>	<b>None</b>

Media reports indicate that a number of ethnic minority candidates are standing as independents. This is to be welcomed. Such candidates may be in a position to draw attention to issues and concerns of immigrant and ethnic minority communities as well as those of the community as a whole. They may benefit electorally, to some extent, from an apparent lack of emphasis on such issues and concerns by the political parties.

### ***Little Emphasis on Canvassing Support Amongst Immigrant and Ethnic Minority Communities***

None of the larger political parties identified specific initiatives to canvass for support amongst immigrant and ethnic minority communities in the June 2004 local elections. The **Progressive Democrats** stated that they would be canvassing at every door and that their electoral policy was 'not selective.' **Fine Gael** stated that it had set up a policy review group that would, as part of its remit, advice on policy issues in relation to immigration and that its advice would be utilised by local candidates when canvassing for support. Again, no specific proposals to canvass for support amongst immigrants and ethnic minority groups were identified. Similarly, **Labour** stated that its platform would incorporate the needs of all people but did not indicate any specific initiatives aimed at obtaining the support of immigrant communities and ethnic minorities. **Fianna Fail** stated that it would canvass at every door 'regardless of what religion or race the occupier may be'. It stated that specific policy initiatives had yet to be finalised but that these would be based 'on a commitment to a society based on the equality and dignity of every single person, irrespective of class, colour or creed.'

The **Green Party** stated that it is asking its local election candidates to provide feedback to the party's policy development process to ensure that it includes issues that are relevant to immigrant and ethnic minority communities. The



party stated that its spokesperson on Justice, Equality and Law Reform meets and consults with representatives of these communities to inform his work in the Dail. **Sinn Fein** stated that it is planning to produce a voter registration leaflet in different languages which will include information about the right to vote and how to register.

What initiatives are proposed by (name of party) to canvas for support amongst immigrant and ethnic minority communities in the 2004 local elections?	
<b>Fianna Fail</b>	<b>No specific initiatives</b>
<b>Progressive Democrats</b>	<b>No specific initiatives</b>
<b>Labour</b>	<b>No specific initiatives</b>
<b>Fine Gael</b>	<b>No specific initiatives</b>
<b>Green Party</b>	<b>Some initiatives</b>
<b>Sinn Fein</b>	<b>Some initiatives</b>

It is arguably the case that many Irish political parties do not, as of yet, consider immigrants and ethnic minorities as potential supporters. It is important to note that these unwanted voters include citizens such as Travellers and naturalised immigrants as well as non-citizens. Frequent media references, often by politicians, to immigrants as ‘non-nationals’ have fostered the impression that they are not electorally significant. It is the case that such ‘non-nationals’ do not have a right to vote in national and European elections. However, they will have a voice in the 2004 local government elections and this voice will be increasingly significant in future elections.

# **Appendix One:**

## **The Local Elections in Ireland – 2004<sup>13</sup>**

In June 2004 local elections will be held across the country to appoint local public representatives to each city and county council. These elections form a very relevant channel for the political participation of foreign nationals in Ireland, as one does not have to be an Irish citizen to vote or to stand for local election.

Due to recent legislative changes, public representatives who hold a seat in the national parliament, Dáil Eireann, will no longer be eligible for election to a local authority and the 2004 elections will be the first that incorporate this change. A number of new seats can be contested this time, a fact that may present exciting opportunities for minority ethnic groups.

### **What does Local Government Do?**

There are 29 county councils, 5 city councils, as well as 5 borough councils and 49 town councils in Ireland that hold certain local government powers.

They are responsible for a number of principal services such as housing, water supply and sewerage, road transportation and safety, development incentives and controls, environmental protection, recreation and amenities.

Due to recent reforms in local government reform structures, a number of changes have been made to increase the power of local authorities to devise policy and contribute to planning for the city or county. New committees have now been created in every local authority in which elected representatives participate in policy-making and economic and social planning.

### **Who is eligible to vote in Local Elections and how do I register?**

The category of persons entitled to vote in the local elections in Ireland is broader than those which apply to any other poll. There are no citizenship

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<sup>13</sup>Sources for this appendix include the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism and Whelan N (2000 ) Politics, Elections and the Law (Dublin: Blackhall)

requirements and any national of any country ordinarily resident in the local electoral area, who is over 18 and is on the register is entitled to vote.

You must be over the age of 18 to vote in local elections and Irish citizenship is not required. However, in order to vote, **you must be registered in the register of electors in the local authority area in which you live.** This usually requires that you have been living at your ordinary address since the 1st September 2003.<sup>14</sup> However, if a person establishes residence during the life of a register, one is entitled to be entered on the supplementary register. Electors who live in urban areas administered by borough corporations, urban district councils and town commissioners are entitled to vote at elections for both the county council and the urban authority concerned.<sup>15</sup>

A register of electors is compiled each year by city and county councils and by now Applications for Registration should have been distributed to all households. If you have not received this form or you have not yet registered, you still have until the 1st November 2003 to get the Application for Registration for the Register of Electors, fill it out and return it to your local city or county council. There is no charge for this and these forms can be obtained by telephoning or calling into the Franchise Section of the local city or council office.

The draft register will be published on 1st November 2003 and displayed for public inspection in post offices, libraries and other public buildings up until 25th November 2003. You should check the draft register during this period to ensure you are correctly registered. The final register comes into force on 15th February but even still, late applications can be made right up until 15 days before polling day.

## Standing For Election

In local government elections, it is not necessary to be an Irish citizen to be elected as a public representative. Someone wishing to stand for local election may nominate him/herself or be nominated by a registered elector and can be

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Section 11 (3) of the electoral Act 1992 provides that a person who leaves his/her ordinary residence with the intention of returning there within eighteen months can continue to be registered there, subject to the condition that a person may be registered at one address only. A written statement by the person that they intend to return within eighteen months in the absence of evidence to the contrary must be accepted as correct. See Whelan N (2000 ) Politics, Elections and the Law (Dublin: Blackhall), p.8

nominated to stand in more than one area. A candidate does not have to be affiliated to a political party to stand for election, but may instead stand as an independent candidate. Normally a deposit of approximately €300 is required to secure a nomination and this is refunded if the nominee is elected, withdraws their nomination, or dies prior to election.

Arrangements for nominations will be published by the local authority along with the notice of election in late Spring 2004. There is normally a period of one week during which candidates can be nominated for election and this takes place approximately four weeks before the polling day. You may nominate yourself or be nominated by a registered local government elector. If you are a member of a political party, you must submit a Certificate of Party Affiliation with your nomination form. If you wish to stand for election as an independent candidate, you must have your nomination paper signed by 15 'assenters'. These are people who are registered to vote in the local authority - excluding yourself and the person who nominated you.

Election of candidates happens through a system of proportional representation in a multi-member electoral area. To be elected, a candidate must receive a quota of votes, which depends on the number of valid polling papers and the number of seats to be contested.

## **Why should I vote?**

Recent reform of local government has attempted to give greater power to local authorities and bring decision-making closer to people on the ground. This means that local government is an important site for ensuring a true representation of the Irish population. Diversity has not been traditionally represented at local political level and even the gender balance of elected representatives is highly disproportionate.

Encouragingly, a number of women and men from minority ethnic communities in various regions have signalled their intention to stand for election with a particular interest in representing ethnic minority issues. Community groups and activists are also taking on a role to encourage and support the participation of traditionally excluded groups, both in candidature and in voting.

Awareness and education are important to ensure greater representation of minority groups in politics. Commitment to social inclusion and the principles

and practice of equality within the body politic is also critical. The duration of the local election process will be an important time to remind public representatives of the Anti-Racism Protocol which all the major political parties in Ireland have endorsed. The Protocol commits its signatories to ensure that election campaigns are conducted in such a way that they do not incite hatred or prejudice on the grounds of 'race', 'colour', nationality or ethnic or national origins, religious belief and membership of the Traveller Community.

## **Further information**

- Carlow County Council,  
County Offices, Athy Road, Carlow 0503 70300
- Cavan County Council,  
Courthouse, Cavan 049 4331799
- Clare County Council,  
New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare 065 6821616
- Cork County Council,  
County Hall, Carrigrohane Road, Cork 021 276891
- Donegal County Council,  
County House, Lifford, Co. Donegal 074 72222
- Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown County Council,  
Town Hall, Marine Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin 01 2054700
- Fingal County Council,  
County Hall, Main Street, Swords, Fingal, Co. Dublin. 01 8905000
- Galway County Council,  
County Buildings, Prospect Hill, Galway 091 509000
- Kerry County Council,  
Aras an Chontae, Rathass, Tralee 066 7121111
- Kildare County Council,  
St. Mary's, Naas, Co. Kildare 045 873800
- Kilkenny County Council,  
John's Green, Kilkenny 056 52699
- Laois County Council,  
County Hall, Portlaoise, Co. Laois 0502 22044
- Leitrim County Council,  
Courthouse, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim 078 20005
- Limerick County Council,  
County Buildings, O'Connell Street, Limerick 061 318477
- Longford County Council,  
County Secretary's Office, Dublin Road, Longford 043 46231
- Louth County Council,  
Courthouse, Dundalk, Co. Louth 042 9335457
- Mayo County Council,  
Aras an Chontae, Castlebar, Co. Mayo 094 24444
- Meath County Council,  
County Hall, Navan, Co. Meath 046 21581
- Monaghan County Council,  
County Offices, The Glen, Monaghan 047 30500

- Offaly County Council,  
Courthouse, Tullamore, Co. Offaly 0506 46800
- Roscommon County Council,  
Courthouse, Roscommon 0903 37100
- Sligo County Council,  
Riverside, Sligo 071 43221
- South Dublin County Council,  
Town Centre, Tallaght, Dublin 24 01 149000
- North Tipperary County Council,  
Courthouse, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary 067 31771
- South Tipperary County Council,  
County Hall, Emmet Street, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary 052 25399
- Waterford County Council,  
County Offices, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford 058 22000
- Westmeath County Council,  
County Buildings, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath 044 40861
- Wexford County Council,  
County Hall, Wexford 053 42211
- Wicklow County Council,  
County Offices, Wicklow 0404 20100

### **City Councils**

- Cork City Council, City Hall, Cork 021 966222
- Dublin City Council, City Hall, Dublin 2 01 6722222
- Galway City Council, City Hall, College Road, Galway 091 536400
- Limerick City Council, City Hall, Limerick 061 415799
- Waterford City Council, City Hall, Waterford 051 309900

### **Town Councils**

- Arklow Town Council,  
Town Hall, Arklow 0402 32819
- Athlone Town Council  
Town Hall, Athlone 0902 72107
- Athy Town Council,  
Rathstewart, Athy, Co. Kildare 0507 31444
- Ballina Town Council,  
Market Square, Ballina, Co. Mayo 096 21399
- Ballinasloe Town Council,  
Town Clerk's Office, Bridge St, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway 0905 42263
- Birr Town Council,  
Town Clerk's Office, Birr, Co. Offaly 0509 20187

- Bray Town Council,  
Town Hall, Bray, Co. Wicklow 01 2868285
- Buncrana Town Council,  
Civic Offices, St. Oran's Road, Buncrana, Co. Donegal 077 61198
- Bundoran Town Council,  
Town Clerk's Office, Bundoran, Co. Donegal 072 41230
- Carlow Town Council,  
Town Hall, Carlow 0503 31759
- Carrickmacross Town Council,  
Courthouse, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan 042 9663662
- Carrick-on-Suir Town Council,  
Town Hall, Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary 051 640032
- Cashel Town Council,  
Town Hall, Cashel, Co. Tipperary 062 61166
- Castlebar Town Council,  
Marsh House, Newtown, Castlebar, Co. Mayo 094 23350
- Castleblayney Town Council,  
Town Clerk's Office, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan 042 9740058
- Cavan Town Council,  
Town Hall, Cavan 049 4331397
- Ceannanas Mor Town Council,  
Headfort Place, Ceannanas Mor 046 40064
- Clonakilty Town Council,  
Town Hall, Clonakilty, Co. Cork 023 33380
- Clones Town Council,  
Courthouse, Clones 047 51018
- Cobh Town Council,  
Town Clerks Office, Cobh, Co. Cork 021 811307
- Dundalk Town Council,  
Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Dundalk, Co. Louth 042 9332276
- Dungarvan Town Council,  
Town Hall, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford 058 41111
- Ennis Town Council,  
Waterpark House, Drumbiggle, Ennis 065 6828040
- Enniscorthy Town Council,  
UDC Offices, Market Square, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford 054 33540
- Fermoy Town Council,  
Courthouse, Fermoy, Co. Cork 025 31155
- Killarney Town Council,  
Town Hall, Killarney, Co. Kerry 064 31023
- Kilrush Town Council,  
Town Clerk's Office, Kilrush, Co. Clare 065 9051047



- Kinsale Town Council,  
Municipal Hall, Kinsale, Co. Cork 021 772154
- Letterkenny Town Council,  
Council Offices, Cavehill, Letterkenny 074 25399
- Listowel Town Council,  
Town Hall, Charles Street, Listowel 068 21004
- Longford Town Council,  
Dublin Road, Longford 043 46474
- Macroom Town Council,  
Town Hall, Macroom 026 41545
- Mallow Town Council,  
County Council Offices, Annabella, Mallow 022 21542
- Midleton Town Council,  
Loughal Road, Midleton 021 631580
- Monaghan Town Council,  
1 Dublin Street, Monaghan 047 82600
- Naas Town Council,  
Town Hall, Naas 045 897232
- Navan Town Council,  
Town Hall, Watergate Street, Navan 046 29078
- Nenagh Town Council,  
c/o Courthouse, Nenagh 067 31241
- New Ross Town Council,  
Council Offices, The Tholsel, New Ross 051 421284
- Skibbereen Town Council,  
Town Clerk's Office, Skibbereen 028 21222
- Templemore Town Council,  
Town Hall, Templemore 0504 31496
- Thurles Town Council,  
Slievenamon Road, Thurles 0504 21433
- Tipperary Town Council,  
Dan Breen House, Tipperary 062 51179
- Tralee Town Council,  
Town Hall, Princes Quay, Tralee 066 7121633
- Trim Town Council,  
Town Hall, Trim 046 31238
- Tullamore Town Council,  
UDC Offices, O'Connor Square, Tullamore 0506 52470
- Westport Town Council,  
Castlebar Street, Westport 098 25888
- Wicklow Town Council,  
Town Hall, Wicklow 0404 67327

# POSITIVE POLITICS:

## Participation of Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities in the Electoral Process



The Africa Solidarity Centre is a voluntary membership organisation founded in 2000 and was officially launched by the Ambassador of the Republic of South Africa to Ireland in November 2001.

The principal aim of the organisation is to act as a focal point for the growing community of African immigrants in Ireland and to:

- Challenge the negative image of Africa and her people by organising cultural events and development education work.
- Work in solidarity with like-minded organisations to address the emerging needs of African immigrant communities in Ireland
- Encourage a healthy and more vigorous Africa-Ireland exchange

Africa Solidarity centre  
17 Rathfarnham Road  
Terenure, Dublin 6.  
Company Registration No: 350740  
Charity No: CHY 14980

Tel: +353 1 490 3237  
Fax: +353 1 490 3238  
Email: [africacentre@eircom.net](mailto:africacentre@eircom.net)  
Website: [www.africacentre.ie](http://www.africacentre.ie)