

# Some Thoughts on Policy for the EaP Countries based on Ireland's Experiences

Alan Barrett  
Economic and Social Research Institute  
&  
Trinity College Dublin

# Earlier views of emigration

- Emigration seen as “part of the problem” in Ireland’s lack of post-independence economic success
- Emigration meant a shrinking market
- Also a perception that we were losing the brightest and best (brain-drain)
- Even genetics were added to the argument (in addition to the rules of Catholic priesthood)

# A (slow) shift in attitude from the 1960s

- The possible benefits of emigration were beginning to be discussed and now these are more appreciated
  - Economic adjustment
  - The Diaspora
  - Return migration

# The Diaspora

- An emigrant's story
- Thomas FitzGerald was born in Ireland in 1830
- Some time in the 1840s, most likely around 1847 and the height of the Famine, he emigrated to the US
- He settled in Boston
- In 1963, his great-grandson John paid a return visit to Ireland

Here is a photo of John in Ireland



President Kennedy in 1963

# President Reagan in Ireland in 1984



President  
Obama  
in Ireland  
in 2011





The Irish Prime Minister with his “friends in high places”



# So might Diasporas be useful for home country?

- Political support
- Economic support via investment
- Tourism

But support cannot be assumed, especially if emigration (and the reasons for it) led to resentment

# Why might return migration be good?

- Extra people
- More importantly, people with enhanced skills
  
- BUT: this sort of “positive return” cannot be taken for granted
  - Need to equip those who leave
  - Need to provide a place that people want to return to (and not just economics)
  - Need to guard against social isolation

# To conclude

- The goals of economic and social policy don't change in the context of emigration
- Educate people to the greatest possible extent
- Provide a society that is free and meritocratic
- Make the Diaspora proud to be “insert country”