European Union │Sample answer

Impact of EU Expansion on Member States - 2016 Q4B

I have studied the impact of European Union (EU) enlargement on member states such as Ireland.

Economic Impacts

Membership of the European Union has been crucial for the economic growth of most member states. Ireland, for example, joined the EU in 1973. At the time, Ireland's economy relied heavily on the poorly developed agricultural sector. Due to funding from the EU combined with Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) attracted by Ireland's EU membership, and the low corporation tax rate of 12.5%, Ireland's economy quickly developed. Many Multinational Corporations (MNCs) are now located in ireland.

During the Celtic Tiger there was a huge labour shortage in Ireland. At its lowest, unemployment was just 4.5%. To help solve this problem, immigrants from other EU countries came to live and work in Ireland. The income tax earned by the government from these immigrants helped to fund education and health services.

However, there are some negative economic impacts of EU enlargement for member states such as Ireland. For example, Ireland relies heavily on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as well as exports to other EU countries. Therefore, Ireland is more vulnerable to economic downturns. Since the 2008 recession, Irish workers have benefited from the Schengen Agreement which allows people in EU countries to work freely in other EU countries. Foreign nationals make up 15% of the Irish workforce. 'Remittance money' is a problem in Ireland - this is when foreign nationals send money home to family in other countries instead of spending it here in Ireland. Racism and xenophobic bullying can also sometimes occur in workplaces.

Social Impacts

Due to the enlargement of the EU, member states such as Ireland are now multicultural socieities. About 12% of the population of Ireland are foreign nationals. This multiculturalism can be clearly seen in primary schools – many children are bilingual as they speak one language at home and

speak English at school. This is evident in the Irish education system, as a wide variety of languages are offered at Leaving Certificate level; including Polish, Arabic and more. Irish streets are full of restaurants selling different cuisines such as Italian. Polish shops such as Polonez can be found easily around the country. Often, supermarkets have aisles dedicated to different cuisines, promoting integration. Emigration from Ireland to other EU countries released pressure on Irish services during economic crises. For example, since 2008, 250,000 people have emigrated from Ireland, which helped to lower the Irish unemployment rate.

There are some negative social impacts of EU enlargement on member states. Racist attitudes and xenophobia have made it difficult for some foreign nationals to live comfortably in some EU countries. Also, the integration of foreign nationals into society can be an issue. Social stratification occurs in some places, which is when a large number of foreign nationals live together in certain areas. This can lead to segregation of foreign nationals and natives.