

# Global Irish

Ireland's Diaspora Policy

March 2015



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha  
agus Trádála  
Department of Foreign Affairs  
and Trade

**The Irish nation  
cherishes its  
special affinity  
with people of Irish  
ancestry living  
abroad who share  
its cultural identity  
and heritage**

**Our vision is a vibrant,  
diverse global Irish  
community, connected  
to Ireland and to  
each other.**

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# Contents

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<b>What's New in this Policy?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Forewords</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Why a Review of Diaspora Policy?</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Who are the Irish Diaspora?</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Why Engagement with the Diaspora is so Important</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>The Role of Government</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Supporting the Diaspora</b>	<b>25</b>
Emigrant Support Programme	25
Welfare	27
<b>Connecting with the Diaspora</b>	<b>31</b>
Whole of Government Approach	31
Implementation	32
Local Activation for Global Reach	32
Communication	34
Culture	36
St. Patrick's Day	38
Commemorations	39
<b>Facilitating Diaspora Engagement</b>	<b>41</b>
Partnerships	41
Networks	43
Returning Home	46
Diaspora Studies	47
<b>Recognising the Diaspora</b>	<b>49</b>
Presidential Distinguished Service Award for the Irish Abroad	49
The Certificate of Irish Heritage	50
<b>Evolving Diaspora Policy</b>	<b>52</b>
New Diaspora Communities	52
Alumni Engagement	53
<b>Annex 1 - Presidential Distinguished Service Award for the Irish Abroad</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Annex 2 - Membership of Interdepartmental Committee on the Irish Abroad</b>	<b>55</b>

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# What's New in this Policy?

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This is the first clear statement of Government of Ireland policy on the diaspora which recognises that Ireland has a unique and important relationship with its diaspora that must be nurtured and developed.

It defines Government's role to both drive and foster diaspora engagement in a way that:

**Supports:** those who have left Ireland and need or want support;

**Connects:** in an inclusive way with those, of all ages, around the world who are Irish, of Irish descent or have a tangible connection to Ireland, and wish to maintain a connection with Ireland and with each other;

**Facilitates:** a wide range of activity at local, national and international level designed to build on and develop two-way diaspora engagement;

**Recognises:** the wide variety of people who make up our diaspora and the important ongoing contribution that they have made, both individually and collectively, in shaping our development and our identity;

**Evolves:** to meet changing needs in changing times.

## Supporting the Diaspora

### We will:

- Move to multiannual grants under the Emigrant Support Programme where appropriate (p.26)
- Keep welfare at the heart of our approach to diaspora issues (p.27)
- Commit 1% of Emigrant Support Programme funding to quality assurance (p.27)
- Increase our focus on the issue of the mental health of emigrants (p.28)
- Support efforts to better equip those who are leaving, for short and long term periods of time, to understand their destinations (p.29)

## Connecting with the Diaspora

### We will:

- Explore working with Northern Ireland Connections and others to pursue an engagement to benefit the island of Ireland (p.17)
- Convene an Interdepartmental Committee on the Irish Abroad, including external stakeholders as required, to work on the delivery of the Diaspora Policy and examine issues affecting the Irish abroad and those seeking to return (p.32)
- Review the implementation of this policy after two years (p.32)
- Support local authorities in identifying and connecting with their diasporas (p.33)
- Improve communications and connectivity between Ireland and its diaspora. Two-way communication with the diaspora will be central to this engagement (p.34)
- Support coverage by the media of stories about the Irish diaspora through the Global Irish Media Fund (p.35)
- In 2015, seek suitable partners to pilot the initial phase of an initiative aimed at deepening the ties with Ireland of younger non-Irish born members of the Irish diaspora (p.38)
- Open the Emigrant Support Programme to projects which deepen links with the diaspora and promote a deeper understanding of Ireland globally through the commemoration of key historical events in Ireland, including the 1916 Rising (p.39)

## Facilitating Diaspora Engagement

### We will:

- Encourage Irish community organisations to achieve independently validated quality assurance standards and support them in so doing (p.41)
- Convene a Global Irish Civic Forum in Ireland in 2015, to discuss the challenges facing the Irish abroad and to capture the voice of ordinary Irish emigrants (p.42); this will be complemented by a resource for Irish organisations worldwide, beginning with those funded by the ESP (p.43)
- Convene a new format Fourth Global Irish Economic Forum (19 – 21 November) with increased engagement with organisations in Ireland, greater female participation, and more participation by young people (p.44)
- Arrange more structured and more frequent Regional Network meetings (p.44)
- Support business networks to facilitate the success of Irish people at home and abroad (p.45)
- Focus on creating more opportunities as part of the economic recovery so that those who left the country because of economic need can return (p.46)
- Support efforts to use Ireland as a hub for research into the potential and reach of diasporas and the practical application of such research (p.47)

## Recognising the Diaspora

### We will:

- Encourage Irish people, organisations and communities to engage with the nomination process for the Presidential Distinguished Service Award (p.49)
- Undertake an evaluation of the operation of the Certificate of Irish Heritage scheme (p.50)

## Evolving Diaspora Policy

### We will:

- Support research so that we can better understand the diaspora and their needs (p.17)
- Ensure diaspora policy is responsive to evolving needs (p.52)
- Connect with new diaspora communities (p.52)
- Launch an alumni challenge fund to provide seed-funding to new collaborative initiatives by Irish institutions to target their Irish and non-Irish graduates working internationally (p.53)

# Forewords



The voice of this small nation is hugely amplified by the many millions around the globe who are Irish by birth or by descent or by affiliation. Our diaspora are an important part of our story as a nation. They are part of who we are as a people, what we have done and where we have gone in this world.

Their existence is the end result of a long history of emigration which for many was not considered a matter of choice.

As we progressed into the twenty first century we thought that those days would remain behind us. But the economic crash of 2008 once again deprived our people, and particularly our young people, of the jobs and opportunities at home that they deserve.

From the beginning of its term of office, this Government made a strategic decision to invest the time and resources needed to rebuild Ireland's reputation internationally. The task was a formidable one.

But I believe the strategy and the enormous effort needed to implement it have been fully vindicated by events. Our economy is now firmly in recovery. The credit for that lies with the Irish people, and the sacrifices made to put the Irish economy back on a sound footing.

Once again we are creating opportunities for our people here and we want them to be able to come home.

My decision to appoint Jimmy Deenihan as Ireland's first Minister for Diaspora Affairs points to the particular importance the Government attaches to engagement with those who left Ireland and with those of Irish heritage globally. Through the Global Irish Economic Forum, we have been able to bring leading influencers together around the shared objective of bolstering Ireland's recovery. The Government remains committed to the further development of the Global Irish Network.

There are many reasons why it is so important to embrace our diaspora - from supporting those that are vulnerable, to creating cultural connections as well as creating opportunities for investment and jobs.

Ireland's Diaspora Policy also puts in place a range of initiatives that will improve how we connect with the Irish abroad and will promote opportunities for those who wish to come back.

The publication of this first ever comprehensive statement of Ireland's Diaspora Policy will ensure that we continually build upon and strengthen our links with our diaspora at all levels across government.

**Enda Kenny T.D.**

*Taoiseach*



Wherever they have gone in the world, our people have made a positive contribution to the communities in which they have chosen to make their homes.

For many, the emigrant experience has been a positive one, providing new experiences and opportunities. For others, it has been more difficult and we recognise the importance of providing support for the more vulnerable of our emigrants.

But our relationship with the diaspora is about much more than welfare. This size of our diaspora gives us a reach and a voice throughout the world that is the envy of many other nations. We have been very fortunate to be able to draw upon their experience and expertise in overcoming our recent economic difficulties and getting this country back on its feet and creating jobs.

We are committed to continuing to get people back to work through our Action Plan for Jobs and Pathways to Work strategies. The results are now being translated into more full-time, and better, jobs being created, and falling unemployment.

This in turn provides job opportunities for our emigrants who wish to return - and we want to see them do so.

It is important that we maintain and develop the connections that we have with those who are Irish, of Irish ancestry and those who share our cultural identity and heritage. So I am pleased to see that communications is a core theme in this Policy and we must ensure that we are proactive in reaching out to the Irish abroad to strengthen our relationship.

We must also ensure that our relationship with the diaspora remains a dynamic one that can evolve to meet changing circumstances. As we strengthen our economic recovery we look forward to continuing to work with the diaspora to ensure that Ireland's future is secured for all of our people.

The cranes are on the skyline again, the jobs are emerging again. A generation stands ready to come home to a Republic of equality, of opportunity, of hopes and dreams and possibilities.

That is what we are working to deliver.

**Joan Burton T.D.**

*Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection*



Ireland's relationship with its diaspora is complex and long standing. It precedes the foundation of the State and touches all corners of the world. I want that relationship to be a positive one for all - those at home and those abroad; recent emigrants and those whose ancestors left these shores a hundred years ago or more.

While this policy is the first ever comprehensive overview of Government engagement with the diaspora, it clearly reflects a longstanding and rich relationship between Ireland and the Irish abroad.

Like any strong relationship, this engagement is multi-faceted recognising that the diaspora is not a homogenous group but is as diverse as the population itself. Our diaspora is both an asset and a responsibility. For some the journey has been hugely positive while for others emigration has been a cause of pain and heartache.

This policy seeks to recognise the immense contribution made by Irish diaspora that have been successful overseas. Those that want to give back to Ireland have done so in a myriad of ways, including through the Global Irish Network and the Global Irish Economic Forum. By encouraging friends abroad to visit Ireland, by setting up businesses here, and by introducing people in their adopted homes to the richness of Irish culture, Irish people all over the world have played their part in Ireland's recovery in recent years, and in restoring Ireland's reputation and place in the world after a period of unprecedented economic challenges.

A priority for the Government is those for whom the journey has not been so positive. The needs of Irish emigrants will continue to remain at the heart of our engagement through the Emigrant Support Programme (ESP). A Global Irish Civic Forum to be held this year will help us to build on the work of the ESP, to facilitate sharing of ideas and lessons learned by the organisations that do tireless work in this space, and to hear the voices of ordinary Irish emigrants.

One of the main themes running through this Policy is that of connectivity. Our network of embassies and consulates around the world will continue their outreach to the diaspora engaging with Irish communities. We will build on that outreach by availing of the opportunities presented by fast evolving technology which, in recent years, has transformed the ability to stay in touch and to remain connected.

Our Global Irish Hub for the Irish abroad will provide a portal for the diaspora - a single place to find information on support services, Irish heritage, staying in touch, business and education, finding Irish networks in other countries and information on returning to Ireland. We encourage those born in Ireland and those of Irish descent to register on the Hub to subscribe to the Global Irish Newsletter which will be issued on a regular basis providing news and information about developments in Ireland across a range of sectors, and stories from Irish communities around the world.

This Diaspora Policy contains a range of measures, big and small, to facilitate the best possible experience of emigration at all stages of the journey from pre-departure, life overseas and we hope, in many cases, returning home to a growing economy. Since the first Annual Action Plan for Jobs in 2012, 80,000 jobs have been created and the Government's goal is to provide full employment by 2018 which will provide many opportunities for returning emigrants to find employment in Ireland.

**Charles Flanagan T.D.**

*Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade*



Since I was appointed as Ireland's first Minister for Diaspora Affairs on 11 July 2014, I have been working together with officials from the Department of the Taoiseach and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on producing this policy. I would like to acknowledge the input of the former Tánaiste, Eamon Gilmore T.D. who initiated the review of diaspora policy at the Global Irish Economic Forum in October 2013.

Submissions were sought from interested parties both at home and abroad and over 130 were received. I would like to thank all those who made submissions and also the many organisations and individuals whom I had discussions with here in Ireland and during my visits to the USA, UK, Australia, UAE, Malaysia and France. Their perspectives have enhanced the development of this policy.

Emigration is always an aspect of life on an island, and Ireland's experience is no different in that regard. Since the 17th century, especially after the Great Famine, and during successive waves of emigration which followed, people have always been leaving from, and returning to, our shores. Though the numbers leaving are thankfully now falling, every family in Ireland has been affected by emigration at some point. It is part of our national story and psyche. It is, quite simply, part of who we are.

There are a huge number of people living overseas who are Irish by birth or descent, our global Irish. In fact, Ireland's greatest resource has always been our people and the valuable contribution that our community abroad has made to Ireland throughout our history is widely acknowledged and respected by the Government and the people of Ireland. The publication of this policy is the latest example of the emphasis placed by the Government on our relationship with them.

The policy will promote and protect our continued efforts to support the vibrant, diverse global Irish community, connected to Ireland and to each other. We will ensure that welfare for those in need will remain at the heart of what we do, while also working to support the many other aspects of Irish culture that bind us including music, sport and the Irish language.

The policy recommends a number of actions that will enhance the connection between the diaspora and Ireland. The fact that it will be driven and implemented by a specific Ministry which spans both the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, will ensure it is implemented effectively. I will chair an Interdepartmental Committee which will ensure a whole of government approach towards diaspora issues.

While the policy is very much focussed on welfare, especially for those who are challenged and vulnerable, there are a number of actions proposed which will further enhance the connections between Ireland and its diaspora. Local authorities will be encouraged to put in place their own diaspora business networks using the Local Enterprise Offices as the focal point. The policy also makes provision for an alumni challenge fund to provide seed funding for new collaborative initiatives by Irish education institutions to target their Irish and non Irish graduates working internationally. In addition, a new initiative, "Fréamhacha", will be introduced in 2015 to provide an opportunity for younger members of the Irish diaspora to come to Ireland on a short visit to immerse themselves in Irish history and culture to ensure their links with the country will remain alive.

We welcome and invite comments and responses to this policy. I will ensure it continues to evolve to meet changing needs in changing times.

**Jimmy Deenihan T.D.**  
*Minister of State for Diaspora Affairs*

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# Introduction

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**The Irish have an affinity to and with each other that is not bound nor defined by geography or time. This first ever comprehensive statement of Ireland’s diaspora policy is firmly rooted in Article 2 of the Constitution of Ireland which states that “the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage”. There can be no more clear-cut statement of the importance of the relationship between Ireland and our diaspora.**

**Over many generations large numbers of Irish people have had to leave Ireland and make their homes and lives elsewhere. But the bond between those who stayed and those who left has remained strong and enduring. Moreover, wherever they went, an early act of the emigrant Irish was to find other Irish and construct new communities of support and solidarity with each other.**

The net result of generations of emigration on that scale is that today the Irish nation stretches far beyond the boundaries of our small island state. For a state of just over four and a half million people and an island of about six million people, it is believed that there are up to 70 million people around the world claiming Irish ancestry and heritage.

Successive generations of the Irish overseas have given Ireland a reputation and reach that other nations envy. However, there is no doubt that emigration continues to be perceived as a loss to Ireland. Most strikingly, it represents a loss of young people, with their energy, innovation and capacity to drive change, though for many of those who leave, it opens up a world of new opportunities. For others, emigration can be a challenging experience and they need support. Our national diaspora policy is relevant to all of these groups.

In rebuilding our international reputation, the diaspora have made a real and significant contribution to Ireland’s recovery and development. In recent times of economic crisis we have been able to draw upon their skills and expertise to address the many challenges that we faced.

Many emigrants return to these shores, often bringing with them a rich variety of experience which has also made a valuable contribution.

As the Government continues to focus on securing our recovery and creating jobs there will be more opportunities for our emigrants to return and we will be communicating these opportunities to them.

While Ireland is recognised as a leader in diaspora engagement, it is appropriate and timely that the Government now takes stock of our relationship with our diaspora and identifies clear priorities for our engagement in the future, recognising that the diaspora is both an asset and a responsibility.

This document states that “welfare is at the heart of our diaspora policy”. That is the case, but our relationship with the Irish abroad is about much more than welfare. The Irish abroad are successful, resourceful and creative. They have built families and businesses, arguably even countries. Many Irish abroad have both the capacity and the desire to contribute to Ireland’s continuing recovery and growth and we want to work with them.



The task of deepening relations with our diaspora begins at home. That does not mean that there is some hierarchy of importance between the different strands of the Irish at home and abroad – on the contrary, an authentic relationship between the Irish in Ireland and those abroad needs to be one of equality and mutual respect.

This policy seeks to build on that emerging new consciousness of the importance of our diaspora and of closer ties between us and them. It sets out why a review of diaspora policy was undertaken and some of the key findings from that process. It clearly identifies areas for government action and themes that require further development. This policy neither aspires to nor claims to be an all-encompassing reference document – rather it should be read as a guide to the work ahead.

Ireland takes a broad definition of diaspora including former and current Irish migrants abroad and their descendants overseas. For many, the linkages to Ireland are a significant element of their personal identity, regardless of how many generations of their family have lived outside Ireland. Of course the diaspora is constantly in flux, shifting in number, location and connection to Ireland. This policy aims to capture emerging trends within the diaspora, insofar as that is possible given current data gaps, in order to inform policy and programme responses to their needs and preferences and to project future needs.

Through political and economic upheaval, the nation, which includes all those who feel a bind to Ireland, has worked together for the betterment of the State and those that reside there. They have never stopped giving back. The most recent wave of emigration from Ireland, where 240,000 Irish people left the State, showed some different characteristics to those previous generations of emigrants.

While a significant number of emigrants still moved to the UK, Australia clearly emerged as the initial destination for many. Those who left were the best educated emigrants to leave Ireland with almost half having been educated to third level. In addition, they remain the most connected to Ireland, as modern communication technology ensures that they can remain in touch with family and friends and keep up to date with Irish news and media.

In times gone by, leaving Ireland was often perceived as a life sentence particularly by those who were left behind. That is no longer the case and attitudes to emigration have changed along with the changing nature of emigration. However, current emigrants, like those from previous waves of emigration, are not a homogenous group. For Government policy to remain relevant it must reflect that diversity.

Throughout this policy you will find the voices of ordinary Irish emigrants and their descendants. We will work to continue to capture their stories to understand our emigrants' experience of emigration and to shape Government policy to their needs.



Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Charles Flanagan T.D., chats with Dubliners Ed Coughlan and Noel Browne at an Irish elders lunch club at the Falconwood Community Centre in the London Borough of Bexley. Credit: Malcolm McNally



## Karen and Robert Hennessy Perth Australia

In April 2008 we left Ireland to travel the world. At the time Karen was working as a PE teacher in Malahide, Dublin and I was a civil engineer in the same coastal village. We landed in Australia on a Working Holiday visa in July of that same year with the intention of working to save for travelling home. After the global financial crisis hit we realised that the work opportunities would not be in Ireland if we returned so we went through a process of going from one visa to another.

After the birth of our daughter Laoise in 2010, Karen along with a long time friend from Ireland, Eimear Beattie, set up a non for profit group called Irish Families in Perth to connect with other mothers in Perth and create a social support system with the emphasis on cultivating Irish heritage for the children of recent immigrants. In 2013 they re-formed the dormant St Patrick's Day Parade in Perth. I was employed by a large construction company as a construction manager and intermittently worked away from home and also was part of the St Patrick's Day Festival committee.

Our daughter is now four and we have no immediate plans to move back to Ireland but return home once a year to visit family and friends. We feel very much connected to Ireland through our work within the Irish community; but realise that Australia is our home for the foreseeable future.

**"After the financial crisis we realised that opportunities would not be in Ireland."**

# Why a Review of Diaspora Policy?

Given Ireland's history of emigration, relations with the diaspora have always been a part of our political, social and economic life. It is clear that over the last ten to fifteen years, there has been a deepening recognition of that fact. For one thing, the insertion of the statement of affinity with the diaspora into the Constitution took place in 1998, in the aftermath of the Good Friday Agreement.

In 2002 the Report of the Task Force on Policy Regarding Emigrants, an independent advisory group established by Government, was published. The report made a number of recommendations, many of which were taken on board. For example, on foot of the Task Force Report, the Government established the Irish Abroad Unit within the Department of Foreign Affairs and set up the Emigrant Support Programme to provide support to organisations assisting emigrants. These structures for supporting and engaging with Irish communities around the world remain in place.



Immigration,  
Emigration and  
Net Migration,  
2007–2014  
Source: CSO

In 2009 and 2010, in response to the economic crisis, the Global Irish Economic Forum and the Global Irish Network were established. The Forum and the Network provide mechanisms for some of the most successful Irish overseas to connect with Ireland and identify ways to contribute to Ireland's continued recovery and economic development. Much has changed in the ten years since the establishment of the Irish Abroad Unit. Three changes in particular have impacted on this review of policy.

- (i) In 2004, it was believed, or at least hoped, that mass emigration from Ireland was a thing of the past. That was not the case and, since the economic crisis took hold, over 240,000 Irish people have left the country. Where in 2004, we were looking at ways to connect with, and support, those who had left Ireland in large numbers in previous generations, by 2008 we were once again witnessing new mass emigration from Ireland. **The issues of emigration and diaspora are at once legacy issues and live ones.**
- (ii) **Communications have evolved hugely in that period.** Current means of mobile communications and widely available social media were in their infancy at that time – Facebook was set up in the same year as the Irish Abroad Unit, Skype was established just a year earlier, and other networks and tools, such as Twitter did not yet exist.

A communications revolution has taken place over the last ten years, coinciding latterly with the new wave of mass emigration from Ireland. A challenge for Government is to harness these new ways of communicating, in particular, for better two-way communication with recent emigrants.

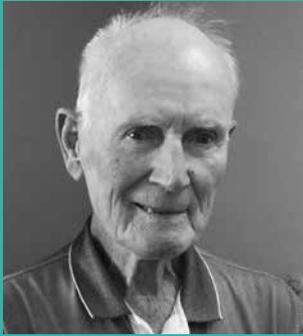
- (iii) **The appointment of a Minister for Diaspora Affairs** for the first time in Ireland's history underlined that managing relations with the diaspora is a whole of Government responsibility. This is further strengthened with the allocation of dedicated resources in the Department of the Taoiseach.

These developments set the background for the first clear statement of Government policy on the diaspora.

A diaspora policy will not create or define the diaspora. What it can do is contribute to the activation and mobilisation of the Irish overseas, and further a sense that they are part of a community.



*Minister Deenihan meets Sr. Romanus Dee, Dr. Patricia O'Sullivan, Sr. Maureen Lovett and Sr. Lucilla Prendiville, St. John of God Sisters in Subiaco, Perth, Australia*



## Bill Moore Perth Australia

**I emigrated to Australia in 1952 after moving first to England and working in construction. I was the youngest of 14 children and two of my brothers had gone to Melbourne and recommended that I join them. I left from Southampton by boat with another brother in January 1952.**

I had planned to work in construction again but it was so hot when I arrived in Melbourne in February that I went to the immigration department and asked them what else I could do. They told me they were looking for bus drivers, so I did the exams and ended up driving double decker buses for a year and a half. After my bus driving experience I returned to construction and worked on many projects over the years, including the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Scheme.

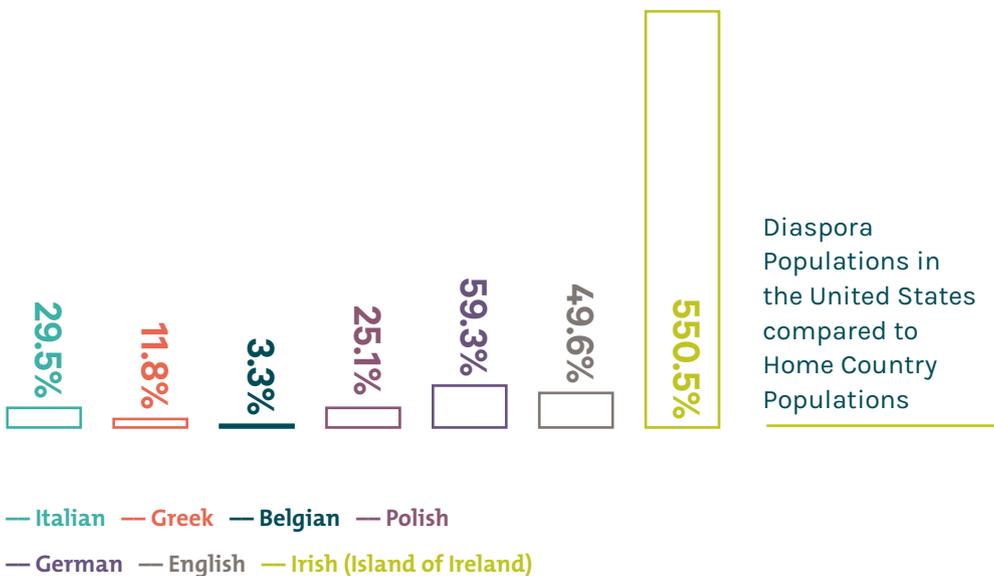
I married an Australian and raised six children in Melbourne. I have always stayed connected to Ireland, though only managed to visit home twice since moving to Australia. My last visit was in 1993. However, I speak to my cousin Pat in Caherconlish every week and stay in touch with nieces and nephews. I am a regular visitor to the Irish Australian Support and Resource Bureau where I like to catch up with my compatriots over a game of cards.

**"I was the youngest of 14 children and two of my brothers had gone to Melbourne and recommended that I join them."**

# Who are the Irish Diaspora?

The Irish diaspora comprises emigrants from Ireland and their descendants around the world and those with a tangible connection to Ireland. This is not static. The degree of awareness of Ireland among the diaspora may fluctuate from time to time. Some people may have the heritage, but neither the interest nor knowledge. Interest can be prompted by major external events, by changes in circumstance or by chance.

The scale of Ireland's diaspora, compared to the population of the country, is truly remarkable though it is difficult to be precise about the size of the diaspora. How population data is collected and recorded varies from country to country. In addition, the degree to which immigrants and their descendants retain, to some extent, the identity of their "home" country can vary hugely from location to location and even from family to family.



Some estimate that the Irish diaspora may total as many as 70 million people. There is no clear evidence to support this figure, but it certainly runs into the tens of millions.

- The greatest verifiable number is to be found in North America, with some **35 million claiming a degree of Irish heritage in the United States and 4.5 million in Canada, and several million more professing Scots-Irish ancestry.**
- For reasons of shared history and proximity, there is an enormous Irish population in Britain. There are approximately 600,000 people born on the island of Ireland currently living in England, but the number of people with Irish heritage is many times that. There is no exact figure, but it has been estimated that **up to one-in-four people in Britain may have some Irish ancestry.**
- The **Irish diaspora in Canada**, as measured in the 2011 Canadian census, was just over 4.5m or roughly 14% of the total Canadian population.
- In their 2011 census, over 2 million people in Australia said they were of Irish descent which equates to over 10% of the total population.
- Other Irish communities are to be found all over the world, diverse in their size and composition, from some 7,000 first-generation Irish in the United Arab Emirates to more than 500,000 people of Irish descent in Argentina. There are small, but active and growing Irish communities all across Asia.

### The diaspora is diverse

The Irish diaspora comprises people of different interests, different beliefs, different reasons for being outside Ireland and holding different views of both Ireland and their host countries. It is young people and old people; those who have found success abroad and those who have not; those who have left Ireland by choice and those who left by compulsion; and those who were not born in Ireland but are descended from those who did. In addition, we also now include a growing number of people who have spent time living, studying and working in Ireland and then returned home to their home countries, often with Irish born children.

The historical diversity of Ireland is mirrored in the diaspora. People left from the island of Ireland, from both sides of the border, before there was a border or an Irish State. Distinct traditions developed, such as the many in North America who identify as Scots-Irish. We are open to working with Northern Ireland Connections and others to pursue an engagement to benefit the island of Ireland.

We acknowledge and welcome this diversity. As we seek to connect the members of the diaspora, we know that we must target and calibrate our efforts for different audiences. We will continue to support research so that we can better understand the diaspora, and their needs.

The support of emigrants, in particular those who have left Ireland and need or want support, will continue to be a primary focus for government engagement with the diaspora. That does not diminish our work to engage with second, third and subsequent generation Irish around the world. As emigrants settle, their children, and their children's children, look at Ireland in different ways and seek different ways of connecting, and we will also respond to this.





## Gráinne Mellon London England

I suppose I was lucky in that I left Ireland for an opportunity, rather than for necessity. I had a training contract with one of the big five law firms but had always wanted to be a barrister and to do international law and human rights work. When I was offered a full scholarship to qualify in London and a place in Chambers, it was an offer I couldn't refuse. I remember feeling very sad leaving Dublin though and it took me quite a while to settle into London. For the first year or so, I was always plotting my return. As time has passed though, I've really grown to love London and what it has to offer as a city, particularly for young people.

It means a lot to me to stay connected to Ireland and to give back where I can. The Irish community in London is a great way to do that. I'm the Chair of the London Irish Lawyers Association, which is the networking body for solicitors and barristers and often the first port of call for new arrivals to the city. I'm also one of the IIBN's Future Leaders- which means that I have been paired with a senior Irish lawyer for coaching and mentoring. There is a real tradition of senior Irish executive and entrepreneurs "giving back" to the next generation and I feel very lucky to have all the support and input that provides me with.

I love Ireland and go back as much as I can. I always imagine myself coming home at some stage- but for now, I'm enjoying all the opportunities London has to offer.

"I've really grown to love London and what it has to offer as a city, particularly for young people."



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# Why Engagement with the Diaspora is so Important

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**The first and principal reason for engaging with our diaspora is a simple one – because our Constitution requires it. The Constitution in effect declares that the Irish at home and the Irish abroad are one community. With that comes the responsibilities and possibilities of community.**

**This first statement of diaspora policy sets out in the clearest way yet how we are giving life and effect to the constitutional imperative.**

Ireland today draws enormous benefit from a diaspora that has been growing for more than 200 years. The energy and accomplishments of members of the diaspora build Ireland's reach and reputation in the world. To ensure this continues, it is important that we mobilise new people, build connections and make it possible for people to connect with Ireland.

We engage the diaspora to enrich Ireland in every way, to extend our reach in the world and to give a sense of belonging to the many Irish and Irish-descended people around the world. We learn from our diaspora and incorporate their experiences from other countries in all aspects of Irish life.

Our overarching goal is to deepen the connections between Ireland and the Irish overseas. Our engagement goes far beyond self interest. It is about developing and deepening long-term relationships.

We aim:

- to support Irish emigrants in making the best lives possible in their countries of residence;
- to help emigrants and their descendants to develop and maintain their Irish identity and their affinity and connections with Ireland;
- to work in partnership with members of the diaspora to contribute to continued peace and prosperity on the island of Ireland.

The **diaspora is both an asset and a responsibility.**

Diaspora engagement requires a sustained, long term effort. Successive Governments have shown a commitment to the diaspora. This is evidenced by the level of emigrant support funding maintained through years of cutbacks and 2015 will see the first increases in expenditure on diaspora issues since before the financial crisis.

Diaspora engagement must be two-way. **Our relationship must be built on trust, respect and reciprocity.** There will be benefit for Ireland and for the Irish both at home and abroad, but we can only make significant progress by working together. As a starting point, we must also support those in need.

Engaging with the diaspora is about building for the future.

### Review Process

In October 2013, the Government announced that a review of our diaspora policy would be undertaken. In the course of a public consultation, more than 130 written submissions were received. A list of these submissions is available on the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website. There has been ongoing dialogue with stakeholders at home and abroad, led by the Minister for Diaspora Affairs.

Two key themes emerged from the consultation:

#### (i) Representation

There were demands for the creation of a new post of a minister for the diaspora and, in July 2014, we responded to this with the appointment of Mr. Jimmy Deenihan T.D. to fill this new role.

There were also demands for voting rights for the Irish overseas. The Constitutional Convention has recommended extending voting rights in Presidential elections to citizens who are resident outside of the State, including those in Northern Ireland. See Page 21 for an update on this issue.

**and**

#### (ii) Communications

There were calls for the Government to communicate more, and more effectively, with those who have left Ireland, and to facilitate communication between Irish communities around the world. We need to be better at connecting with different groups within the diaspora, in particular making use of new technologies, and this is taken up on page 34.

In addition, this document draws on reviews, evaluations and audits conducted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade over the years, as well as the ongoing engagement of the embassies and consulates with Irish communities.

This document does not aim to invent or re-invent diaspora policy. Instead, it aims to draw on our experience to date and add to the good work that is already in place including through hearing and responding to external views. In order to remain relevant, diaspora policy must be active and responsive, creating new engagements as well as refreshing and maintaining existing ones.

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**Henry Ford's father, William Ford, was born in Ballinascorthy, West Cork, in 1826 and emigrated, initially to Canada and then to the United States. On a trip to Ireland in 1912, Henry Ford visited the area to reconnect with his roots. In 1917, Henry Ford established a factory manufacturing tractors in Cork. This was to become the first Ford plant in Europe, which at its peak employed 1,800 people. The plant, which ceased production in 1984, had an enormous impact on the life of Cork city and county both economically and socially.**

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The issue of voting rights is of enormous importance to many Irish citizens abroad. They have expressed this through well organised and vocal campaigns and in submissions to this review of policy.

In addition, meeting in September 2013, the members of the Constitutional Convention came out clearly in favour of citizens resident outside the State having the right to vote in Presidential elections, including those in Northern Ireland.

An extension of voting rights to Irish citizens outside the State would be welcomed by many in the diaspora. It would allow them to deepen their engagement with Ireland and to play a more active role in Irish society. It would further the wider goal of enhancing diaspora engagement. However, it would also be challenging to introduce and to manage. A range of issues

would arise in this context, including policy, legal and practical issues.

For example, a key policy issue is the precise eligibility for any extended franchise. Ireland has a large number of citizens resident outside the State and generous conditions for passing that citizenship down through the generations, including to those who have never visited or engaged with Ireland. There are also significant practical issues which must be given due consideration.

In light of the foregoing the Government has asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, in cooperation with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Minister for Diaspora Affairs to analyse the policy, legal and practical issues arising and to report back to Government.



*President and Mrs. Higgins meeting with members of the Irish community in the Chapelle Saint Patrick, Irish College, Paris*

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## Kieran Bergin London England

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**I am from Athy in Co Kildare. My parents are working class people. My brother and I take great pride in our background. I found growing up at home a bit like 'the Good, Bad and the Ugly'. I have some fantastic memories and friends and family back there. But, there was also very dark times.**

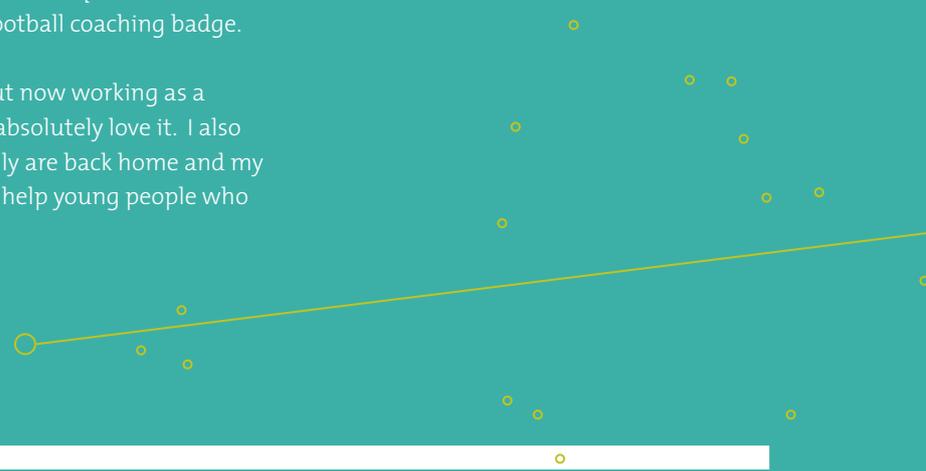
As a child I loved sport, it was my way to release and I was passionate about Gaelic games and football. In my teens I started to experiment with drink and drugs. I was clever at school but I fell into that world of drink and drugs. I got myself into all sorts of trouble. I don't blame anyone for it, it was my choice. I was addicted to class A drugs by the time I was 15.

As I got older I realised I couldn't do it anymore. I eventually fled from Ireland to save my life. I ended up homeless when I was 20 and went to the London Irish Centre in Camden. They sent me to a day centre for young homeless people called New Horizon Youth Centre where I got loads of help. They were fantastic to me, giving help around my housing situation, my education and employment and my addiction. They allowed me to be myself and they showed me how best to express myself.

In the six years I have been in London I have achieved a lot. I have battled my addictions and I currently am two years clean from drugs and sober. I have gained employment and put myself through college. I am qualified to work in health and social care and I have secured an FA football coaching badge.

I am currently back at New Horizon Youth Centre but now working as a support worker with young homeless people and I absolutely love it. I also feel connected to Ireland, it is my heritage. My family are back home and my heart is there. I would love to go there one day and help young people who may be experiencing the same problems that I had.

**"I also feel connected to Ireland, it is my heritage. My family are back home and my heart is there."**



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# The Role of Government

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The members of Ireland's diaspora have been engaging with Ireland, and with each other, since before there was a State.

The Government is just one part of the complex web of networks and organisations that connect people in Ireland and across all continents under the single banner of being Irish. The Irish Government recognises the rich and varied nature of the global Irish community and wishes to broaden and deepen our links with them for mutual benefit.

Our role is primarily one of support and facilitation. Financial support is a key part of this, as described below, but it is also about institutional support, for example through Ireland's network of embassies and consulates.

Overall, it is the Government's role to both drive and foster diaspora engagement in a way that:

**Supports:** those who have left Ireland and need or want support

**Connects:** in an inclusive way with those, young and old, around the world who are Irish, of Irish descent or have a tangible connection to Ireland and wish to maintain a connection.

**Facilitates:** a wide range of activity at local, national and international level designed to build on and develop two-way diaspora engagement.

**Recognises:** the wide variety of people who make up our diaspora and the important ongoing contribution that they have made, both individually and collectively, in shaping our development and our identity.

**Evolves:** to meet changing needs in changing times.



## Jennifer Gaffney Atlanta United States

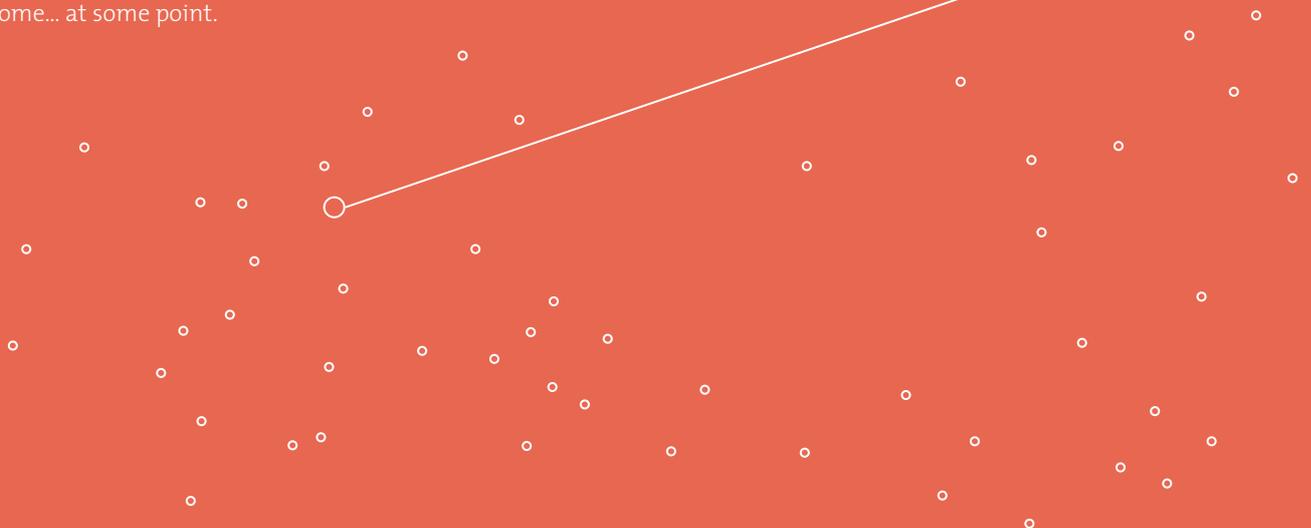
I emigrated to the United States in June 2008 following a job offer that brought me initially to Greenville, South Carolina before moving to Atlanta, Georgia in March 2009. I had always envisioned spending a number of years in the US so when the opportunity came my way at the beginning of the economic downturn, it seemed like a chance worth taking.

I am lucky to be able to travel home to Roscommon to visit family a few times a year and I am grateful that Atlanta has a large Irish community which helps to keep that connection to home year-round.

I am actively involved in a number of Irish business and social networks in Atlanta and enjoy keeping up with the daily news from home through online Irish newspapers and the Irish-Atlanta Connection on Facebook and Twitter.

Although I am quite settled in Atlanta, I keeps an eye on job postings as well as companies opening offices in Ireland because I would eventually like to return home... at some point.

**"I am grateful that Atlanta has a large Irish community which helps to keep that connection to home year-round."**



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# Supporting the Diaspora

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While many of our emigrants are better equipped than before for the demands of emigration, there are still those who remain vulnerable and for whom emigration is a challenging experience.

At a policy level, we seek to take account of the needs of departing and returning emigrants and of the needs of second, third and subsequent generation Irish around the world.

In 2014, we provided financial support to **210 organisations** working with emigrants and the diaspora in **over 20 countries** spread across **five continents**.

## Emigrant Support Programme

The Emigrant Support Programme is a tangible expression of the Government's support of, commitment to, and interest in the global Irish community. It aims to strengthen the international Irish community and its bond with Ireland. The Irish Abroad Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade manages and co-ordinates the programme in partnership with Ireland's embassies and consulates abroad.

In the period 2004-2014, the Emigrant Support Programme assisted over 470 organisations in more than 30 countries, with grants totalling over €126m. Grants ranged from very small amounts for grass-roots community and voluntary groups, to larger allocations awarded to non profit organisations operating on a large scale. The details of grants awarded in each year are available on the website of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The Emigrant Support Programme funds projects that will:

- Celebrate, maintain and strengthen the links between Ireland and the Global Irish;
- Address the diverse and evolving needs of Irish emigrants, especially the elderly, disadvantaged and vulnerable;
- Facilitate access to statutory and voluntary services in their country of residence for Irish emigrants;
- Foster a more vibrant sense of community and of Irish identity;
- Further the outcomes of the Global Irish Economic Forum;
- Support business networks to connect Irish people to each other at home and abroad;
- Research and define the emerging needs of Irish communities abroad;
- Support development of new ways to communicate and connect with the increasingly diverse global Irish, including non-traditional diasporas;
- Improve awareness and understanding of the emigrant and diaspora experience.

While the Programme is primarily designed to assist Irish community and voluntary organisations in delivering these goals, it also supports strategic initiatives within its overall framework.

### Emigrant Support Programme Sector Breakdown 2011-2014



#### Ongoing Funding Commitment

In Budget 2015, the Government allocated €12.595 million to supporting emigrants and engaging with the diaspora. This sum included maintaining the Emigrant Support Programme at €11.595 million in 2015, together with an additional €1 million for new diaspora projects and initiatives which will have a particular focus on supporting local communities to develop relationships with their diasporas.

This funding will allow the important work that has been done to support emigrants to continue. It will also allow the Government to invest in new projects and initiatives designed to further broaden and deepen Ireland's engagement with its global diaspora, and their engagement with each other, in line with our diaspora policy.

#### Multiannual Funding

We will move towards indicative multiannual funding arrangements with some of our larger partners. This will be based on demonstrated capacity to deliver quality services and outcomes and on an existing track record with the Emigrant Support Programme. Before being considered for multiannual funding, an organisation would need to complete a satisfactory audit and capacity assessment undertaken by, or on behalf of, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

This will enable a more strategic engagement with these organisations, setting shared goals over a number of years, to maximise the benefit for Irish emigrants. In the first instance, this change will be aimed at the larger recipients of Emigrant Support Programme funding in Britain. If successful, a wider roll-out can be considered.

## Small grants

The application and reporting requirements of the Emigrant Support Programme are rigorous and applicants for large and small grants are faced with the same application process. While rigour is warranted in the management of public monies, we should ensure that such rigour is focused where it is most needed.

20% of all Emigrant Support Programme grants in 2014 were for sums of less than €5,000. Many of our partner organisations have a remarkable impact with these small amounts. Often, these are organisations with established records and relationships with the Programme. We will look at ways of simplifying the application process for recipients of amounts less than €5,000, taking into account their record of delivery and financial management, with a view to rolling out changes in 2016.

## Quality Assurance

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade disburses significant sums to support emigrant and wider diaspora initiatives in Ireland and around the world. Robust processes are required to ensure value for money for the taxpayers who fund these projects and programmes and the best possible outcomes for those they are intended to benefit.

**Rigorous quality assurance is essential to protect the integrity of the programme for the long-term.**

In 2014, a number of external audits of Emigrant Support Programme funded organisations were undertaken. This is part of a programme of audits which will continue annually, covering organisations in different locations, of different scales and with diverse mandates.

We will work with partner organisations to improve their capacity to deliver services to the global Irish. **In Britain, we will work with Irish in Britain to encourage Emigrant Support Programme funded Irish community organisations to achieve independently validated quality assurance standards and support them in doing so.**

Public scrutiny is also important and we will continue to annually publish the details of all funding decisions, as has been the case since 2006. We will spend approximately 1% of the Emigrant Support Programme budget on quality assurance, to ensure the best value for money for the taxpayer and the best possible outcomes for the Irish abroad.

## Welfare

The Emigrant Support Programme was originally established to help the most vulnerable among our emigrant communities and this will continue to be the key focus. **Welfare will remain at the heart of the Emigrant Support Programme.**

It is not possible for the Government to provide and resource comprehensive welfare supports to the Irish overseas. The Emigrant Support Programme cannot replace social welfare supports in Irish citizens' countries of residence. Instead, working with civil society partners, it can help people access those services to which they are entitled. Support can also be provided for services linked directly to their emigrant status and in culturally sensitive areas, such as mental health and wellbeing.

Our emigrants can be rendered vulnerable by a range of factors, including isolation, age, location, immigration status, employment status and health. We work with civil society to identify needs and ensure that the most vulnerable Irish abroad can access appropriate supports.

Funding for welfare-related projects has been mainly focussed on Britain, and this is expected to continue. Ease of access to Britain – low cost of travel, free movement, shared language – means that some people arrive there without adequate preparation. In effect, some emigrants bring their vulnerability with them, and it can be exacerbated by unfamiliar surroundings without the social supports of family and friends.

## Aging Communities

In former traditional centres of Irish emigration the population is aging. According to the 2011 UK Census, the Irish are now the oldest ethnic group in Britain. This brings specific challenges including around healthcare and social isolation. Even where Irish emigrants have done well, settled, put down roots and raised families, as they age, they can feel the distance from Ireland more keenly. We want to support older members of the global Irish community to live more active, healthier lives and to have more choice and control in their lives through quality advice and support. An increasing number of older Irish emigrants care for family and friends. We want older carers to have the support they need to both support their loved ones and enjoy a good quality of life themselves. We work with a large number of groups working to reach out to the elderly Irish, such as the Irish Elderly Advice Network, who have strong roots in the communities they serve.

**Cuimhne – Irish Memory Loss Alliance**  
**The Cuimhne strategy is a campaign to address the needs of all Irish living in Britain who experience forms of memory loss, inclusive of age-related forgetfulness, dementia and Alzheimer’s. A project of Irish in Britain, it provides support to a wide range of Irish community organisations working with people with memory loss.**

### Travellers

Emigrant members of the Traveller community are especially vulnerable and can be subject to discrimination. Many come from particularly deprived backgrounds and have difficulties with integration, alongside literacy and health problems. The Emigrant Support Programme works with Travellers in Britain, in partnership with a number of organisations. Funding is provided for organisations which provide services tailored to the particular needs of Irish Travellers overseas. A key partner in this is the Traveller Movement, although many others are involved.

### Prisoners

Irish emigrants who become prisoners overseas may find themselves isolated from the main prison community because of language or social differences.

This isolation can exacerbate the impact of the prison experience, and such prisoners may need additional supports. Embassies and consulates play an important role in ensuring that Irish prisoners overseas have their rights respected. In addition, there is a large role for civil society organisations, such as the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas and The Irish Chaplaincy in Britain, in providing comfort to prisoners through visits and correspondence and the Government supports them in this work. Given the numbers involved, the main focus is in Britain, but work is also supported in other locations, including the United States of America and Australia, depending on need.

### Mental Health

Emigration and the experience of living away from home can be psychologically and emotionally challenging. There may be various reasons why emigrants face mental health challenges, including isolation, the stress of emigration and poor living conditions. There may be links to factors prior to departure from Ireland and, in some cases, the impact of alcohol or substance abuse. Supported projects are designed to deliver improved mental health and help access statutory mental health services, in particular for the most vulnerable, including those with complex needs, newly-arrived migrants and the elderly.



*London Irish Pensioners Choir performing at the Embassy of Ireland, London.*

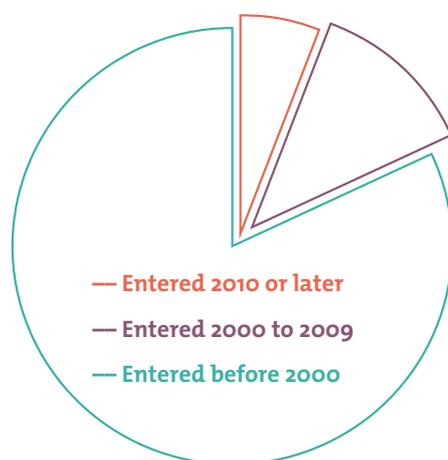
Emigrant Support Programme partner organisations are reporting increased demand for supports in the area of mental health. We will put a particular focus on the mental health of emigrants over the next twelve months, working with partners, both to try to get a clearer picture of need, and to respond to that need. Responding to calls from the Irish immigration centres in New York, in 2015 we are launching specific training and counselling services there in partnership with Pieta House.

### Undocumented

The legal status of Irish emigrants can have a significant bearing on their lives, causing stress and personal hardship to those who do not have an established right to remain in the country where they live. The undocumented in the United States face particular challenges. While the announcement by President Obama on 20 November 2014 of executive action on immigration reform are welcome, and will provide relief for some, others will remain outside the terms of the announced action. Further legislative action by the US Congress will be needed to fully address the issue.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will continue to work with decision makers in the US and other countries to facilitate Irish citizens in normalising their immigration status and ensuring they have the right to travel as needed.

### Year of Entry to US by Irish born residents 2011-2013



The Emigrant Support Programme funds organisations overseas who give practical advice on visas and immigration, and provide assistance here in Ireland for those who have been forced to return. With growing numbers of Irish in new destinations, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade remains conscious of the importance of ensuring that Irish citizens are aware of their rights as emigrants and can avail of all opportunities open to them.

### Pre-departure information

It is important that those leaving the country take the time to understand their destination, and the particular demands it may place on them and, if relevant, on their families. There may also be societal differences which need to be considered before leaving, and on arriving, in a new country. To varying degrees, Irish emigrants fly the flag for their home country; whether they want to or not, they can be seen as representatives of Ireland and they need to be prepared for this.

We will be open to proposals which better equip those who are leaving for short and long term periods of time to understand their destinations. However we recognise that the vast majority of emigrants are capable and wish to look after themselves.

### Looking to the future

With increasing numbers of emigrants in destinations such as Canada and Australia, it is possible that these communities will see greater need in the welfare area in the coming years. It is hoped that, by providing support for emigrants from the outset of their experience, they will avoid serious and significant difficulties in later years. Assistance from the Emigrant Support Programme is demand-led and we are very open to further requests for funding from these areas.



## Sister Cosmas Cullen Kampala Uganda

**I came to Uganda in 1949 by boat from Southampton to Mombasa through the Suez Canal, and then three days' journey by train to Lugazi, where I arrived at my first mission, a teacher training college in Nkokonjeru.**

Uganda then was a different place from today – the population was around five million and large stretches of the countryside seemed completely uninhabited except by wild animals, whose green eyes shone in the headlights of the car. Kampala was a lovely little town, with no slums, and flowering trees dividing Main Street.

I have loved Uganda from the beginning. I found the people friendly and welcoming and the students have been a joy to teach – intelligent, talented, courteous and eager to learn. I have taught at all levels, from primary, secondary, and now that I am retired I help teachers in two nursery schools. I am in Uganda because I belong to a missionary congregation and I go where I am sent!

My family in Ireland have mostly passed on but I still have cousins, and we have two convents in Dublin and Dundalk, where I will eventually retire. I was for a period supported by Misesan Cara, but this ended after I reached eighty. Otherwise, I have received support from friends and relatives. This has helped me to construct two nursery schools and to support the work of the Teru Foundation for disabled children, run by one of my former protégées.

I would encourage anybody to come to Uganda to experience for themselves the beautiful country, with its pleasant climate and friendly people. The dire poverty and the striking difference between rich and poor can be daunting, but the opportunity to make a change in people's lives is rewarding. Personally, I feel that in giving young people an education, especially girls, I have given them the one thing that nobody can take from them and which can open for them opportunities in life which they might not otherwise realise.

**"My family in Ireland have mostly passed on but I still have cousins, and we have two convents in Dublin and Dundalk, where I will eventually retire."**

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# Connecting with the Diaspora

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The Government has a role in promoting greater awareness of Ireland and of the connections that exist among the diaspora and between the diaspora and Ireland. We must make it possible for the diaspora to connect with Ireland in diverse ways to meet diverse needs.

Relations with the diaspora require "constant interaction and two-way communication" as noted in *Ireland and America: Challenges and Opportunities in a New Context*, published by the Embassy of Ireland in Washington in 2014.

## Whole of Government Approach

Relations with the Irish abroad is a **whole of Government activity**. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has traditionally taken the lead role in working with the diaspora but, increasingly, it is a responsibility that is shared across departments and state agencies.

The Department of the Taoiseach, working together with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, plays a key role in coordinating this whole of Government approach to diaspora engagement. The creation of the new role of Minister for Diaspora Affairs, located in both the Departments of the Taoiseach and Foreign Affairs and Trade, clearly reflects the importance of this joined-up approach.

The issues that arise across departments vary enormously. For example, the Department of Education and Skills and Enterprise Ireland work together in the area of alumni engagement by Irish academic institutions and in relation to the promotion of the Education in Ireland brand.

Government departments and agencies play an important part in engaging with the Global Irish Network, particularly through the work of the Global Irish Economic Forum which has covered issues ranging from youth unemployment, sports and tourism to smart ageing and agri-food. A key objective of the 2013 Forum was to feed into ongoing national policy development for our economic recovery and a range of recommendations directly fed into the Action Plan for Jobs 2014.

Access to an appropriately skilled workforce is an issue of growing importance to Ireland's economic recovery. A range of government departments and agencies, and private sector organisations are engaging in initiatives that are designed to promote job opportunities to the Irish diaspora.

All departments and state agencies have a stake in Ireland's reputation abroad and recognise the role that the diaspora can, and do, play in defending and improving that reputation.

There is also an increasing need to identify where administrative barriers might exist to Irish emigrants wishing to return.

Issues which can impact in very real ways upon the lives of those leaving Ireland and those seeking to return include:

- Mutual recognition of qualifications.
- Mutual recognition of documents.
- Welfare entitlements.
- Access to childcare.
- Access to education.
- Visas.

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**In 2014, cooperation between the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, the Road Safety Authority, the Embassy of Ireland in Ottawa and the Canadian authorities secured agreement on the exchange of Irish driving licences for local licences in Ontario, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan, with progress in a number of other provinces at an advanced stage. The recognition of the Irish driving licence is an important issue for the Irish community in Canada as the completion of recognition agreements greatly enhances the employability of many new Irish migrants.**

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## Implementation

Implementation of the Diaspora Policy will be driven primarily by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in tandem with the network of embassies and consulates and in conjunction with the Department of the Taoiseach.

The Minister for Diaspora Affairs will chair a new **Inter-departmental Committee on the Irish Abroad** with participation from external stakeholders and Irish embassies and consulates as required, to ensure that government works in a joined-up way to realise the objectives of our diaspora strategy. This will include addressing issues affecting the Irish abroad and those seeking to return.

This Committee, whose membership is detailed in Annex 2, will meet on a quarterly basis and will report periodically to Government on progress. The Committee will review the implementation of this policy after two years.

## Local Activation for Global Reach

Sense of place is enormously important in Ireland. For many Irish people abroad, it is not just a question of being from Ireland but, which county, town and even townland a person is from. This attachment to place can be passed down through the generations. While the county associations in the main traditional centres of emigration might not be as strong as they once were, the attachment to place remains.

In recent years, a number of initiatives in Ireland have brought home the effectiveness of building on that sense of place. In 2013, The Gathering demonstrated clearly how local communities can be mobilised to make connections globally. The majority of the 5,000 gatherings which were held were organised by local communities. In some cases, the legacy of this outreach will continue to benefit these communities.

The strength of the community sector as a driver of diaspora-related tourism has been recognised by the new Community Tourism Initiative for the diaspora, which seeks to build on the legacy of The Gathering. The initiative, a joint partnership between Fáilte Ireland, IPB Insurance and the 34 Local Authorities, under the auspices of the County and City Managers Association, is providing an annual fund of €1m over the period 2014-2016 to support up to 700 local community-based events and festivals each year.

Traditionally, and understandably, it has been western counties that have been hardest hit by emigration, as jobs and other opportunities were limited. Consequently, it is these counties that have the largest diasporas, which can serve as a resource and a way to connect with the world.

There is potential for communities and counties in Ireland to reach out to their own diasporas and build new relationships, to benefit local and regional development. Some counties are already active in their efforts to mobilise their respective diasporas. The work done by Donegal, Kerry, Limerick and Mayo stands out in this regard.

In 2015 we will support Local Authorities and Local Community Development Committees in seeking to identify the members of their diasporas, and identify initiatives for building these relationships. This will include developing a toolkit for local authorities, to help develop their capacities in this area. In addition, we will identify opportunities to reach out to county diasporas through Local Enterprise Offices.

### **Genealogy**

The desire to trace family history is often the incentive for an individual of Irish ancestry to activate their links to Ireland. The successful tracing of an individual's roots relies on ready access to and availability of records. The digitisation of the 1901 and 1911 census records by the National Archives have proven to be an invaluable tool for genealogical research.

The National Library of Ireland's announcement of their plans to make their entire collection of Catholic parish register microfilms available free online is also a very significant initiative in this respect.

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**Ireland Reaching Out (Ireland XO) is an innovative, volunteer-based non-profit initiative, supported by the Emigrant Support Programme, which seeks to build vibrant lasting links between the Irish diaspora and their parishes of origin in Ireland. The programme is based on a simple idea; instead of waiting for people of Irish descent to trace their roots, Ireland XO volunteers identify those who left, and trace them and their descendants worldwide, inviting them to become part of their community. Ireland XO volunteers welcome returning Irish diaspora to local areas, introducing them to the places and people connected to them, establishing what is hoped will be lifelong relationships built on shared cultural identity and heritage.**

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*The Irish Festival of Oulu, Finland. Credit: Juha Pekka Manninen.*

## Communication

Effective communication is essential to real diaspora engagement. With modern technologies, it is more important and more possible than ever to engage with Irish communities globally. The need to communicate better with the Irish abroad was one of the strongest themes to emerge from the public consultation on diaspora policy. People want to feel connected and they want the Government to play a role in achieving this.

**"an urgent need for stronger official communications between Ireland and the Irish abroad"**

– Noreen Bowden

**"desire for increased communication regarding Ireland and engagement with the diaspora"**

– Survey by the Irish Australian Chamber of Commerce

### Submissions to the Review of Diaspora Policy

The last ten years have given us the tools necessary to do this. Information sharing and connecting with each other has never been easier. We must **improve our communication and so deepen our relationship with the diaspora**. Identifying specific audiences and tailoring our communications for them will be a challenge. Our initial communications will focus on issues affecting them and their relationships with Ireland, but we can only effectively engage with and support Irish communities internationally if we know their concerns. **Communication must be two-way. We will listen to the diaspora.**

The role of the **Minister of State for Diaspora Affairs** is also central to better communication. This role is vital to communicate the views of the Irish abroad to the Government and the Government response to the Irish abroad.

In addition, we are creating a suite of initiatives to help improve our level and frequency of communication with the diaspora and to allow for them to have a greater connection to Ireland.

- Global Irish**  
 Global Irish is a hub for emigrants and those of Irish descent to access information across a range of topics, including information on how to maintain your links to, and stay in touch with, Ireland through sport, heritage, culture and Irish media outlets. The hub also provides information to help people settle into their new homes overseas with links to Irish clubs, societies and business networks internationally. Also included is a section for those considering returning to Ireland, bringing together information on job and training opportunities, supports for starting your own business and helpful tips on setting up home in Ireland with information on housing and education. This hub will evolve, as more online resources come available and in response to the views of users.
- Global Irish Newsletter**  
 We will issue regular communications by email to the Irish abroad on issues of interest, including developments in Ireland, features on the economy and opportunities available at home. It will also provide stories of significant developments that are of interest to Irish communities around the world. Those who wish to receive this can register at Global Irish. This idea of a register to stay in touch was brought forward by Crosscare in the consultation process and endorsed by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- All About Jobs Newsletter**  
 All about jobs is a dedicated section on the central Government news site, merrionstreet.ie, which captures the latest news and information, an event calendar of all major Government events across the country for small businesses and jobseekers and information on the major Government campaigns like Action Plan for Jobs and Pathways to Work. A weekly eNewsletter is available full of the latest news and updates, as well as job announcements and key statistics by registering at merrionstreet.ie.
- Social Media**  
 We will grow our presence on social media, initially using Twitter, allowing the public to interact in a transparent and immediate way. This ongoing engagement and communication will facilitate our consideration of issues and inform our plans and actions.

While we intend to expand the range of methods of communication that we use, existing tools will remain active. We will continue to welcome feedback and contacts by letter, telephone and email. We want to communicate with the Irish abroad in the ways they choose to communicate with each other.

### Media

There is a high demand among Irish communities internationally for access to Irish news, radio and television from Ireland. Public and private providers are responding to this:

- RTÉ Player International, TV3 Player, TG4 Player and UTV Ireland Player facilitate those with web access to watch a wide range of Irish television programmes.
- In July 2014, TG4 entered into an arrangement with a US channel, in accordance with which some of its content is aired daily in the USA. Content is carried by Today's Ireland, a public service, educational and free to air channel in the US.
- All national radio stations are available online.
- Almost all of the major Irish newspapers are expanding their online presence, with significant content available online.

- RTÉ and the GAA have launched GAAGO to expand global access to GAA Championship Games.

The diaspora itself has a large number of publications and radio programmes and in addition, there is a number of new TV and on-line companies that are creating programming for, and about, the diaspora, including Irish TV; An Lár and Today's Ireland.

### Global Irish Media Fund - Supporting Media Coverage of Diaspora Issues

Media outlets have responded to the recent wave of emigration in a positive way. In addition to viewing emigration, rightly, as a public policy issue, they have examined its human impacts on those who have left and those left behind, for example The Irish Times' *Generation Emigration* series.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade wishes to encourage further good quality coverage of all aspects of the Irish emigrant experience.

We will launch the Global Irish Media Fund to support news organisations and journalists in telling stories from and about the Irish abroad and the impact of emigration on those at home.



*The Taoiseach meets young diaspora in New York, September 2014*

## Culture

More than any other aspect of Ireland or our Irishness, our culture reaches all corners of the world. It is one of the most effective ways of connecting with the global Irish diaspora, strengthening links to home and maintaining expression of Irish identity through generations. Our traditional culture, combined with contemporary culture, presents a rich and complex picture to diverse world audiences.

St. Patrick's Day provides an annual focal point to celebrate our rich culture and heritage especially in the areas of literature, art and music. It provides us with an opportunity to share our warm culture of hospitality with others. Even in countries where there is less awareness of Ireland, our culture still resonates.

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**Culture Ireland recognises the significance of culture and cultural identity for our emigrants. It supports arts events which offer an important opportunity to engage with the diaspora and support them in maintaining their cultural ties to Ireland.**

**Culture Ireland supports many arts events worldwide. These include Irish film and music festivals where the reach of the diaspora has generated new audiences for Irish arts, beyond those with Irish connections.**

**Culture Ireland also supports an annual programme of events in Irish centres abroad working with partner organisations such as the Irish Arts Centre, NY, Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris and the London Irish Centre.**

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## Irish Language

Support towards Irish language initiatives abroad has been provided to Glór na nGael through the Emigrant Support Programme since 2007. Glór na nGael runs the Global Gaeilge scheme which supports international Irish language initiatives. Significant Emigrant Support Programme funding has also been provided to Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann since 2005 towards its activities in Britain and the US, which include fostering and promotion of the Irish language.

We are open to proposals to advance the teaching and learning of Irish in our diaspora communities. For example, two Irish language summer schools in Australia were awarded ESP funding in 2014.

Investment by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in a TG4 Content Distribution Project in 2013 / 2014 opened up opportunities to market TG4 content on a worldwide basis and make it easier for audiences to find and access TG4. This project also has the potential to support the creation of new and innovative Irish language learning web portals/Apps for learning Irish purposes. One of TG4's priorities for 2015 is the development of a multi-platform interactive Irish language learning resource as a landmark initiative for the Centenary Commemorations.

## Music & Dance

Traditional and contemporary Irish music and dance remain very popular with the Irish diaspora and opportunities to develop their own skills and experience Irish artists are extremely important for them. In the last twenty years alone, Irish dance has been seen by more audiences worldwide than ever before due in part to the incredible Riverdance phenomenon.

Traditional Irish music and dance is supported by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann around the globe and the work they do internationally helps to keep these traditions alive. With hundreds of branches worldwide, Comhaltas provides classes, organises festivals, brings musicians and dancers on tour and publishes recordings, books and tutorials of traditional Irish music. We will continue to work in partnership with Comhaltas to ensure that the Irish abroad can avail of their services.

## Sport

The Irish at home and abroad are dedicated sports enthusiasts and Gaelic sports in particular are a very important part of our culture and heritage. The community gatherings around hurling, camogie and football matches, common to towns and villages in Ireland, are now replicated in many Irish communities abroad. The importance of Gaelic games and the associated community for Irish people overseas can be seen from the increase in the number of clubs outside of Ireland in recent years, with clubs now in existence from Myanmar to South Africa, and Buenos Aires to Saskatoon.

## Literature

Ireland's writers have a resonance far beyond the State. Many of our most recognised writers have lived abroad at different times in their life and reflected on this experience to inform their work. This includes all four Irish winners of the Nobel Prize for Literature. We support a number of travelling exhibitions on notable Irish cultural figures, including exhibitions focusing on the life and works of James Joyce, William Butler Yeats and Samuel Beckett.



The 150th anniversary of the birth of W.B. Yeats will be celebrated throughout 2015. Yeats2015 partners will span the literary, cultural, historical and academic worlds and events will be national and international.

## Irish Studies Programmes

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will continue to support Irish Studies programmes abroad which provide a formal opportunity for the diaspora to engage with their heritage in an educational setting. Programmes are available in institutions all over the world including: the Keogh-Naughton Institute, Notre Dame University; Glucksman Ireland House, New York University; and the Centre for Irish Studies, Charles University, Prague.

## Capital Investment in Cultural and Heritage Infrastructure

Through the Emigrant Support Programme, the Government has invested in the infrastructure of some of the key Irish cultural institutions around the world, including the Irish Arts Centre in New York and the Irish Cultural Centre in London.

In addition, funding has been provided to the GAA to develop and improve their facilities to give greater impact to the communities that they serve. For example in 2013, a grant of €600,000 was made available for the development of spectator facilities at Ruislip, the home of the GAA in London.

This capital investment helps to ensure that the facilities for Irish culture and heritage are maintained and protected into the future and can provide a focus for emigrants and diaspora communities, as well as non-Irish communities.



*Gaelic Football in San Francisco.  
Photo: Brendan Moran/SPORTSFILE.*

## Ceiliúradh

During President Higgins' State Visit to Britain in April 2014, a specially commissioned musical celebration of cultural links between Ireland and Britain, Ceiliúradh, took place at the Royal Albert Hall in London. This concert, commissioned by Culture Ireland, had a high-profile line-up. Through online and traditional broadcast it had a remarkable reach.

Culture has been a core theme at each of the meetings of the Global Irish Economic Forum held to date. While it is recognised as a valuable calling card, branding Ireland and opening doors, it is about much more than that. Through culture, Irish imagination and creativity are inspired, nurtured and expressed.

## Exhibition: Visualising the Irish Diaspora

The ESB Centre for the Study of Irish Art at the National Gallery has embarked on the formation of an archive of images produced outside of Ireland that possess a strong Irish dimension through the representation of the Irish diaspora. In late 2015, the Gallery will produce an exhibition of imagery associated with Irish emigration and the Irish diaspora in North America. This exhibition hopes to reflect on the history of Irish emigration and in particular on the visual representation of emigrants. We will work with the National Gallery to attract the interest of Irish people living abroad and support access and the communication of this project to the diaspora.

## Inspiring Ireland

The Government is supporting *Inspiring Ireland*, an exciting and significant new departure for Ireland's national collections. Inspiring Ireland will provide free access at [www.inspiring-ireland.ie](http://www.inspiring-ireland.ie) to the treasures held by Ireland's internationally acclaimed cultural institutions, including the country's national museums, libraries, galleries, archives and theatre. The collaboration is supported by an international advisory board, led by John Hartnett, which will help with technology direction and commercialisation and encourage financial support for Inspiring Ireland.

## Fréamhacha

In recent years there has been a growing focus in countries with large diasporas on providing an opportunity for the children of emigrants to strengthen their links with the country of their parents or grandparents through immersive visits to their 'home' country. These short visits are seen as an important tool to nurture a greater mindfulness of heritage in diaspora populations.

In 2015, suitable partners will be sought to pilot an initiative aimed at deepening the ties of younger members of the Irish diaspora to Ireland. The main focus will be to facilitate the development of a short educational programme, which will involve the participation of a group of young people of Irish descent over a period of two weeks or so in Ireland. In the first instance, the Fréamhacha programme will be aimed at young members of the diaspora in the US and, if successful, a wider roll-out will be considered.

## St. Patrick's Day

St. Patrick's Day is unique. It is celebrated in more countries around the world than any other national day and reflects the distinctive nature and reach of the Irish nation. It is when those who are Irish by birth and by descent come together with those who are Irish by desire. It has particular prominence in countries with major centres of Irish diaspora such as the US, Canada and Australia.

St. Patrick's Day offers a platform for Ireland to engage with the world. It is a time for Ireland to communicate with the world when the world is listening.

It is also a time for Ireland to engage with emigrant and diaspora communities around the world and this is an integral part of the high level visits that take place annually as part of the global celebrations.

It goes without saying that St. Patrick's Day presents an unparalleled opportunity for the Government to expand our reach by influencing international decision makers and showcasing Ireland. In 2014 alone there were 76 'greenings' of iconic sites worldwide and 30 trade-focused high level visits across 60 cities in 23 countries.

However, St. Patrick's Day remains first and foremost a celebration - a celebration of culture, heritage and achievement. This celebration is driven by thousands of volunteers in Ireland and worldwide who take the time and make the effort to make St. Patrick's Day a community celebration without parallel.

Annually, St Patrick's Day energises Irish social, cultural and business networks worldwide. Their efforts, supported by and in tandem with Government initiatives, bring the attention of the entire world to our nation and our people.

## Commemorations

The period of 2012-2022 sees a large number of centenaries and other important milestones in the history of this island; this period has been referred to as the Decade of Commemorations.

While the main focus of centenary activities will be on the island of Ireland, there is a clear role for the Irish abroad, and the Government intends to have as inclusive a process as possible in the lead up to the main commemoration period in 2016.

We will support our diaspora to share in the commemoration of seminal events in the creation of the Irish nation and the Irish State. We do this as Ireland's history is a history shared with the diaspora. Many of the 1916 leaders were part of the diaspora at different times in their lives – some having been born abroad and others having lived overseas. We also want to remember and mark the role that the diaspora played in those events, and in the founding of our state.

Through Ireland's network of embassies and consulates, we will prepare a programme of international activities, focused in particular on the centenary of the 1916 Rising. In 2015 and 2016, the Emigrant Support Programme will be open to projects to deepen links with the diaspora through the commemoration of these events.



*The Irish community in Tokyo, Japan was joined by Minister Frances Fitzgerald for their 2014 St. Patrick's Day Parade*



## Colin Courtney Stockholm Sweden

I have been living in Stockholm, Sweden since October 2005. After graduating from UL I joined an Irish company called First Derivatives and my first assignment was a 3 month project in Stockholm.

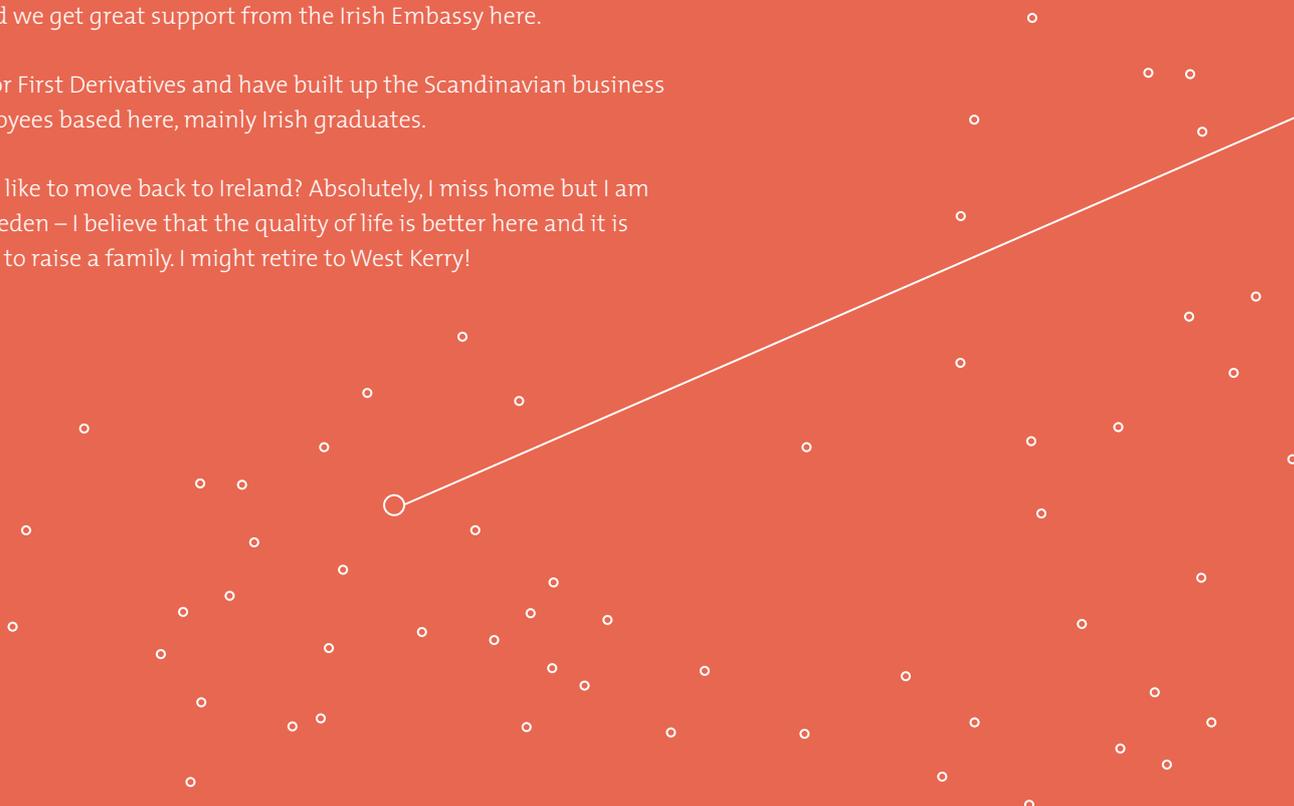
I met a Swedish woman called Linn in 2006 and never looked back! We got married in May 2014 and have a 1 year old daughter called Leah.

In 2009 I co-founded Stockholm Gaels GAA club and that has been a very big part of my life here. I find it extremely important to keep in touch with my Irish culture and Irish people, especially now that I have a daughter. We have a very active Irish community in Stockholm now which has been fantastic and we get great support from the Irish Embassy here.

I still work for First Derivatives and have built up the Scandinavian business to 30+ employees based here, mainly Irish graduates.

Would I ever like to move back to Ireland? Absolutely, I miss home but I am happy in Sweden – I believe that the quality of life is better here and it is much easier to raise a family. I might retire to West Kerry!

"I find it extremely important to keep in touch with my Irish culture and Irish people, especially now that I have a daughter."



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# Facilitating Diaspora Engagement

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## Partnerships

Ireland is enormously fortunate to have a global network of civil society organisations working in welfare, community, sporting, cultural and business arenas.

Some of these avail of assistance from the Government, but many others work entirely independently, drawing on the goodwill of individuals and communities. The volunteer spirit is vital to keep hundreds of diverse community organisations going in all parts of the world and is a key strength of the active global Irish community.

**We work in partnership with organisations of varying sizes and roles which share a common goal of making lives better for Irish people at home and abroad.**

These organisations, often deeply rooted in their local communities, can reach people in ways that the Government cannot. Their activities are vital for healthy, thriving Irish communities. They are essential for meaningful engagement with the diaspora.

Working in partnership means there is a two-way relationship. These organisations offer advice and guidance to Government on our approach and what we should do better or differently. For example, the increased focus on mental health is in response to the need identified and advocated for by our partner organisations in Ireland, Britain and the United States.

It is in everyone's interests that government's partners are robust organisations, capable of delivering supports and services to those who need and want them, capable of using resources efficiently and effectively and capable of securing financial supports beyond those provided by the Irish Government, in order to ensure their long-term sustainability.

**We will work with our partners to build their capacity.**

The following are some of our partners around the world. It is not an exhaustive list; we work with more than 180 organisations each year. However, it does highlight the range of activities being undertaken around the world, by and for Irish people.

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## Global Irish Civic Forum 2015

**Working with the UCD Clinton Institute, we will convene a Global Irish Civic Forum in Ireland in 2015 to discuss the challenges facing the Irish abroad and to capture the voice of ordinary Irish emigrants.**

**It will bring together Irish community leaders and members from around the world, drawn from emigrant and diaspora communities. It is intended that the Forum will provide a means for face-to-face connections between those who may be facing similar challenges in their own communities. It will also provide an opportunity for dialogue between these groups and the Government.**

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While the Government has invaluable relationships with a large number of organisations around the world through the Emigrant Support Programme, it is hoped to also reach beyond the ESP-funded organisations for this Forum.

## Emigrant Services Advisory Committee

The Emigrant Services Advisory Committee (ESAC), formerly known as the Díon Committee, was established in 1984 to advise the Government on issues of concern to the Irish community in Britain. The Chairperson and Secretary of ESAC are officers serving in the Embassy of Ireland in London. The other ESAC members are appointed based on their experience of involvement with the Irish community in Britain and/or their personal expertise. They serve in a voluntary capacity. The ESAC's main practical role is to make recommendations on applications for Emigration Support Fund grants for projects in Britain and it also advises and reports on emigrant welfare and other issues at the request of the Minister.

## Gaelic Athletic Association

With approximately 400 clubs outside the island of Ireland, arguably the GAA has greater reach into the Irish diaspora than any other organisation. In addition to its established international centres in Britain and the US, it is growing rapidly in other areas, including the Gulf, South East Asia and across Europe. In many locations, GAA clubs provide a first port of call for new emigrants, giving them an immediate circle of familiarity and support. With the launch of their new international resource for clubs, the GAA are extending their work to support the physical and mental wellbeing of their international members.



*The Global Irish Economic Forum, 2013 which took place at Dublin Castle from 3rd-5th October. Photo Colm Mahady / Copyright Fennell Photography 2013*

The Irish Abroad Unit has partnered with the GAA over the last number of years, co-funding Community Development Administrators in Britain and the US. These Development Administrators work with schools, colleges and community groups to bring Gaelic games to these communities. Since 2012, there has also been a Global Games Development Fund which provides small grants to clubs outside of Britain and the US.

### Irish in Britain

Irish in Britain, formerly the Federation of Irish Societies, was established in 1973, to share expertise and to represent, campaign for and support the growth and well-being of Irish communities in Britain. We work with them in a number of ways, in particular to develop the capacity of smaller Irish organisations, and so ensure the quality of services provided to those in need. While we remain a key funder for the organisation, they remain independent and offer valuable guidance and advice to the Embassy in London and to the Government, as well as to their member organisations.

### Coalition of Irish Immigration Centers

The Coalition of Irish Immigration Centers (CIIC) is a national umbrella group for all of the Irish immigration centres in the US. The CIIC was established in 1996 to promote the welfare of Irish immigrants in the US at a national level. We work closely with CIIC and its constituent members to promote shared goals of supporting Irish emigrants, documented and undocumented, in need.

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## Connecting our Partners

**The Crosscare Migrant Project is an information and advocacy organisation working with emigrants, returning emigrants and migrants coming to live in Ireland. They work with some of the most vulnerable people leaving Ireland and those seeking support in their efforts to return.**

**Working in partnership with Crosscare, we will establish a resource where organisations funded by the Emigrant Support Programme, and others, can connect and share information and experiences, with a view to deepening their knowledge and improving services to Irish emigrants globally.**

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## Networks

### THE GLOBAL IRISH NETWORK

#### Global Irish Network and Global Irish Economic Forum

Following the first Global Irish Economic Forum in September 2009, the Global Irish Network was established in early 2010. It brings together successful people from diverse backgrounds, based in dozens of countries worldwide, who give freely of their expertise, their experience and their time.

The Global Irish Network has played a significant role in contributing to Ireland's economic recovery and in rebuilding our international reputation. We will continue to work with them to ensure that they have a continued involvement in our ongoing recovery.

The Network was established with three broad objectives:

- to provide a platform to assist the Government and State agencies to promote Ireland's economic, cultural and tourism messages in key markets;
- to provide a forum through which successful Irish business and cultural figures abroad can interact with each other, exchange views and be kept informed of key developments in Government policy;
- to provide a forum through which members can put forward proposals and implement practical initiatives.

The Global Irish Network has been a valuable resource for the Government. Its members, collectively and individually, provide advice to Ministers, delegations, embassies and state agencies seeking to advance Ireland's interests in markets around the world.

Since its establishment, the full Network has been brought together on two occasions, at the 2011 and 2013 meetings of the Global Irish Economic Forum. These meetings were focused on economic recovery, restoring our international reputation and job creation and they have contributed to successive Action Plans for Jobs.

The Global Irish Network has played a significant role in contributing to Ireland's economic recovery and in rebuilding our international reputation. We will continue to work with them to ensure that they have a continued involvement in our ongoing recovery.



Supporting  
**ID2015**  
 A Year of Irish Design

**At the 2009 Forum, there was a recommendation to "establish world class centre or University for the performing arts and Irish culture housed in a landmark building in Ireland, to become a global centre for artistic and creative education, innovation and technology". This initiative was led by the private sector and the result is Uversity, a recognised College of the National University of Ireland, which offers a Masters in Creative Process with modules available from colleges and universities across the island of Ireland.**

**At the third Forum, in October 2013, it was recommended that 2015 should be designated as the Year of Irish Design. This initiative was taken forward by the Design & Craft Council of Ireland on behalf of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation. The initiative is supported by an interdepartmental and cross agency steering committee, ensuring maximum effectiveness and impact. ID2015 has an exciting programme of events, both nationally and internationally, showcasing and developing design throughout industry across a very broad spectrum of disciplines. ID2015 aims to transform the design sector, creating jobs into the future, increasing design based exports and engaging with an audience of over three million people at home and abroad.**

**The Global Irish Contacts Programme, run by Enterprise Ireland, has connected more than 120 members of the Global Irish Network who provide mentoring on an ongoing basis to Irish SMEs.**

The Network was established in a very specific context, at a time of deep crisis. As our economy recovers, it is timely to consider the longer term objectives and focus of such a committed and influential international network. We must endeavour to ensure mutual benefits for Ireland and our committed friends.

We will explore how to equip the Network to operate as a vibrant network on an ongoing basis, linking members globally, as this has been a weakness in the past and we will give greater definition to the work of the Network in specific economic sectors.

The **Global Irish Economic Forum** is convened by Government to bring together the members of the Global Irish Network. As initially conceived, it involved the exchange of ideas on the Government's priorities for economic recovery, job creation and the restoration of Ireland's reputation. The closed door sessions offer an invaluable opportunity for frank and open discussion. However, the context has now changed. It is important that the Forum reach further beyond the walls of Dublin Castle.

At the 2013 Forum, there was outreach through regional meetings in Cork, Galway and Belfast. Regional meetings will be held again for the 4th Forum.

One of the more successful elements of the 2013 Forum was a large-scale mentoring event, organised by Enterprise Ireland, where Network members provided mentoring to 70 small and medium sized enterprises. Further opportunities for increased outreach into the community will be explored.

This mentoring event included companies from Northern Ireland, and we are open to continuing this cooperation in the future.

**A Fourth Global Irish Economic Forum will be convened.**

We will ensure that the Global Irish Civic Forum contributes ideas to the Global Irish Economic Forum, and vice-versa.

We will give effect to the commitment given in 2013, to better gender balance and greater participation from young people.

## Business Networks

Irish Business Networks are flourishing around the world. This is due in particular to the increase in emigration combined with a global increase in networking and the technologies to make it more effective.

These networks vary in reach and composition. In most cases they are complementary to other organisations that are focused on the wider community and cultural aspects. In some of the larger centres of Irish population, there can be a range of networks in one place, catering to different needs and becoming ever more specialised. This specialisation is, perhaps, seen most clearly in London, with organisations such as the London Irish Lawyers Association, the London Irish Town Planners Network.

In recent years, through the Emigrant Support Programme, some support has been given to the development of Irish business networks around the world. This has included support for website development and for mentoring programmes. The overall volume of support has been small, representing just 3% of ESP grants in 2014, but has been important in getting new organisations or projects off the ground. In addition, in some locations, a grant from Government is seen as an invaluable indicator of support, which can enhance prestige and credibility. We recognise that these organisations are capable of generating considerable resources themselves but understand the importance of ESP as a form of Government recognition and to leverage other funds.

The main purpose of our support to business networks is to help Irish business people and professionals to connect with each other, seek out new opportunities and, ultimately, to advance themselves and their businesses. It is about facilitating their success and maintaining their interest with and connection to Ireland.

### **We support business networks to facilitate the success of Irish people at home and abroad.**

These networks can also: promote Ireland as an attractive location in which and with which to do business; promote inward investment and entrepreneurship; and, act as a conduit for agencies and Irish businesses to develop trade or other business opportunities in overseas markets.

Some Irish business networks are going international. The Irish International Business Network now has branches in London, New York and Dublin. In South East Asia, the Asia-Pacific Irish Business Forum brings Irish businesses and business groups together on the margins of the Asian Gaelic Games.

There is currently no platform that brings Irish business networks from around the world together, virtually or in reality. **Connecting these networks** is a logical next step. We would welcome proposals towards this end submitted in the 2015 Emigrant Support Programme funding round.

The report of the Clinton Institute on “Supporting the next Generation of the Irish Diaspora” found that “the emergence of a young, female, professional element in the Irish emigrant communities affords opportunity for the Emigrant Support Programme to support the development of diasporic networks for female professional development”. We see this as an area where targeted actions may be effective and we are open to proposals

## Irish Executive Mentoring Program

The Irish Executive Mentoring Program is an online tool developed by the International Irish Business Network with support from the Emigrant Support Programme. It allows those of Irish birth, descent and affinity to register, either as mentors or protégés, to share and benefit from experience and knowledge. It will foster new executive and entrepreneur talent among the diaspora.

## Diaspora Philanthropy

While philanthropy in Ireland is still at an early stage, some members of the diaspora, both Irish born and those of Irish descent, have become significant givers to projects, programmes and organisations in Ireland.

Side by side with the contribution of some exceptional individuals, the work of the Ireland Funds stands out internationally as a remarkable example of diaspora giving. Founded in 1976, The Worldwide Ireland Funds currently operate in 12 countries and have raised over \$480 million for over 3,000 outstanding organisations. The Ireland Funds’ vision, of “the global Irish making a difference together”, could serve as a guide to all those seeking to work for shared good in this area.

## Returning Home

In our ongoing work to deepen economic recovery, we aim to create the conditions where those who had to leave the country because of economic need can return.

A growing new challenge will be to facilitate, in practical ways, those that left Ireland and want to return home.

Since 2009, 193,200 people between the ages of 15 and 24 have left Ireland. Although the number of young people leaving in the year up to end of April 2014 has dropped, the latest available figures show that about 29,000 of those that emigrated in this period were students, an increase in this category of over 8,000 on the previous year. These figures also show that 47% of all emigrants had a degree or third level qualification.

The Government recognises that our diaspora is comprised of individuals with a rich variety of talent and experience that can make a major contribution to Ireland. As our economic recovery gathers pace, the availability of skilled workers, in particular, will be of growing importance.

In some sectors of the economy, there are already job opportunities. Irish emigrant communities are a key target for those seeking to recruit talented, able people to work in highly skilled roles in Ireland, and government departments and agencies, as well as private sector organisations, are working on a range of initiatives to connect with the diaspora to promote job opportunities here. In tandem with this, it is also important that moving or returning to this country is as easy a process as possible.

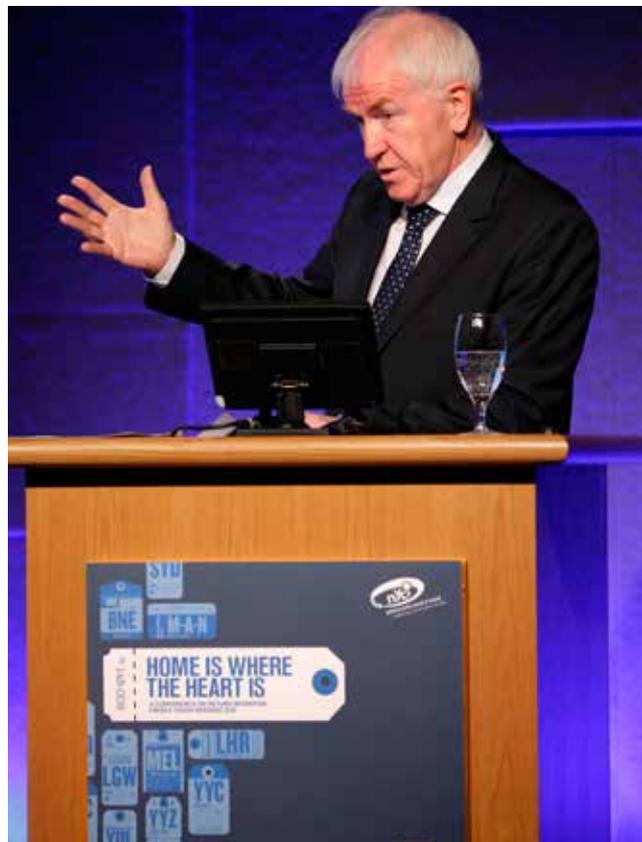
Where possible, the Government will also work to ease the logistical challenges of moving from one country to another. The consultation process for this policy identified a number of barriers to return for emigrants. These include recognition of qualifications, recognition of driving licences, lack of affordable housing and job opportunities. While it may not be possible to fix all of these problems, we will, through the Interdepartmental Committee, work with other Departments and agencies to minimise the difficulties that these challenges present. This process will be ongoing and any developments will be highlighted on the Global Irish website and through the newsletter for emigrants.

Not everyone returning to Ireland is coming home for work. Many Irish people return to Ireland to avail of our education system, particularly at third level. In March 2014, the then Minister for Education and Skills announced that children of Irish emigrants, who have spent 5 years in primary or post-primary school in Ireland, will qualify for EU level fees at Irish Universities and third level institutions for undergraduate courses from the 2014/15 academic year.

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**Safe Home is an Irish based organisation that has evolved from providing housing options for older Irish-born emigrants to an organisation that provides an information and advisory service for anyone considering the move to Ireland and support for those who have moved back and require assistance. Safe Home is supported by the Emigrant Support Programme.**

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Minister Deenihan addresses "Home is where the heart is", NYCI conference on Return Migration

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## ConnectIreland

**Launched at the 2011 Global Irish Economic Forum, ConnectIreland, which implements the Government's Succeed in Ireland initiative, complements the work of IDA Ireland, the agency responsible for Foreign Direct Investment. The initiative mobilises the global Irish to be the "eyes and ears" for Ireland in identifying companies seeking to expand into Europe or looking for a European base. ConnectIreland offers an incentive for people to become connectors with a cash reward paid for every job actually created.**

**With over 40,000 registered connectors, ConnectIreland has been responsible for 36 new greenfield projects establishing operations in Ireland, with the creation of over 1,000 jobs in 8 counties. ConnectIreland has also created an active project pipeline with the potential to create a further 2,500 jobs. In all, the goal of the Succeed in Ireland Initiative is to create at least 5,000 jobs over the life span of the programme.**

**ConnectIreland operates in close cooperation with many of our embassies and consulates overseas. In order to maximise the reach of our diplomatic network, particularly in places where we have recently established a presence, or where there are new centres of Irish emigrants, we will put in place a joint Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and ConnectIreland campaign to identify and mobilise members of the diaspora not currently reached by the Government.**

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## Diaspora Studies

There are over **230 million** international migrants living in the world today. It is relatively difficult to find reliable information on them and their experience, yet global interest in the role and potential role of diasporas is growing rapidly.

Ireland is ahead of most countries in efforts to engage with our citizens abroad and their descendants. Initiatives like the Emigrant Support Programme and the Global Irish Network are original and inventive and point the way for others to follow.

While we have innovated, we recognise that we have much to learn, from the diaspora and from other countries. As we seek to learn from others, we should also be willing to share our own experiences. This knowledge is held by Ireland's universities, non-governmental organisations and private individuals, as well as by the Government.

**We will support efforts to use Ireland as a hub for research into the potential and reach of diasporas and the practical application of such research.**



## Juan José Delaney Buenos Aires Argentina

Irish-Porteños are lucky people. Probably Borges was also thinking of us when he wrote that the Argentinians are Europeans in exile. I feel that, but I also feel that the encounter of two remote cultures enriched my life and my central activity which is writing. For being part of two worlds, the Irish-Porteños are fortunate, proud of their traditions.

Through Irish literature, Irish friends and occasional visits, I learned that the rather mythical image of Old Ireland I got from my parents is gone forever. It is curious and significant that parts of the legendary island have been surviving for many years in this far-off land of the world: language, music and even certain foods were preserved here by the Irish migrants and their descendants. Argentina became, then, a kind of a Noah's Cultural Ark.

Now that we are going through the slow but inevitable disappearance of the visible Irish-Argentine community, we see that the deep legacy of the Irish in Argentina is a spiritual one: culture and a singular way of understanding life, which is worth living, is the true contribution of the Emerald Isle to this South American melting-pot.

The positive gravitation of what is known as the Irish Diaspora reveals that Irishness is not necessarily related to geography; it is an ineffable condition and an oblique way of understanding this funny world.

"Culture and a singular way of understanding life, which is worth living, is the true contribution of the Emerald Isle to this South American melting-pot."

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# Recognising the Diaspora

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The day to day work of Irish officials overseas includes a significant effort to reach Irish communities and recognise the work they are doing. This is supplemented with high level recognition during Ministerial visits which usually include an Irish community dimension.

There are also some initiatives that recognise the diaspora in a particular sector. For example, the Science Foundation Ireland St. Patrick's medal, which is awarded to an Irish scientist, engineer or technology leader living in the United States, who is not only a leader in their field, but has also worked with researchers in Ireland or has contributed to developing the research ecosystem in Ireland.

## Presidential Distinguished Service Award for the Irish Abroad

The Presidential Distinguished Service Award for the Irish Abroad was initiated by the Government in 2012. The Award provides recognition by the Irish State of persons living abroad who have given sustained and distinguished service to Ireland or to Irish communities abroad.

While the scheme is open to all persons living outside Ireland, it is primarily aimed at Irish citizens, those entitled to Irish citizenship and persons of Irish descent. Full details of the nomination process are available on the website of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The first awards were presented by the President in November 2012. A full list of those who have received Awards to date is included at Annex 1.

## Future of the Award

Over the three years the Awards have been in place, they have been presented to thirty remarkable individuals, from diverse locations and backgrounds, who have made their contributions to Ireland in many different ways. These thirty recipients were chosen from strong fields of nominees.

It is important that the Awards continue to attract high quality nominees, drawing on as broad a base as possible in the global Irish community. There are so many Irish people doing great things all over the world, and these awards offer an opportunity to recognise them.

## The Certificate of Irish Heritage

The Certificate of Irish Heritage was introduced in 2011 to recognise descendents of previous generations of Irish citizens in an official manner. It gives practical expression to the sense of Irish identity felt by many around the world, who may not be entitled to Irish citizenship due to the passage of generations.

The Certificate is an acknowledgement of the importance the Government attaches to recognizing people of Irish descent. Applying for the Certificate provides an opportunity for people to re-engage with Ireland and to discover more about their family history and their Irish heritage.

There have been high-profile presentations of Certificates, including Presidents Clinton and Obama, the actor Tom Cruise and Olympian Lord Coe.

They are available for purchase by, or for, anyone of Irish heritage, who was not born on the island of Ireland. The Certificate is produced and sold by the financial services company FEXCO, on behalf of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Uptake of the Certificates has been disappointing, with fewer than 3,000 having been produced to date. We will continue to work with FEXCO to promote the scheme around the world to drive interest.

Before the end of 2015, **we will undertake an evaluation of the operation of the Certificate of Irish Heritage scheme**, in partnership with FEXCO, to plan effectively for the future.

## Irish Diaspora in National Parliaments Worldwide

**The success of the Irish abroad and their integration into other cultures and countries manifests itself in diverse ways. One of the most striking is the existence of parliamentary friendship groups, such as the Friends of Ireland in the United States Congress and the All Party Parliamentary Group on the Irish in Britain in Westminster. We will engage with these and similar groups to maintain and develop their enduring links with Ireland.**



*President Higgins presents a Presidential Distinguished Service Award to Fr. Michael Kelly (Zambia)*



## Austin and Mary Comerton Ottawa Canada

In 1988, we, in our mid thirties, emigrated to Canada along with our two daughters. Three of Austin's siblings were settled in Ottawa. Austin operated businesses in Athlone and Tullamore at that time and I worked part-time at TSB. Opportunities for the children, then 9 and 6, looked bleak and moving represented a chance for a new start and keeping the family together.

I joined Telesat Canada a short while after arrival and has just retired as the Executive Assistant to the CEO. Austin spent six years in the office furniture industry and then spent sixteen years working in satellite telecommunications. As a hobby, Austin started broadcasting an Irish radio show in 2005 and still maintains that interest.

Canada has provided the ability to experience new things that seemed unattainable, It has provided us with a comfortable lifestyle and helped us give our children the career opportunities we hoped for. We have travelled extensively and regularly visit Ireland.

SKYPE, RTEPlayer and online newspapers help keep the connection alive with family and friends. Austin also established a Rose of Tralee centre and founded the Ireland-Canada Chamber of Commerce in Ottawa.

**"Canada has provided the ability to experience new things that seemed unattainable, It has provided us with a comfortable lifestyle and helped us give our children the career opportunities we hoped for. "**

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# Evolving Diaspora Policy

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**Diaspora policy will continue to evolve.**

**While we fully appreciate that the bulk of Irish diaspora activities occur spontaneously and without Government support, the Government still has a fundamental role in this area. We realise the need to listen and be responsive to real need. The consultative exercise leading to this policy showed a broad interest in diaspora matters among a diverse range of groups and individuals.**

**However, we expect that it only touched on a fraction of those who have the interest and the capacity to contribute. We want to continue to mobilise that interest and welcome new contributions. We will remain open to new ideas, so that Government policy can evolve to meet changing needs in changing times.**

## **New Diaspora Communities**

We will look at new ways to connect with emerging diaspora communities.

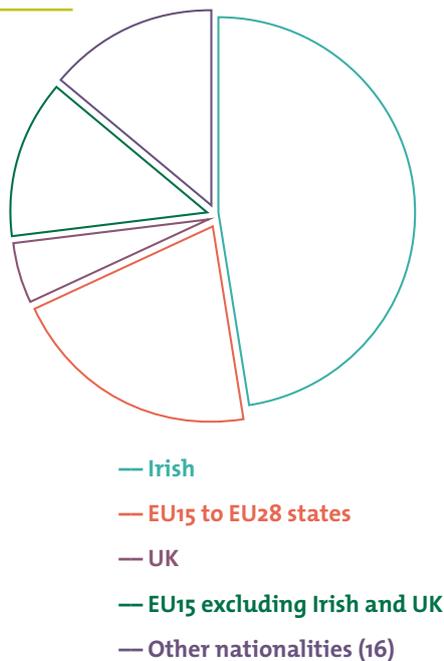
Ireland has become a very diverse society in recent years with a significant increase in immigration. Many of these people have made Ireland their permanent home. They have opted to become Irish citizens and are actively contributing to the life of their local communities, while also providing a whole new network of citizens from every country in the world. The positive contribution that these new groups can and do make to Ireland's ongoing development is welcomed and recognised.

In addition, there is a growing number of people who have spent time living, studying and working in Ireland and then returned home. Both groups serve as a valuable link between Ireland and their home countries and offer opportunities to strengthen Ireland's connections with a wide range of countries.

New Irish diaspora communities have been formed in countries such as Poland, as Irish citizens who were born in Ireland to non-Irish parents, or who have become Irish citizens as adults, returned to their country of origin. We want these young Irish to retain their links with Ireland and have pride in their Irish citizenship.

**We are open to supporting projects with new diaspora communities in their countries of residence to help retain their Irish identity and to strengthen connections between Ireland and their home countries.**

Nationalities of Emigrants from Ireland 2009-2014.  
Source: CSO



## Alumni Engagement

Building and deepening relations with the alumni of Irish third-level institutions is an important part of diaspora engagement, both in terms of connecting with Irish graduates overseas and connecting with non-Irish students who may retain some affinity with Ireland. Such links have enormous potential, for Irish third-level institutions and for the country as a whole. We will work to ensure stronger engagement with international alumni. The mechanisms to develop closer collaboration, information sharing and joint actions to enhance alumni engagement will form part of the Department of Education and Skills' Internationalisation Strategy 2015-2020.

**In 2015, we will launch an Alumni Challenge Fund to provide seed-funding to new collaborative initiatives by Irish institutions to target their Irish and non-Irish graduates working internationally.**



*Minister Deenihan, KconnectAgain Alumni Conference, November 2014*

# Annex 1

## Presidential Distinguished Service Award for the Irish Abroad

### 2014

#### Arts, Culture and Sport

Fionnula Flanagan (US)  
Thomas Keneally (Australia)

#### Charitable Works

Fr. PJ McGlinchey (Korea)

#### Business and Education

Jim Flaherty (deceased, Canada)  
Catherine Day (EC)  
Colm McLoughlin (UAE)

#### Irish Community Support

Mary Allen (Britain)  
Avril Conroy (Russia)

#### Peace, Reconciliation and Development

Niall O'Dowd (US)  
Kevin Cahill (US)

### 2013

#### Arts, Culture and Sport

Mick Moloney (US)

#### Business and Education

Craig Barrett (US)  
John Martin (France)

#### Charitable Works

Anne Merriman (Uganda)  
Sr. Cyril Mooney (India)

#### Irish Community Support

Mary Tilki (UK)  
Seamus McGarry (UK)  
Rodney Walshe (New Zealand)

#### Peace, Reconciliation and Development

George Mitchell (US)  
Ambassador Dan Rooney (US)

### 2012

#### Arts, Culture and Sport

Pat Kelly (Canada)  
Pierre Joannon (France)  
Jim Stynes (deceased, Australia)

#### Business and Education

Donald Keough (United States)  
Andy Rogers (Great Britain)

#### Charitable Works

Chuck Feeney (United States)

#### Irish Community Support

Sally Mulready (Great Britain)  
Sr. Lena Deevy (United States)

#### Peace, Reconciliation and Development

Fr. Michael Kelly (Zambia)  
Loretta Brennan Glucksman  
(United States)

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# Annex 2

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## Membership of Interdepartmental Committee on the Irish Abroad

### Departments:

Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine  
Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht  
Department of Children and Youth Affairs  
Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources  
Department of Defence  
Department of Education and Skills  
Department of Environment, Community and Local Government  
Department of Finance  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
Department of Health  
Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation  
Department of Justice and Equality  
Department of Social Protection  
Department of the Taoiseach  
Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport  
Office of Public Works  
Office of the Revenue Commissioners

### Agencies:

Bord Bia  
Enterprise Ireland  
IDA Ireland  
Science Foundation Ireland  
Tourism Ireland



## Avril Conroy Moscow Russia

Initially I never had considered going very far from Ireland, but I got an unexpected offer to travel to Russia at a time when it was completely unknown and mysterious so when I left Ireland for the first time, it was definitely on an adventure. At the time, I couldn't see it lasting for more than one, maximum two years. But it was a very exciting time as Russia emerged out of the shadow of the Soviet Union, especially in the consumer retail sector which had developed from nowhere in a very short space of time.

I love Ireland, and have a fantastic family back at home so I visit quite often, which makes missing it manageable. But the longer you are away I think the more you miss some basic things about being there. But living abroad becomes a habit, and the ever-changing, helter-skelter environment in Russia keeps you on your toes. Having said that, in my role as President of the Irish Business Club in Moscow, and my position on the Global Irish Network steering committee – I keep very much in touch with both the Irish community in Moscow, and also what is going on at home. I joined the Irish Club very early on when I arrived in Moscow and it was a great lifeline to home and our culture, which it still is for Irish people who come to Moscow as they settle in to a very different way of life to what they're used to.

We have several events in Moscow where you probably could forget you are in the centre of Russia, the main ones being the two Irish balls the Irish Club organises (the White Ball in December and the Emerald Ball in March) which gather together around 300 Irish expats and their Russian friends and partners, and the St. Patrick's Day Parade. The Parade in Moscow has been running since 1991 and is still a huge family event when thousands of Muscovites and their families come out, dressed head-to-toe in green white and gold.

At events like that the connection is very strong, and you feel a huge sense of pride and privilege to be Irish.

Part of living abroad has made me even more determined to promote all of the special things about our Emerald Isle that we love so much, and yet often only fully appreciate when we are far from home.

**"Living abroad has made me even more determined to promote all of the special things about our Emerald Isle that we love so much."**

