



An Roinn Gnóthai Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs

2020 Annual Report



Foreword

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Simon Coveney T.D.

In common with the rest of the world, the COVID-19 pandemic was the foremost challenge impacting the country, this Department, and wider Government, in 2020. I believe the response of the Department demonstrated the best of how its almost 2,500 staff spread across the world are “Working for Ireland”, from the consular assistance afforded to our citizens overseas to the informed international perspective it brought to cross-Government decision making, to significant redeployments of staff to support pandemic contact tracing. I wish to acknowledge the dedication and resilience of the staff of the Department who worked throughout to support our citizens abroad and inform Irish government policy through effective communication with our international partners in Europe and beyond.

Although the pandemic was a defining feature of the year, progress on a number of strategic initiatives continued throughout 2020. The year began with welcome progress in Northern Ireland. After three years without power sharing institutions, the “New Decade, New Approach” agreement paved the way for restoration of the institutions and the resumption of power-sharing. 2020 also saw an important new initiative commence, with the first Shared Island Dialogue taking place in November. The dialogue, “New Generations and New Voices on the Good Friday Agreement” saw 80 young people from across the island take part in the event and share their perspectives. We remain committed to working through the implementation of ‘New Decade, New Approach’, the legacy of the conflict, and the complex consequences the UK’s departure from the EU are having on this island. On Brexit more broadly, work in Dublin, Brussels, London and our missions in EU countries also continued apace, with the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement finalised in December, and extensive Brexit readiness planning and campaigns conducted throughout the year.

Ireland’s successful election to the UN Security Council in June 2020 was a highlight of the summer months. Preparations were further accelerated for the start of our two-year term on the Security Council, January 2021. At the heart of our priorities for membership are



Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney © Julien Behal / DFA

peacebuilding; strengthening conflict prevention; ensuring accountability through promoting the rule of law and upholding universal human rights.

Work on the Global Ireland initiative continued despite the fact that the opening of a number of new diplomatic missions was postponed to 2021 because of the pandemic. 2020 allowed my department to continue preparations for the implementation of Expo 2020 Dubai, following its postponement to 2021.

Two important Global Ireland strategies were also published during the year. “Delivering for Ireland in the Asia Pacific Region to 2025” was launched in January 2020, with objectives including significantly developing Ireland’s trade and investment links with the region and facilitating more people-to-people exchanges across business, academia, culture and civil society. Ireland’s Diaspora Strategy 2020-2025 was launched in November. An inclusive and forward-looking strategy, it places the welfare of the Irish abroad at the heart of our diaspora engagement and commits us to building fresh linkages across our diaspora and re-energising existing ones. Both strategies represent distinct and significant contributions to the Global Ireland initiative, which foresees a doubling of the scope and impact of Ireland’s global footprint by 2025.

Looking ahead, although the pandemic is still unfortunately a fact of life for us all, I am confident that the Department will continue to promote the interests and values of Irish citizens, with the highest levels of dedication and integrity.

Simon Coveney T.D.
Minister for Foreign Affairs

Foreword

Secretary General
Joe Hackett

2020 was a year like no other in the history of the Department, the country, and indeed the wider world. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was felt early on across our diplomatic network, and as the world around us adapted to unprecedented circumstances, so too did the Department's staff at headquarters and overseas.

It was a challenging time for us all, and remains so. At the end of 2020, between headquarters, posted, and local staff, almost 2,500 people were working for the Department. The pandemic impacted each and every one in a different way, both personally and professionally. As a member of our senior leadership team, I was struck by the pace, scale and effectiveness of the Department's response, and the energy and experience colleagues across the world brought to bear in responding to the demands of the global crisis in the interests of Irish citizens at home and abroad. Our collective achievements in the face of such adversity remain a source of great pride, which I hope is shared across the Department. I particularly acknowledge the demands placed on those colleagues serving overseas during the pandemic, and who – alone or with accompanying family – were, like so many of our citizens overseas, unable to return home for a large part of the year. For some, this came at a significant personal cost.

I would also like to pay tribute to my predecessor, Niall Burgess. In his capacity as Secretary General until earlier this year, Niall led the senior management response to the pandemic, and in the preceding years, oversaw significant investments in remote working capability.



Secretary General, Joe Hackett © DFA

This Annual Report represents a snapshot of the many and varied ways in which colleagues across the Department rose to the singular challenge of COVID-19 and contributed to the whole-of-Government response. It also recognises the many areas of work which were progressed despite the pandemic. This included our election to the UN Security Council in a highly competitive process, extensive leadership across Government on Brexit-related issues, unprecedented demand for our consular services, and contributing to the Government's efforts to respond to the challenge of COVID-19. The Department was also active in implementing the Programme for Government following the formation of a new Government.

Overall, the experiences, both good and bad, we faced as a Department through 2020 have made us more agile and more innovative. I look forward to working closely with our Ministerial team and our staff at headquarters and overseas over the coming years, to deliver on our core mandate of serving the Irish people, promoting their values and advancing their prosperity in an increasingly complex external environment.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Hackett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Joe Hackett
Secretary General



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Responding to COVID-19



Responding to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic took root across the world in early 2020, demanding that new ways of living and working be found. The footprint of the Department of Foreign Affairs spans the entire globe. It's staff around the world, many in very small teams, faced challenging levels of restrictions and prevalence of COVID-19 in their local communities while maintaining continuity of service for our citizens overseas. A snapshot of the Department's response to the pandemic at home and abroad is provided below.

Repatriations to and from Ireland

The pandemic had major implications for the Department's consular work, requiring the expansion of consular operations, and the establishment of dedicated helplines to respond to the needs of our citizens. In 2020 alone, the Government's dedicated COVID-19 Call Centre for citizens abroad responded to over 24,000 calls for assistance and advice.

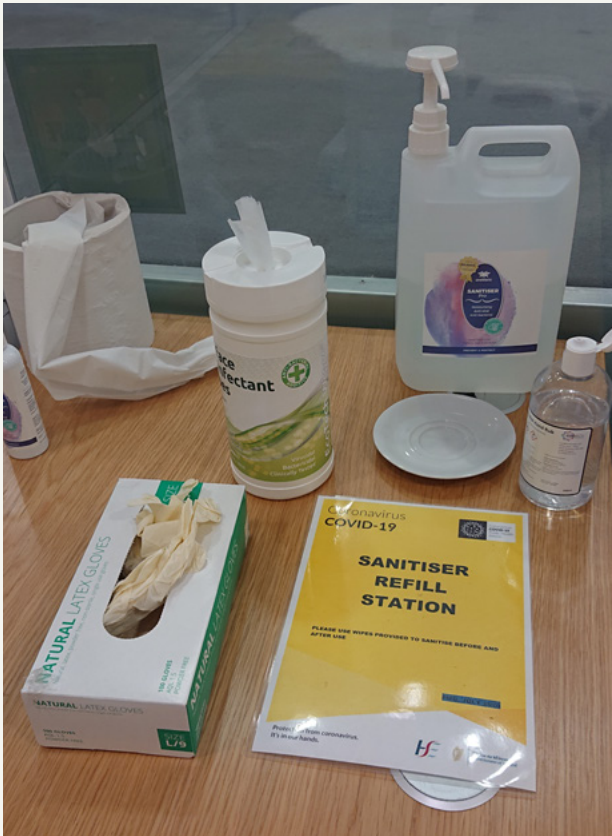
With unprecedented numbers of our citizens stranded around the world, including many in remote locations or in difficult conditions, the Department handled the most extensive repatriation operation in the history of the State, helping well over 8,000 citizens to return from 129 countries across five continents. This included many health care workers, who wanted to assist in the COVID-19 response at home. The Department's work was based on an innovative policy developed in the early stages of the pandemic, which outlined a comprehensive approach to repatriations and associated issues. Up to 180 colleagues from across the Department were trained up and worked around the clock for several months as part of the wider consular team.



Minister Coveney addresses DFA staff in Ireland and overseas by video in the first stage of the pandemic © DFA



Volunteers working in the Consular Crisis Centre during the COVID-19 pandemic © DFA



A sanitiser refill station for staff based in the Consular Crisis Centre © DFA

As well as providing information about internal and international restrictions and available routes and connections, and assisting citizens to get seats on commercial flights or ferries where possible, the Department negotiated places for citizens on flights chartered by EU, British and other partners. In a few specific cases, the Department chartered repatriation flights directly, bringing groups of citizens safely home from Peru, India, and Nigeria. These were all complicated operations, involving extensive outreach and assistance to citizens and their families; discussions with local, regional and national authorities; and negotiations with airlines and other transport companies, despite severe local travel restrictions in place.

The Department was also instrumental in assisting foreign nationals in Ireland to return to their home countries. Working closely with foreign Embassies, the Department of Transport, various airports and An Garda Síochána, the Protocol team assisted with the organisation of 24 repatriation flights to arrive and depart Ireland to repatriate over 3,000 foreign nationals to their home countries. This included flights for citizens of Italy, Slovakia, Spain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Moldova, Israel, India, and Ukraine via special airline flights or military aircraft.

The ability of staff at home and abroad to continue working throughout the pandemic was enabled by corporate support teams including ICT Unit and the Property Management Unit (PMU), among others. Throughout 2020 PMU, on the advice of the HSE, HSA and our own health and safety colleagues, worked to ensure that our 12 HQ premises and over 160 mission buildings were properly maintained, cleaned, sanitised, equipped with new signage and generally prepared for a return to the workplace when deemed safe to do so by the Government. The PMU also supported the establishment of temporary home offices by staff obliged to work remotely for most of the year.

Great Britain Emergency Travel Response

In light of the Government announcement on 20 December banning travel from Great Britain (and South Africa) to Ireland due to public health concerns, the Department's Crisis Centre was again activated that evening, and remained in operation throughout the Christmas / New Year period. During this time, the Department facilitated the safe return of 3,500 eligible citizens and long-term residents to Ireland, via special flights or on ferries.

Consular Travel Advice

The supply of accurate and up-to-date travel advice was paramount in 2020, with citizens relying on the Department as a trustworthy and impartial source of information. In collaboration with its network of Embassies and Consulates overseas, the Department maintained a high quality online travel advice service, providing detailed information about the rapidly evolving circumstances in countries and territories all over the world. The Department also worked closely with the Department of Health and other relevant Departments regarding information about travel into Ireland and COVID-19 measures in place here. The operationalisation of the new EU Traffic Lights System in the autumn required the suspension of the Department's TravelWise app.

Ensuring Continuity in Consular Services

Consular Services, which incorporates the Authentication and Apostille Unit and the Marriages Abroad Unit, provides essential services to citizens, businesses and the legal profession. Staff in both units adapted operations during COVID-19 and continued to provide services throughout the year, with the volume of applications remaining high.

In line with public health restrictions, the public offices in Dublin and Cork were closed in March. The Authentication and Apostille service moved from a public-facing same-day turnaround service to a registered postal-only service, with staff working in the office throughout all levels of restrictions in order to access applications and operate specialist printers and equipment. The disruption to well-established work practices, and the requirement to rotate staff between home and office working in order to respect public health and safety requirements, resulted in longer than usual waiting times. Additional staffing, office space and equipment were required with a view to ensuring staff safety, business continuity and the maintenance of services.



RONAN CUNIFFE
First Secretary | Consular

I was assigned as Deputy Director for Consular Protection in June 2019. While Consular is a busy section at any time, COVID-19 posed enormous consular challenges throughout 2020. Citizens became stranded around the world and needed help getting home. Families in Ireland needed information about what was happening overseas and how they could help their relatives abroad. As the pandemic evolved, guidelines around international travel took on great significance and this placed huge importance on our Travel Advice. And throughout the year, every individual consular case was complicated by the background of the pandemic and related restrictions.

While it was a challenging year, I look back on it as a period of great achievements for the Consular team, our Mission colleagues around the world and the countless colleagues from other units who lent their support throughout the response. Consular work really allows you to make a positive and tangible difference to citizens when they most need help and I feel fortunate to have been part of a great response by the Department.

Consular & Protocol COVID-19 Response at a Glance

8,000

assisted **return from overseas**
during initial months



3,500

assisted home
from **Great Britain**



180

staff redeployed,
working **24/7**



24

repatriation flights
carrying **3,000 foreign
nationals** repatriated
from Ireland



1,550

Letters of Freedom
to marry issued



24,000

calls for assistance
answered



44,532

Authentications & Apostille
stamps issued



COVID-19 Response Fund

As the scale of the impact of the pandemic on our diaspora communities became clear, the Government moved quickly to react. Managed by the Department's Irish Abroad Unit, the COVID-19 Response Fund was established as a dedicated resource for Irish communities abroad. The four main priorities were to:

- » protect our elderly and mitigate the impact of social isolation;
- » meet the needs of those made vulnerable by the crisis and respond quickly and effectively to cases of particular hardship;
- » provide mental health supports and bereavement counselling to those in need, and to;
- » support innovative ways to provide services online.

Projects were delivered through existing community welfare organisations and charities in partnership with Ireland's diplomatic network. In 2020, over €1.3 million was disbursed to organisations to fund just under 100 projects to deal with the immediate needs of the 'Global Irish'.

The response of Irish community organisations to the challenges of COVID-19 was truly exceptional. The global Irish responded to the challenges by developing what were often completely new and innovative collaborations and delivery methods.



The Consulate General of Ireland joins diplomatic missions around the world in the April 2020 #ShineYourLight initiative, to show solidarity with frontline workers © DFA

Digital Diplomacy

As pandemic restrictions were introduced around the world, the Department and its diplomatic network rapidly pivoted from traditional methods of engagement with the wider world to embrace digital diplomacy.

Mission and Departmental social media channels and websites were crucial vehicles to reach Irish citizens and key stakeholders overseas in the early stages of the pandemic. As the world adapted to restrictions on interpersonal engagement, the Communications Unit and diplomatic network likewise adapted its programmes of outreach and engagement to the digital sphere. With campaigns such as the #GezelligSessions (Embassy of Ireland, The Hague), "From Isolation - Inspiration" (Embassy of Ireland, London), #Irelandalnspera (Embassy of Ireland, Bogotá) and "Shades of Green" (Missions across the USA), music proved a popular. The Department's YouTube channel, ([youtube.com/IrishForeignMinistry](https://www.youtube.com/IrishForeignMinistry)) is an important archive of these and many other policy statements and cultural activities shared online during the year.



Nathan Carter performs as part of the "From Isolation - Inspiration" cultural series, curated by the Embassy of Ireland in London © Youtube.com/IrishForeignMinistry



WORDS FROM **ULYSSES** BY JAMES JOYCE

A still from "A New Day Will Be", celebrating Bloomsday 2020 © DFA

Public engagement in Ireland took a similar approach with the Department celebrating Europe Day, Africa Day, Pride, Bloomsday and Hallowe'en on social media.

A new collaboration in 2020 saw school children learn about Irish Aid activities in Sierra Leone on RTÉ's innovative School Hub programming, and later, Ambassadors from around the world shared insights into how Christmas is celebrated around the world on the After School Hub.

With widespread travel restrictions still in place in the lead up to Christmas 2020, Minister for Overseas Development Aid and Diaspora, Colm Brophy, launched a new platform to connect Ireland's diaspora during the festive season. The "To Be Irish at Christmas" platform hosted a wide range of activities, including music, storytelling, archival footage, and a very special trip to deliver children's letters to Santa Claus by our Ambassador to Finland, Ruth Parkin.

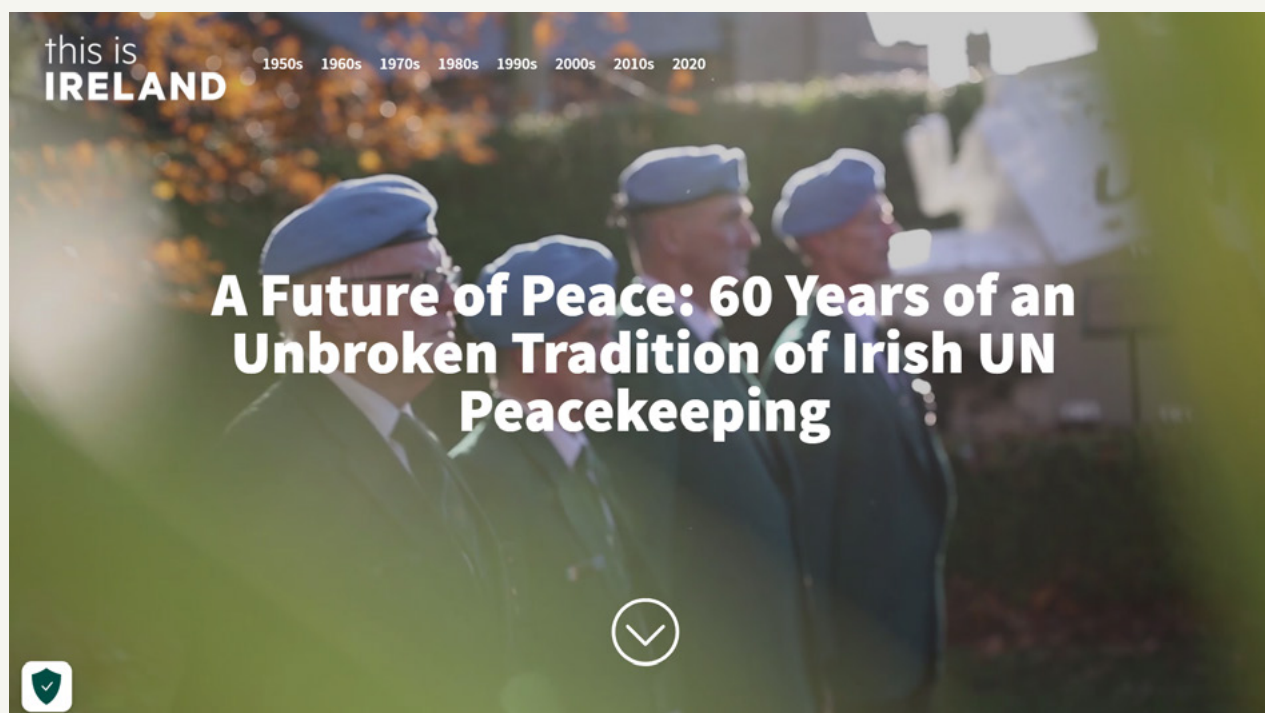
Development of ireland.ie, the Department's central digital platform for Ireland's engagement with international audiences, continued during the year. Exhibitions about Ireland House Tokyo and Ireland's history of peacekeeping over six decades were among the showcases added during the year.



Ambassador Sile Maguire and Elf Brian talk about Christmas traditions in Spain for RTÉ's After School Hub, December 2020 © DFA



Minister of State for Overseas Development Aid and Diaspora, Colm Brophy, T.D., launches the inaugural "To Be Irish at Christmas" programme © DFA



An exhibition on Ireland's 60 Years of Peacekeeping was launched on ireland.ie in May 2020 © DFA

Informing Cross-Government Decision Makers of International Responses to Covid 19

Like much of the Civil Service, in March 2020, the work of the Department's Policy Planning Unit was reoriented to respond to the developing public health situation.

The Unit played a central role in collecting, collating and circulating a regular COVID-19 Digest of Mission Reporting within the Department of Foreign Affairs and across the wider Government system. Each Digest featured reporting from Ireland's diplomatic network on the latest international developments, including epidemiological data on cases and deaths, public health measures such as lockdowns, and in due course, the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination programme worldwide. In total, our diplomatic missions abroad supplied 4,968 COVID-19 Country Situation Reports to HQ in 2020, from which Policy Planning Unit produced 74 Regional Digests.

In addition to these regular reports, the Policy Planning Unit responded to urgent requests from the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE), the Department of Health and other Government Departments to provide briefing on specific topics such as international travel, testing and tracing and vaccinations. These reports drew on best practice from EU partners and the wider world to inform Ireland's policy response. Almost 50 detailed reports were provided by PPU in 2020 and this work continues into 2021.

COVID-19 & International Law

The global pandemic has raised many questions of international law, amongst other things leading to suggestions for a new pandemics treaty to be negotiated under the auspices of the WHO. Governments around the world have responded to the public health emergency by enacting a range of restrictions on rights and freedoms to protect their citizens. Some states have entered derogations to international human rights treaties, while others, including Ireland, have introduced measures designed to remain within the framework of restrictions permitted by treaties such as the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. At times of crisis the rule of law is more essential than ever and unacceptable restrictions on human rights cannot be introduced under the pretext of protecting public health.

Irish diplomats and other officials abroad have continued to provide consular assistance to Irish citizens, often in very difficult and dangerous situations, throughout the pandemic. To do this effectively, they need to be afforded the privileges and immunities that they are given under international law and similarly, in imposing restrictions here, the Government has respected the privileges and immunities of diplomats assigned to Ireland. We have also worked to ensure that the restrictions respect the requirements of international law which may require person-to-person engagement with foreign leaders, officials and international organisations.

The Department, both at home and throughout the Mission network, has engaged with other Government Departments, international organisations, counterparts in other countries and, most importantly, our citizens, to ensure that individuals' health and welfare, as well as their rights, are protected to the fullest extent possible during the pandemic, whilst protecting public health, international relations and the rule of law.

Managing the Response

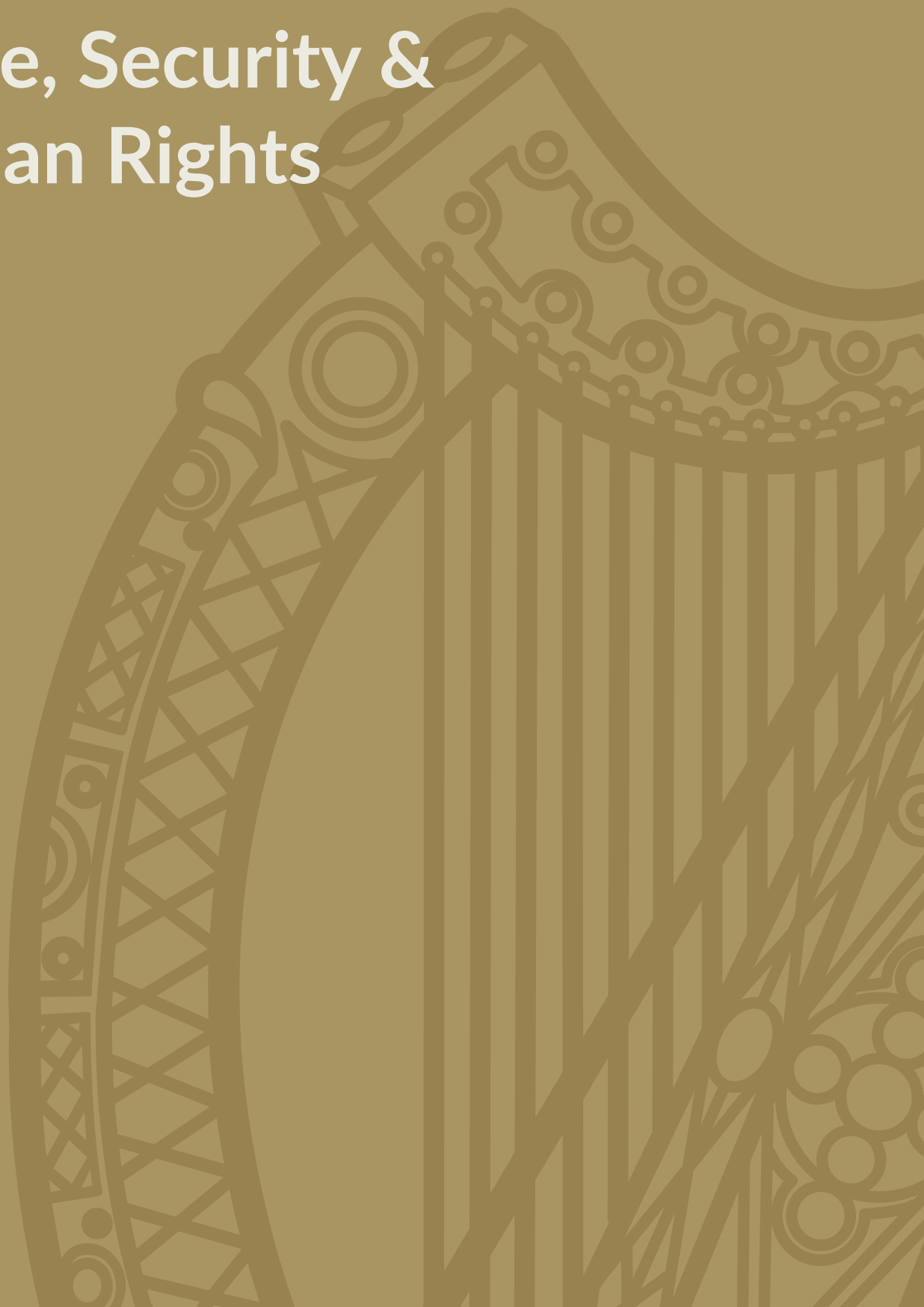
The Department's governance structures and processes played a critical role in enabling the Department to respond to the pandemic and deal effectively with the international consular crisis, during a period when the majority of staff moved to working from home from March 2020. Chaired by then Secretary General Niall Burgess, the Department's Management Board led the Department through this period and ensured that we continued to deliver to our objectives around the world despite the challenges brought about by COVID-19.



Over the course of 2020, the Management Board met on 37 occasions to consider how best to provide consular assistance and advice to Irish citizens; Ireland's contribution to the global public health response to COVID-19; and, how to support staff at home and abroad through the challenges of the pandemic.

The Management Board was supported in this work by a number of sub-committees, chaired by the Deputy Secretary General Brendan Rogers and other Management Board members, which prepared and delivered important work on corporate issues, policy development and coherence, overseas development and equality and diversity issues in support of the Department's overall goals.

Ireland at the United Nations – Peace, Security & Human Rights



Election to the UN Security Council

Ireland was elected to the United Nations Security Council on 17 June 2020. The final months of the election campaign were carried out remotely but energetically. The outcome provides Ireland with an opportunity to bring our principles, values and independence to the Council's vital work of maintaining international peace and security for a two-year term, 2021-2022.

Preparations for the Council term began immediately following the vote. The Government identified three guiding principles for our term on the Council: building peace, strengthening conflict prevention, and ensuring accountability. Under the direction of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, detailed policy preparations were initiated within the Department at headquarters, at Ireland's Permanent Mission to the UN in New York and across the Embassy network, to enable Ireland to engage effectively across over fifty country, regional and thematic files of the Council agenda and within its various subsidiary committees and working groups.

At the 75th session of the UN General Assembly, the Taoiseach delivered Ireland's national statement setting out our ambition to be an active and engaged member of the Security Council. High Level Week, an important occasion for Ireland to contribute to discussions on the work of the UN and on pressing international issues -



Ireland's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason, casts Ireland's vote in the UN Security Council Election, June 2020 © DFA

was conducted virtually for the first time due to the ongoing pandemic. Key themes included the impact of the pandemic and the renewed importance of multilateral co-operation. As the UN celebrated its 75th anniversary, Ireland marked 65 years of UN membership and looked forward to the start of our Council term on 1 January 2021.



EMILY GHADIMI

Desk Officer | Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Unit

I work as Desk Officer in the Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Unit, focusing primarily on nuclear issues. In 2020, a significant part of my work was dedicated to Ireland's ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). This was a unique chance for me to work directly on a significant global issue, and entailed a broad range of work, including preparing public communications, completing the domestic processes for ratification, and drafting remarks for the Minister at the Dáil debate on the TPNW.

Nuclear disarmament is a signature foreign policy for Ireland, and our position on the TPNW was followed closely by interested states and civil society. Ireland's ratification was completed on 6 August 2020, which marked the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, which served as a sobering reminder of why the elimination of nuclear weapons is vitally needed. The ratification of the TPNW gave us an excellent opportunity to communicate the importance of nuclear disarmament to a wider audience, both in Ireland and abroad.

Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Unit

Ireland has a strong and historic legacy in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, dating from the late 1950s. In May 2020, Ireland hosted a virtual event to mark the 50th anniversary of the entry into force of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Former President Mary Robinson spoke at the event, highlighting that the pandemic demonstrates the necessity of a multilateral response to address the threats posed by nuclear weapons.

Ireland ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 6 August 2020, marking the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. This was an important achievement in continuation of our longstanding signature foreign policy on nuclear disarmament.

Ireland is deeply concerned about the humanitarian consequences arising from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA). In 2020, Ireland continued its leadership of a process to agree a Political Declaration on EWIPA aimed at improving compliance with International Humanitarian Law and reducing the civilian harm caused by EWIPA. Ireland's Ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva hosted consultations in February 2020 with over 75 states and broad civil society participation. Progress was interrupted by the pandemic but momentum was maintained through written consultations, bilateral engagement and a high-level webinar, with the participation of Minister Coveney, the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the International Committee of the Red Cross.



Speakers at a virtual event to mark the 50th anniversary of the entry into force of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty © DFA



Minister Simon Coveney signing Ireland's instrument of ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) © DFA

Conflict Resolution Unit

REPORT ON THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF UNSCR 1325

October 2020 saw the publication of a new report '*Building Peace from the Grassroots: Learning from Women Peacebuilders to Advance the WPS Agenda – Report on Consultations on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), Sustaining Peace and COVID-19 with Local Women Peacebuilders in Colombia, Northern Ireland, South Africa and Uganda*'.

This report was commissioned by the Department's Conflict Resolution Unit (CRU) and produced by the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, in collaboration with UN Women, to mark the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) when the international community recognised the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls. Resolution 1325, along with nine subsequent resolutions, make up the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda.

Officially launched in October 2020, the report was the result of a series of consultations undertaken with women peacebuilders and civil society across Colombia, Northern Ireland, South Africa and Uganda. The report outlined some of the challenges facing women and women peacebuilders,



Building Peace from the Grassroots report © DFA

which have been compounded by the deleterious impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through engagement with these women peacebuilders and their recommendations, the report identifies concrete, experience-based and practical examples of how to help accelerate the WPS Agenda as per six priority areas outlined by the UN Secretary-General in 2019.

The report's recommendations include that the UN, Member States and other international development partners invest in the localisation of the WPS agenda, and that funding for implementation of the Agenda and peace agreements, especially including their gender provisions, is not reduced in the aftermath of the pandemic.

CYBERSECURITY VISIT TO CALIFORNIA 24-28 February 2020

The Department's International Security Policy Unit, in collaboration with the National Cyber Security Centre and Consulate General of Ireland in San Francisco, organised a high-level visit to Silicon Valley, the global centre of high technology, innovation and social media. The delegation included representatives from the Departments of Business, Enterprise and Innovation; Communication Climate Action and Energy; Defence; Foreign Affairs; and Justice and Equality. There were also representatives from An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces.

The visit was the third iteration of the 'Strengthening Cybersecurity' initiative, established in 2018 by the US Embassy in Dublin, which brings together

cybersecurity leaders in Ireland. The purpose of the visit was to connect with leading practitioners and policy leaders in California, including in the California State government, major private sector tech companies (including McAfee and Microsoft) and significant cyber academics with a view to improving collaboration and capacity building in cybersecurity.

Members of the Irish delegation, which included Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland representatives, also attended the RSA Conference, the largest cybersecurity conference in the world, helping to raise the profile of Ireland as a place to do business and invest in cybersecurity.

International Security Policy Unit

CIVILIAN CSDP DEPLOYMENTS

The EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) allows the EU to undertake peacekeeping and conflict prevention missions and to strengthen international security in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter. EU civilian crisis management is a key component of this work. In 2020, Ireland had up to 21 experts deployed to Civilian CSDP missions in Europe, the Caucasus, Africa, and the Middle East. These experts worked with partners to support them in building capacity around Rule of Law, policing and civil administration, all vital to establishing and maintaining security and stability. In the face of the challenges of COVID-19, the Department of Foreign Affairs worked with the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Civilian Missions to ensure the safety of our funded experts, facilitating travel and drawing up a protocol for medical evacuation arrangements. As the pandemic developed, the Department has resumed deployments to missions where possible, in order to further the commitment in Ireland's Civilian CSDP National Implementation Plan. Ireland has also been leading EU Member State discussions on enhancing career paths for Civilian CSDP deployees, and hosted a number of virtual workshops on this topic – the first of which took place in October 2020.

Human Rights Unit

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT DURING 2020

Ireland remained extremely active at the Human Rights Council during 2020, delivering 61 national statements and co-sponsoring over 69 resolutions. Ireland co-led on a Joint Statement on civil society space (June) and on the human rights situation in Yemen (September), securing the renewal of the mandate of the Group of Eminent Experts.

IRELAND'S PERIODIC REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

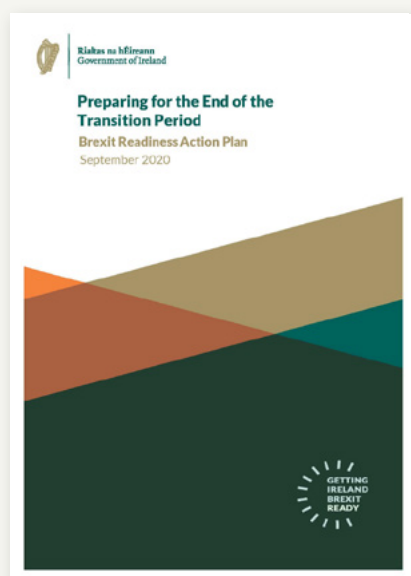
In 2020 the Department led on the preparation of Ireland's fourth periodic report on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) for submission in 2021, coordinating across government and civil society.

NATIONAL PLAN ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The multi-stakeholder implementation group for the National Plan on Business and Human Rights met in plenary on four occasions in 2020 and there were six meetings of the three subgroups in total. An independent assessment of Access to Remedy in Ireland, commissioned as part of the implementation of the National Plan, was finalised in December 2020.

Strengthening Our Place in Europe





© DFA



Minister Simon Coveney announcing details of the 'Getting Ireland Brexit Ready' public information campaign © Julien Behal/ DFA

Responding to Brexit

Brexit continued to be a priority focus for the Government throughout 2020. The Department supported the EU engagement of the Taoiseach, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for European Affairs on Brexit. Our teams at home and abroad continued to support, promote and explain Ireland's Brexit objectives.

The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020 on the terms set out in the Withdrawal Agreement, including the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. The Protocol protects the peace process on the island of Ireland, avoids a hard border, and protects the EU Single Market, and Ireland's place in it. The Withdrawal Agreement also provided for a transition period, ending on 31 December 2020.

In February 2020, EU Member States, including Ireland, adopted the negotiating mandate for the future relationship negotiations with the UK. These negotiations concluded on 24 December, with the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement to be applied from the beginning of 2021. The Agreement provides for tariff and quota free goods trade, transport and energy connectivity, and cooperation between police services. It protects the Single Market that is so important for our future prosperity and ensures fair competition for our businesses.

The EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement, together with the Withdrawal Agreement, including the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, means that Ireland's key Brexit objectives in the negotiation phase have been achieved.

In parallel, the Department co-ordinated extensive whole-of-Government preparations for the end of the Brexit transition period. In September 2020, the Government published its Brexit Readiness Action Plan, which building on earlier action plans, set out the necessary preparations for the end of the Brexit transition period. The Department, together with the Department of An Taoiseach, oversaw the implementation of the action plan.

In 2020, the 'Getting Ireland Brexit Ready' campaign continued to focus on raising the awareness of citizens and businesses of the changes arising on 1 January 2021. The wide-ranging campaign, included national radio and TV advertising, and was complemented by extensive stakeholder outreach by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for European Affairs, as well as other Ministers.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs was the lead Minister for the 2020 Brexit Omnibus Act, signed into law by President Higgins in December. The Act underpins the readiness measures required for the end of the Brexit transition period, and is focused on protecting our citizens and on supporting the economy and jobs.

Visits

Department officers facilitated the visit to Ireland of OSCE Special Representative (OSR) and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Valiant Richey, from February 17-20, 2020.

OSR Richey and his team held meetings with representatives of Civil Society organisations; the Department of Justice and Equality's Anti-Human Trafficking Unit; Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service; An Garda Síochána's National Protective Services Bureau; Cross Border Task Force and the National Central Bureau; and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. His wide-ranging programme also included engagements with representatives from the Ombudsman for Children's Office, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, National Women's Council and the National Observatory on Violence Against Women and HSE frontline facilities.

On February 26, 2020 the Department hosted a visit from Moldovan delegates to formally commemorate the landmark decision by Moldova to open their first embassy in Dublin, led by State Secretary of the Moldovan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Mr Eugeniu Revenco. Political consultations led by then EU Division Director General, Joe Hackett, were held at Iveagh House prior to the ribbon cutting ceremony at the Embassy of Moldova in Dublin. The event was hosted by the Ambassador of Moldova to Ireland, Larisa Miculet, and with opening remarks provided by the then Department of Foreign Affairs Secretary General, Niall Burgess.



Participants at the meeting between the Department of Foreign Affairs and OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Valiant Richey © DFA



Former DFA Secretary General Niall Burgess and State Secretary of the Moldovan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration Eugeniu Revenco during his visit to Ireland to mark the official opening of the first Moldovan Embassy to Ireland © DFA



Minister for European Affairs, Thomas Byrne, T.D., spoke on Kilkenny/Carlow Local Radio as part of the Communicating Europe Initiative © DFA

Communicating Europe

The Communicating Europe Initiative (CEI) is a grants programme managed by EU Division to raise awareness about the EU and to improve the quality and accessibility of public information on European issues. In 2020, funding was distributed to a total of 20 projects.

The selected partners represented a wide range of community-based groups, youth organisations, educational bodies and local media from various parts of the country. Projects covered diverse target audiences and themes related to Ireland's relationship with the EU.

A highlight from the 2020 CEI was the production of two local radio series with Radio Kerry and Kilkenny/Carlow Local Radio (KCLR) which aired popular weekly discussions related to the EU's transformational impact

on various aspects of Irish life. Minister Coveney and Minister of State for Europe Affairs, Thomas Byrne both took part in these series.

Other projects included the production of podcasts (including a David McWilliams podcast) on the impact of the EU for Ireland, as well as Brexit preparedness events, a Massive Open Online Course on the EU through Crisis and Recovery, and initiatives on EU climate action. While COVID-19 caused some disruptions, moving online allowed projects to reach much wider audiences than in previous years.

Reports of 2020 CEI projects can be found on the Department's website, www.dfa.ie.

Future of Ireland in Europe Communications & Outreach Project – European Movement Ireland

The three-year *Future of Ireland in Europe Communications and Outreach project* came to an end in December 2020. Managed by European Movement Ireland (EMI) on behalf of the Department, the programme focussed on public outreach on European issues, an area in which EMI has deep experience.

Through a series of Citizen Dialogues, podcast production and an alumni mentorship network, the programme aimed to generate public debate as well as engaging with citizens and with different sectors through various media platforms, particularly social media. The programme also engaged with a wide range of networks

at home and across the EU. Throughout 2020, 15 Future of Europe podcasts with key EU stakeholders, citizens and diplomats were created. Further information can be found on the EMI website.

EMI will continue this work through a new three-year programme agreed with the Department for 2021-2023. In the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe, the new programme includes three core strands of work: (i) holding regional citizen engagement seminars related to the Conference, (ii) developing an interactive digital 'anthology' on Irish-EU relations; and (iii) young people and the digital space.

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Briefing on the
German Presidency of
the Council of The EU

Tuesday 7 July 2020

#EU2020DE

European
Movement
Ireland

© IIEA

Future of the EU27 Programme – Institute for International and European Affairs

The Institute for International and European Affairs' 'Future of the EU27' project came to an end in June 2020, after three years. Through the project, the IIEA published extensive research and analysis to contribute to the public debate on the future of Europe. Central themes of the project included: the future shape of the EU; macro-economic effects of Brexit; EU institutional implications of Britain's withdrawal from the EU, as well as the new strategic alliances that Ireland will need to develop within the EU after Brexit. The IIEA also organised numerous public diplomacy and policy events, online and offline, over the course of the 3-year project.

Following the success of the Future of the EU27 programme, since September 2020, the Department has been funding a new three-year Global Europe programme with the IIEA. This consists of research, events, and public engagement on issues including protecting LGBTQI+ rights in Europe, migration as well as Ireland's role in the UN Security Council.

Further information on Global Europe can be found on IIEA's website.



Minister Byrne participating in the Informal videoconference of the Ministers of European Affairs, 23 February 2021 © DFA



A wide range of events were organised by the IIEA under the DFA-supported "Future of the EU27" and "Global Europe" programmes © IIEA

Advancing Ireland-UK & North-South Relations



Institutions

On 9 January 2020, following multiple phases of multiparty negotiations including a final intensive talks process before and after Christmas, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney, T.D., and then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Julian Smith, published a proposed agreement - *New Decade, New Approach* - as the basis for the restoration of the institutions and the resumption of power-sharing in Northern Ireland.

The deal that the two Governments put to the parties and published that day set out priorities for a new Executive on health, education, infrastructure and welfare. It agreed measures for more transparent and accountable government in Northern Ireland and included a package of reforms on the Petition of Concern. It agreed reforms to make the power sharing institutions more resilient, in addition to agreeing legislation on language and identity, including on the Irish language, the language, arts and literature associated with the Ulster Scots / Ulster British tradition, and a new Office of Identity and Cultural Expression.

The Irish and British Governments, at the same time, each announced a series of financial and other commitments in support of the resumption of the power-sharing institutions at Stormont and the NSMC. These commitments are annexed to the proposed agreement, but do not form part of it.

On 11 January, following acceptance of the proposed agreement by the five main political parties, the Northern Ireland Assembly was reconvened, and a new power-sharing Executive was formed, with Ministers drawn from all five parties. DUP leader Arlene Foster was appointed First Minister, while Sinn Féin's Michelle O'Neill was appointed deputy First Minister.

The formation of the Executive ended a three-year period without power-sharing institutions in Northern Ireland. The formation of the Executive also meant that the work of the North South Ministerial Council could resume, with a plenary taking place on 31 July 2020, to develop cooperation and action on an all-island basis.

Throughout 2020, the Department remained in close contact with stakeholders in Northern Ireland, including on COVID-19 co-operation, Brexit-related issues, the implementation of 'New Decade, New Approach', and issues pertaining to the legacy of the conflict in Northern Ireland.



Minister Coveney and former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Julian Smith announce the publication of 'New Decade, New Approach' © PA Images / Alamy Stock Photo

SHARED ISLAND INITIATIVE

The Shared Island initiative is a key feature and priority of the Programme for Government, with the aim of working 'with all communities and traditions on the island to build consensus around a shared future ... underpinned by the Good Friday Agreement and by the absolute respect for the principle of consent'. The first Shared Island Dialogue - "New Generations and New Voices on the Good Friday Agreement" - took place on 26 November 2020. Over 80 young people took part in the event, drawn from civic, student, sporting, faith, cultural, and youth engagement groups from across the island of Ireland, representing the 1.3 million young people born on the island since 1998.

NORTHERN IRELAND RECONCILIATION FUND

The organisations supported by the Department's Reconciliation Fund faced unprecedented challenges as they sought to navigate through the pandemic, with their capacity to deliver funded projects – and for some, just to remain in operation – being significantly affected by the public health restrictions required to manage COVID-19. The Department engaged with its funded partners throughout the year, taking a flexible, supportive and realistic approach, recognising that many reconciliation projects had to be tailored to the new reality and delivered in a different way, while others would take more time to complete. With our support, some organisations also adapted and responded to the needs of their local communities in a very practical way, providing online support and basic assistance in the form of food and personal welfare parcels.

Despite the challenges, the Reconciliation Fund was able to deliver its annual spring and autumn funding rounds in full, with 146 grants totalling €3.7m paid to 121 organisations in support of peace and reconciliation.

Prior to the onset of the pandemic, the Reconciliation Fund team also undertook important outreach by holding three well-attended information and engagement sessions on the Reconciliation Fund in Belfast and Derry in February 2020.

In autumn 2020, the team completed an important series of online consultations with funded organisations and key stakeholders on the development of an updated strategy for the Reconciliation Fund, intended to come into effect in 2021 and cover the period 2021 to 2024.

Building Global Ireland





Ireland's Heads of Mission meet at Iveagh House, January 2020 © DFA

Heads of Mission Conferences 2020

High Level Engagement between Heads of Missions and senior management takes place annually to engage on the implementation of key policy priorities for the year ahead.

In January 2020, Ireland's Ambassadors, Permanent Representatives and Consuls General from across more than 90 missions gathered together with key partners in the public service, the business community, the Diplomatic Corps and representatives of the diaspora, culture and other key stakeholders to examine the significant shifts in the geopolitical landscape and discuss the Department's key priorities for 2020.

In September 2020, a special gathering of the Heads of Mission from 90 locations around the world took place in a 'virtual' setting to discuss the major challenges and opportunities that Ireland faced in the coming year; to explore the Global Ireland dimension of the new Programme for Government and how the wider Team Ireland will work together to deliver on the ambition of the programme and help in Ireland's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

This innovative event attracted contributors such as Secretary General of the UN Antonio Guterres, former US Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power, Dr Mike Ryan from the World Health Organisation, Ireland's past President Mary Robinson, and Booker prize nominated author Colum McCann. The 'virtual' nature of the conference meant that the public could also join the event online.



In January 2020, Heads of Mission, along with a peacekeeper visited 80 schools across the country as part of the Global Ireland Schools project © DFA



September 2020 saw the first 'virtual' Heads of Mission conference, which was livestreamed and broadcast live on RTÉ News Now © DFA



Throughout 2020 the Department of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with Team Ireland continued with planning for Ireland's participation in Expo 2020 Dubai. Delayed due to COVID-19, Expo will now run from October 2021 to March 2022 © DFA

Expo 2020 Dubai

Since the launch of Global Ireland, the Department has been leading the planning for Ireland's participation at Expo 2020 in Dubai, which was postponed until October 2021 as a result of the pandemic.

2020 was a challenging year in terms of planning, nevertheless Ireland's Pavilion was completed in late 2020. Expo will showcase Ireland to a global audience in a post-Covid world and in a region with significant potential to further develop trade, investment, education and tourism links. 192 countries are participating in what is expected to be the first large-scale event of its kind in 2021.

Ireland's participation is centred on the theme of *Island of Inspiration – putting creativity at the centre of human experience in the 21st century*. Through our programme, we will show how creativity drives human connection and community, on a global as well as a local scale. Significant focus will be on economic recovery, health innovation and sustainability. Ireland's programme will involve initiatives and events inside and outside our Pavilion, including strong participation within Expo's Thematic Weeks.

Expanding Ireland's footprint overseas

Although new mission openings originally planned for 2020 were deferred to 2021 due to COVID-19, the project team continued to work on the opening of the permanent chanceries for our new Embassies in Santiago, Bogotá and Wellington and the new Consulates in Vancouver and Mumbai. The impact of COVID-19 and associated restrictions meant that completing construction and fit out in each of these locations was extremely challenging and was expertly coordinated by the HQ based project team and a dedicated architect from within the Department's Property Management Unit.

Since they were established, these missions have each worked towards the promotion of Irish interests and the High Level Goals of the Department, focusing on areas of bilateral engagement, trade and promotion of Irish values, including supporting our campaign for the UN Security Council. In addition to engaging with the Irish community and diaspora, each of these missions also made a significant contribution to the COVID-19 consular response, supporting Irish citizens in country and in their countries of secondary accreditation, including assisting on the repatriation of Irish citizens.



Reception area, Consulate General of Ireland, Vancouver, Canada © MGBA Architects



Embassy of Ireland, Wellington, New Zealand © DGSE Wellington

PROGRAMME OVERSIGHT BOARD IN ACTION

Abuja Chancery Project

The Programme Oversight Board continued to meet in 2020, overseeing the delivery of 25 high-level and strategic projects within DFA. Projects included the rollout of the DFA Contacts and Events Management System; the Grants Management project; London Embassy Enabling Project; EXPO 2020 Dubai; Tokyo Ireland House; New Missions Programme and the Abuja Chancery project.

The Embassy building in Abuja has been assessed as inadequate and it was recommended that the Department develop a new building that is fit for purpose and is in a safe and secure location to better facilitate the promotion of Ireland and the protection of its staff.

Previously, a site was secured by the Department for the construction of a new chancery building in the EU mission compound in Abuja. In addition, the State was allocated land by the local government in Abuja for the construction of fit-for-purpose, safe and secure official representational and promotional space, as well as for the official accommodation. Work on designing the new Chancery and Residence in Abuja progressed with the preliminary design stage completed in 2020.

165

properties
around the world



86 Chanceries



73 Official Residences



6 Compounds



Global Ireland: Expansion of the diplomatic network, 2018-2020

Opened to end 2020

10 New Missions

Target by end 2025

26 New Missions





EIMEAR NOLAN

On Secondment | Strategy Governance & Change Unit

Initially I joined Foreign Affairs on secondment as an AO from the Department of Finance in 2019 in order assist on delivering a Department-wide Contact and Event Management System (CEMS). This system represents a crucial strand of our digital diplomacy and the mission-wide adoption and the use of CEMS is critical to the successful implementation of Global Ireland. It also means that we as a Department are now better able to fully to utilise one of our greatest assets: our contacts and networks of influence. During rollout, much like everyone else's plans, COVID-19 impacted enormously meaning we had to be agile and pivot to account for the multiple ways our initial plans were no longer possible, from training to data migration to redevelopment work. Despite this, CEMS has now been rolled out to each Mission and all HQ Business Units successfully and is in operational phase.

Global Island Policy Series

The Policy Planning Unit (PPU) contributes to strategic policy formulation by providing forward-looking analysis of long-term trends and carrying out innovative policy projects.

The Global Island Policy Series is a flagship initiative of the Policy Planning Unit. The lectures aim to improve the Department's understanding of policy issues among colleagues at HQ and abroad. In 2020 as a result of COVID, the Global Island Policy Series moved online.

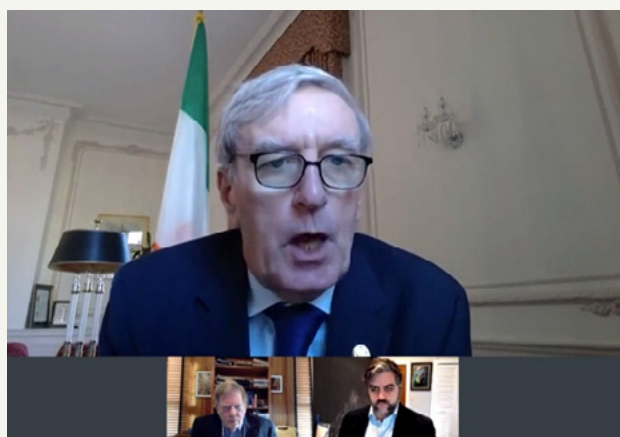
In total, 12 in-person events and 10 online events took place. The topics included Ireland's membership of the United Nations Security Council, the economic and social impact of COVID, Data Security, and other global political and economic issues. The geographic scope covered the entire DFA network including the Americas, Europe, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific region.



Dan O'Brien Looks Ahead to 2021" - featuring Dan O'Brien, IIEA Chief Economist and Brendan Rogers, Deputy Secretary General © DFA

Another important pillar of PPU's work is networking with other policy planning units, especially our EU partners. In 2020, the Policy Planning Unit participated in seven European-level policy-planning meetings organised by the European External Action Service on the following topics: Strategic Autonomy, Transatlantic Relations, Women Peace & Security, Technology & Foreign Policy, and Strategic Governance.

In addition, in 2020, PPU completed a number of innovative projects on topics such as mapping Irish communities and our diaspora overseas in locations such as British Columbia and New Zealand, and how to build our links with parliamentarians abroad. As a result, training materials on community mapping and parliamentary engagement are now available to all of our missions. PPU also supported capacity building within the Department on data analysis and the transition to online events as a result of COVID.



"US Elections - Analysis and Outlook" - with Ambassador Dan Mulhall, Robert Schmuhl, University of Notre Dame, and Michael Brendan Dougherty, National Review Magazine © DFA

EVENTS

2020

The Global Island

Seminar Series Policy Planning Unit
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

- JANUARY**

 - UN Event with Security Council Report
 - 'A European Silk Road?'
 - Disability Inclusive Development
- FEBRUARY**

 - Mary Daly Event - Ireland, UK and Americas and Trade
 - How Least Developed States Respond to Climate Change
 - The Irish America Series: Researcher from the Clinton Institute
- MARCH**

 - "Women in the Spotlight"
 - "100 Years of Women in Politics and Public Life"
 - Ireland's UN Security Council candidature - Ask us anything
 - Parliamentary engagement-Work Shop
- APRIL**

 - Using Quantitative Data to inform Foreign Policy and Practice
- MAY**

 - Dan O'Brien Looks Ahead to 2021
- JUNE**

 - "Foreign Policy Challenges in a Changed World"
- JULY**

 - A view from Brussels - Global Trend and the Future of the EU
- AUGUST**
- SEPTEMBER**
- OCTOBER**

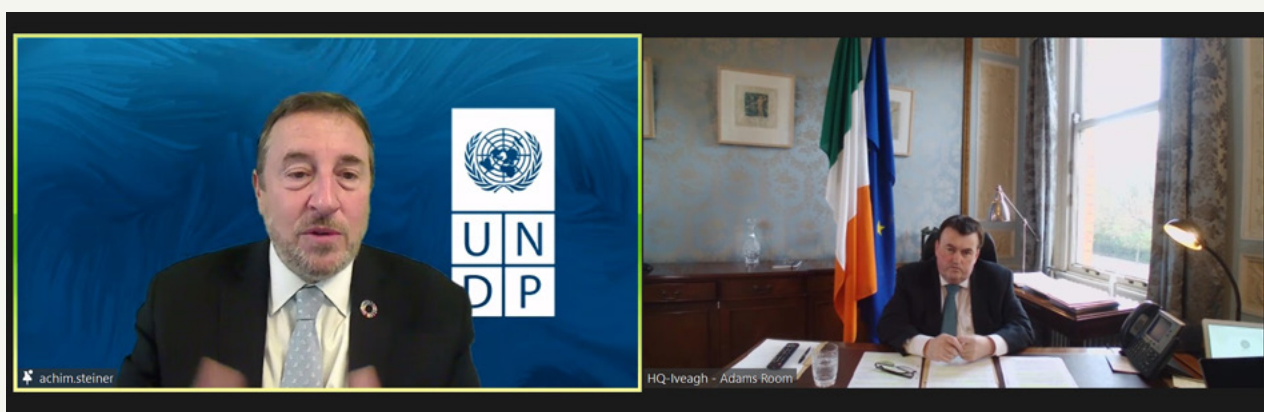
 - Technology and Foreign Policy
 - "Chile: 1 Year since Social Crisis & 5 Days before a Historic Vote"
- NOVEMBER**

 - "Russia: Economic and Political Challenges for the 2020's"
 - "Italy in the time of Covid-19"
 - US Presidential Election
 - "From Wilde to Gandhi - A New World"
- DECEMBER**

 - Review of 2020 & Outlook for 2021

Working for a Better World





Minister of State for Overseas Development Aid and Diaspora, Colm Brophy T.D., meets virtually with UN Development Programme Administrator, Achim Steiner, November 2020 © Twitter.com/Irish_Aid

Irish Aid

In 2020, the Government invested over €867 million in Ireland's overseas aid programme. The bulk of this funding - €545 million - was managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs. The remaining €322 million was allocated through other government departments, mainly the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; the Department of Finance; and through Ireland's contribution to the EU Development Co-operation Budget.

Ireland provides untied aid to support the most vulnerable communities and contribute to the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals. We work closely with selected partners, including governments, international organisations, civil society and the private sector, to ensure lasting improvements in the lives of communities living in poverty.

In May 2020 the OECD published its review of Ireland's development cooperation programme. It confirmed that Ireland continues to be a world-class donor, positively highlighting our focus on delivering assistance to where it is needed most; our commitment to multilateralism and sustainable development; and our long-standing advocacy for poverty reduction.

The review concluded: *'Ireland is widely seen as an excellent partner, providing quality financing and supporting its investments with a presence on key partner bodies such as boards and donor support groups where Ireland uses its influence to improve effectiveness and coherence.'*

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney T.D., welcomed the publication of the OECD peer review and said that the review *'shows that Ireland is a strong development partner, with many areas of excellence, and can provide inspiration for other donors.'*

Also in 2020, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), a leading global development think tank, ranked Ireland as the number one donor in delivering principled aid in their Principled Aid Index 2020, the second successive year in which Ireland scored highest on the Index.

Responding to COVID-19

The arrival of COVID-19 brought hardship to every country, but particularly to those most vulnerable. COVID-19 was more than just a health crisis, but also a development crisis.

COVID-19 paralysed large swathes of the global economy and cost more than USD \$500 billion per month in lost productivity and output. The pandemic also generated a global education crisis, locking up to 150 million girls out of school permanently. It has set back gender equality by decades, disrupted food systems, and generated debt crises.

It was clear that Ireland needed to provide agile responses, addressing simultaneously the health and development crises. Over the course of 2020, Ireland allocated approximately €150 million to the global COVID-19 response. Approximately €55 million of this went to longstanding and trusted partners - the UN, WHO, NGOs and partner countries - to respond directly to COVID-19.

We also fast-tracked roughly €93 million funding to partners to help to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. Ireland was also proud to contribute to the European Union's global response to COVID-19, which by the end of 2020 had mobilised more than €38 billion.

Our earliest responses were focused on providing humanitarian assistance, supporting health partners, addressing food security and nutrition, looking at social protection and economic recovery, and protecting people whose vulnerability was increased by lockdowns, including women at risk of domestic violence.

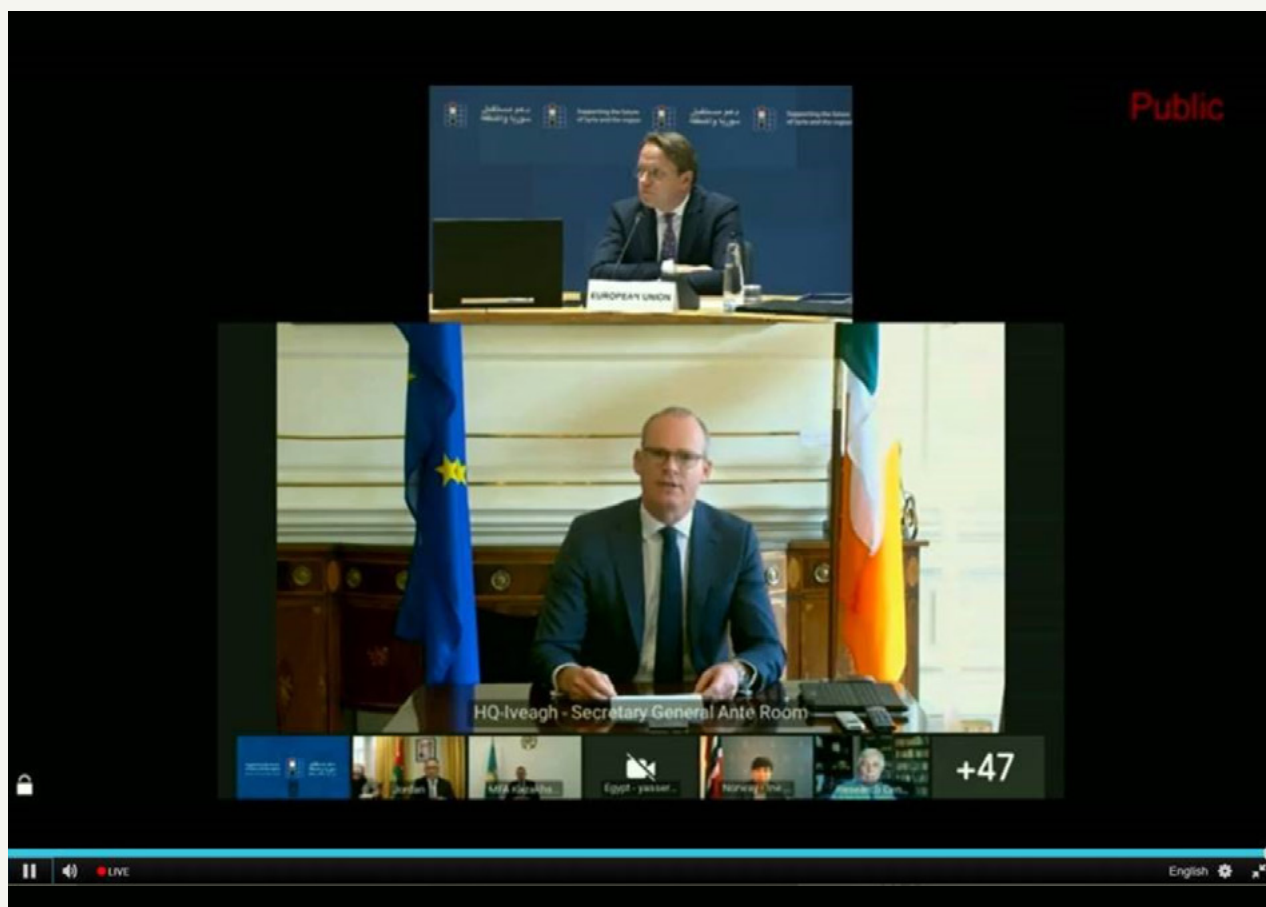
Our bilateral programmes helped Ministries of Health to create surge capacity, obtain PPE, put in place infection control protocols, and establish ICU facilities. In each country, our responses were tailored to the specific needs at the time. For example:

- » In Mozambique, approximately €1.5m of Ireland's support to the health sector was reallocated to buy essential PPE for frontline workers.
- » In Sierra Leone, €750,000 was provided to the World Food Programme (WFP) for food assistance in COVID-19 treatment centres and food distribution to vulnerable households.
- » In Malawi, €480,000 was provided to the Ministry of Gender for COVID-19 emergency cash transfers.
- » In Uganda, €1.8m was provided to WHO to support the health system and procure testing kits.

We worked closely with multilateral partners. Ireland was one of the first countries to respond to the WHO's appeal for funding to assist low and middle income countries. Ireland quadrupled funding to the WHO and significantly increased commitments to the Global Vaccine Alliance (Gavi) to support the vaccine development effort and the creation of the COVAX mechanism, which has proved instrumental in providing access to vaccines to developing countries.



A COVID-19 shielding awareness session, Antananarivo, Madagascar © UN Peacebuilding Fund, Madagascar © UN Peacebuilding Fund, Madagascar



Minister Simon Coveney addresses the June 2020 Syria Donor Conference, at which Ireland pledged €25m © DFA

Humanitarian Response

In addition to COVID-19, pre-existing drivers of humanitarian need, such as conflict and climate change, continued to worsen. An estimated 440 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance and protection in 2020, a 165% increase from 2019.

In 2020, Ireland provided €192m in humanitarian assistance, channelled through partnerships with the UN system, the Red Cross and civil society organisations, as well as through the European Union.

Conflict remains the single biggest driver of humanitarian need. 2020 also saw a significant number of climate-related humanitarian emergencies, including flooding across East Africa and drought in the Sahel.

The majority of Ireland's humanitarian support is delivered through Irish Aid in the Department of Foreign Affairs. Humanitarian assistance is also provided by other Government Departments, such as Ireland's contribution to the World Food Programme by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Ireland seeks not only to respond to humanitarian need but also to reduce it. We do this by making linkages across our humanitarian assistance, development programming and support to peacebuilding. This joined-up approach is most evident in countries where Ireland has an Embassy and uses diplomacy and aid to address complex crises, such as those affecting Tigray in Ethiopia and Cabo Delgado in Mozambique.

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

2020 posed serious challenges to gender equality globally. Lockdowns led to a significant increase in gender-based violence (GBV), while almost 20 million girls are estimated to have left education since the pandemic began, adding to approximately 130 million who are already out of school.

In February, Ireland launched the Drive For Five, calling on governments to commit to five transformative actions to improve girls' education: She has a desk; she is confident; she learns the skills she needs; she is safe; she is healthy.

Ireland hosted a high-level meeting at the United Nations where UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Mary Robinson and Bono were joined by five inspiring youth advocates - Sonita Alizadeh, Marie-Claire Kaberamanzi, Nibras Khudaida, Aisling O'Boyle and Mohamed Sidibay - to launch this global call.

Since his appointment in July 2020, Minister for Overseas Development Aid, Colm Brophy T.D., has continued to place a focus on girls' education. Ireland works with partners such as the Global Partnership for Education, UN Women, One and the Malala Fund to support the rights of girls everywhere to receive an education.

SUPPORTING CLIMATE ACTION

The 2020 Programme for Government recognised climate change as a major domestic and foreign policy challenge. In October 2020, the Department established a new Climate Unit to maximise our ability to tackle climate change.

The role of the Climate Unit is to support, coordinate, shape and scale-up Ireland's climate diplomacy and climate financing, in close collaboration with other Government Departments. Key priorities include supporting communities to adapt to the effects of climate change in least developed countries and small island developing states, and protecting the ocean and promoting a sustainable blue economy.

The unit will also deliver on key priorities of the Programme for Government, including doubling the percentage of our Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) for climate finance by 2030 and climate proofing our ODA.

Through Irish Aid's climate action, Ireland also supports the least developed countries and small island developing states in climate negotiations. Climate action also cuts across key Irish priorities such as the realisation of human rights and the maintenance of international peace and security. We are playing a leading role in integrating climate into discussions of the UN Security Council.

Expanding Ireland's Reach - Focus on the Americas and Asia



Introduction

In 2020, Ireland had 16 bilateral diplomatic missions in the Americas, and 15 in the Asia-Pacific Region. With a selection of examples drawn from headquarters and missions, this section provides a snapshot of the breadth of Ireland's engagement with these two regions in 2020.

US & Canada

In line with the Government's *Strategy for the US and Canada, 2019-2025*, we continued to focus on strengthening and deepening Ireland's unique relationships with the United States and Canada. Indeed, 2019 had seen the greatest number of high-level visits from both sides of the Atlantic in recent times. 2020 was set to continue in this vein, beginning in February with a successful visit and Iveagh House Lecture by the President and CEO of the San Francisco Federal Reserve, Mary C. Daly.

With the onset of the pandemic, and the Taoiseach's sombre address from Washington D.C. during his St. Patrick's Day visit, the work of the US & Canada team pivoted. Re-designated as the *North America Consular Team*, and with a temporarily expanded staff, we worked to support our missions in the US and Canada as they provided assistance to Irish people in their regions. The team also liaised closely with the US and Canadian Embassies in Dublin which assisted with the repatriation of Irish citizens from across the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

High-level visits with the US Administration moved into the virtual space, with Ministerial outreach to the Irish communities in the US and Canada also being conducted online. With the end of the initial consular emergency, the latter months of 2020 saw attention move to the US Presidential election, and to the pledge made by President-elect, Joe Biden, to reinvigorate America's international engagement.

Irish America Lecture Series

Although still one of the largest "ethnic groups", the number of those claiming Irish descent in the United States has been declining steadily in recent years, from about 40 million in 1980 to about 32 million today. As the Irish diaspora in America enters what is termed "late generation ethnicity" and moves further from the generation of their ancestors who emigrated, the question arises as to how Ireland can best engage with the next generation.

To provide a window into the richness, vibrancy and complexity of Irish America today, a three-part public lecture series was organised featuring renowned speakers including Prof. Liam Kennedy, Dennis Brownlee, founder of the African American Irish Diaspora Network, Leni Sloan, board member of the African American Irish Diaspora Network, and Dr Ebon Joseph of the Institute of Antiracism and Black Studies in Dublin, and a number of Fulbright awardees.

The lectures moved online when COVID-19 restrictions were introduced, and explored issues such as what it means to be young and of Irish descent in America today; the experience of diverse groups of Irish Americans throughout history; and links between African American and Irish groups in the US.



Minister Coveney's visit to Washington DC © Marty Katz



FRANK FLOOD

Head of Mission | Consulate General, Vancouver

The Consulate General of Ireland office opened in Vancouver in October 2018 as part of the Global Ireland initiative. It has three main functions, to provide consular assistance to Irish citizens, support for the growing and vibrant Irish community in British Columbia, and to promote stronger bilateral relations including trade, tourism and investment.

As a new office, the Consulate initiated two benchmarking exercises in 2019 with the support of the Irish community, the development of an Irish in British Columbia trade directory and an innovative Irish community mapping project.

The mapping project which identified fifty local Irish organisations was central to the response of the Consulate to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 as we reached out to all Irish organisations. This enabled the Consulate to agree what steps the Consulate could take to be as helpful as possible.

The Irish Abroad Unit quickly established the COVID -19 Support fund which processed modest but key funding requests in a very professional manner, often in a matter of days. The Consulate then accessed this funding to provide support for a communications officer for the Irish Covid 19 Support Group to produce a weekly e-newsletter and to build the digital capacity of organisations and individuals in the new virtual world.

Working with the Irish Canadian Immigration Centre, the Consulate also facilitated the appointment of a Social Care Advisor in Vancouver to help address mental health concerns and a Client Liaison Officer to provide an employment information service.

Towards the end of 2020, as some struggled with life in the pandemic an online cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) course was provided free of charge to Irish citizens. In addition, funding was provided to re-start the Irish Benevolent Fund which provided food vouchers to the needy.



Repatriation of Irish citizens from Peru on a DFA-organised charter flight
© Eduardo Benavides

Latin America and Caribbean

The imposition of strict lockdowns and restrictions on international travel in March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic left thousands of Irish citizens stranded across the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region and in need of consular assistance.

In response to this unprecedented crisis, staff in our six missions worked around the clock for a number of months to assist stranded citizens. The coordinated effort involved frequent cooperation with national and local authorities, EU Member States and other key partners, Ireland's Honorary Consuls in the region and Consular response teams in headquarters to ensure Irish citizens could return home at the height of the crisis.



YANINA BEVILACQUA
Cultural and Press Officer |
Embassy of Ireland, Buenos Aires

I joined the Embassy in Buenos Aires in 2013 as Secretary for the Ambassador and, since 2018, I have also worked as Cultural and Press Officer.

Since the pandemic and the strict lockdown established shortly after, my experience in logistics, communication and liaison with local authorities was put at the service of the repatriation of over 300 people from Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay to Ireland, after these countries closed their borders in March 2020.

I was responsible for keeping track of all the restrictions and formalities required to allow people to travel, as well as contacting the Foreign Ministries and other authorities when Irish people had difficulties crossing internal borders. I had to ensure that we were always able to advise and provide people with the necessary paperwork to reach the airports and leave the country safely.

Through my network and contacts I was able to get early warning of when flights to Europe were about to go on sale. This allowed our citizens to access the flights the moment they went on sale as flights would sell out within minutes.

During the crisis period, Team Ireland in Argentina worked tirelessly to ensure that our people got home safe and sound. Teamwork and the contribution of everyone's experience was very important to carry out our task in the best possible way.

In this very uncertain and difficult context, it has been a great honour to serve Ireland and help so many citizens to return home from such remote places, safely and despite many difficulties.

For Irish citizens travelling in Peru, the Embassy of Ireland in Chile worked, together with Ireland's Honorary Consul in Lima, to evacuate travellers on an Irish repatriation flight. The Embassy conducted a complex logistical operation to bring Irish citizens that were stuck in various cities and regions across the country to Lima by bus in time for the flight home. In total, 93 Irish citizens and 126 tourists of other nationalities, including EU, UK and Norwegian citizens, travelled on the Irish flight from Peru.

Overall, diplomatic missions in the Latin America and Caribbean region provided advice or assistance to over 1,000 Irish citizens stranded in the region and supported many complex repatriation efforts.

Irish diplomatic missions in Latin America and the Caribbean were innovative in adapting their work to the constraints imposed by the pandemic, particularly in taking advantage of the move to digital events and meetings.

Missions in the region worked together to organise the first ever LAC Regional Christmas Concert, showcasing Irish and local artists and streamed live across social media channels.

The Embassy of Ireland in Argentina ran a "Friday Night Series" of video performances between July and December. The Mission worked with local Irish music groups and artists to make short videos published on Instagram that were sponsored by Irish businesses in Argentina, and which provided raffle prizes. The success of the video series led to the Embassy organising a live-filmed end-of-year concert that attracted over 4,600 viewers.

The Embassy of Ireland in Colombia ran a cultural campaign called #IrelandInspira (Ireland Inspires). The project involved ten selected artists submitting short videos of a performance, which the Embassy published on social media. #IrelandInspira celebrated a wide variety of art forms, including music, poetry, drama, visual arts and Irish dancing. By the end of the campaign, the videos had received over 46,000 views on Twitter and Facebook, and had reached over 97,000 people on Facebook.



The Irish Ghosts performing at the Embassy of Ireland in Buenos Aires 'Irlanda en Concierto: Argentina Session' © DFA



"The Embassy of Ireland in Mexico organised an international conference on Women Peace and Security" © DFA

The Embassy of Ireland in Chile developed an online campaign called "Discover Your Irish Roots". It included a number of testimonial videos from Chileans of Irish heritage, features on popular Irish surnames in Chile and a video interview on the experience of Irish immigrants in Peru. The campaign reached nearly 90,000 people on Facebook, 16,000 impressions on Twitter, and 8,000 on Instagram.

The Embassy of Ireland in Mexico held an international conference on Women Peace and Security (WPS) in collaboration with UN Women and members of the International Cooperation Roundtable on Gender Equality in Mexico. With over 1,000 participants from government, public security authorities and civil society, the virtual conference, held in October, gathered experts from around the world to speak on the WPS agenda 20 years after the adoption of Resolution 1325 and identified a number of opportunities for future collaboration.

The Embassy of Ireland in Brazil moved its traditional Bloomsday celebrations online, counting down the 18 "episodes" of Ulysses with video readings and performances on Twitter and culminating in a 30-minute show on YouTube celebrating Irish literature, music, poetry and drama.

The Consulate General of Ireland in Sao Paulo organised a series of three webinars to promote the SDGs ahead of COP26 focussing on the themes of EU Green New Deal, gender equality and innovation. The series has been watched by over 1,000 and the inaugural event, a fireside chat with former Ambassador of Ireland to the UN, David Donoghue, has been made into a podcast.



MERCEDES AGUIRRE SARAVIA

Culture and Public Diplomacy Officer | Embassy of Ireland in Santiago

I joined the team at the new Embassy of Ireland in Chile soon after it opened in 2019. Working in culture, events and outreach for this new mission in 2020 has challenged me professionally in many ways. I have learned a lot from the experiences of moving to online events, the challenge of connecting with an online audience and the creativity of the proposals and collaboration we have received from an arts and culture sector hard hit by the pandemic.

In early 2020, I managed the very welcome visit of former President Mary Robinson to Santiago in January and a St Patrick's Day celebration organised with the Irish community in March. Then, with the onset of the pandemic, we were tasked with re-imagining our strategy to achieve our objectives. We focused, on the one hand, on spreading Irish culture. We hosted our first Bloomsday celebration online with the support of Chilean cultural figures and we supported the participation of musicians in

Ireland in a Jazz Festival organised by the European Union. In addition, we shared some ideas and perspectives based on Ireland's recent history of a Constitutional Convention and Citizens' Assemblies, as Chile voted to establish a new Constitutional Convention in 2020.

As a new mission, one of our main objectives was to create an Irish community by identifying Irish descendants in Chile, Peru and Ecuador. This was an objective that could be achieved in 2020, despite the lockdown, thanks to the reach of social media. Our "Discover your Irish Roots" project identified more than 500 people with Irish ancestry and helped them to learn more about their families and their possible links to Ireland. Overall, 2020 has been a year of learning and I believe that this experience has given me the creativity to reinvent myself professionally.

Asia Pacific

ASIA PACIFIC REGION STRATEGY

Launched in January 2020, the Asia Pacific Strategy, *Global Ireland: Delivering in the Asia Pacific Region to 2025*, is a cross-government initiative to double our impact and influence in this globally-significant region in the coming years. Based around five high-level objectives – political, economic, culture and diaspora, visibility, and a Team Ireland approach – the strategy sets out the goals and milestones for an Ireland which is more politically engaged, trading more and more connected through people-to-people links after a five-year period. Key commitments from DFA in the strategy include widening our footprint in the region, with new missions in the Philippines and China by 2025, the building up of political and official links, and delivering a dedicated Asia-Pacific communications programme.





Establishment of diplomatic relations with Papua New Guinea. Joint Communiqué was signed at Embassy of Ireland Canberra on 26 October, 2020 © DFA

The target of €100 billion two-way trade with the Asia Pacific region by 2025 is the focus of DFA's economic diplomacy programme, and includes the significant efforts of the State Agencies and relevant departments to boost economic links and deliver new EU-wide trade agreements with major economies. Specific areas of focus include agriculture and food, education, tourism, domestic exporters and FDI.

The ambitious programme of commitments and targets will be overseen by an interdepartmental stakeholders group, with annual reports to government to track progress.

The development of a new Ireland House in Tokyo is a key goal in Ireland's current foreign policy and is explicitly referenced in the Global Ireland 2025 initiative. The contract for the complete design of the new Ireland House in Tokyo was signed in August 2020 following an international Design Competition. The Design Team is led by the award winning Dublin-based architects firm Henry J. Lyons. This project represents the largest capital investment that the Irish Government has ever committed to delivering outside the State since independence. It is expected that the project will be completed in 2024.



Artist's impression of Ireland House, Tokyo © Henry J Lyons Architects



Artist's impression, view of the Courtyard, Ireland House, Tokyo
© Henry J Lyons Architects

TEAM IRELAND SOURCING PPE

In the early days of the pandemic, the global demand for health equipment was an immediate and substantial challenge for Ireland's COVID-19 response. Team Ireland supported the HSE to help procure vital equipment, such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), testing kits, and ventilators, through collaboration between IDA Ireland, the Department of Foreign Affairs and its mission network abroad. Embassies and State Agencies worked closely together on the ground abroad drawing on their network of contacts and local market expertise to support successful sourcing and delivery in a highly competitive and complex global market.

IMPORTATION OF FACEMASKS FROM KOREA

Korea responded swiftly and effectively to the initial outbreak of COVID-19, deploying a range of resources and approaches including mass testing and contact tracing, which had been fast-tracked following lessons learned from the experiences of MERS. Korea's innovative approaches, including drive-through test centres, enabled it to conduct a national election in May 2021. Its COVID-19 technology also was of early interest to Ireland in forming our response to the pandemic.

At the request of the HSE, channelled by IDA Ireland, the Embassy of Ireland in Seoul and IDA Korea – together Ireland House Korea – acted quickly to secure a supply of 2.23 million test kits from a rapidly growing and respected Korean company, while coordinating every day with Global Irish Division and Asia Pacific Unit at DFA HQ and with IDA HQ. Speed was important given the emerging international competition for finite supplies of COVID-19 equipment.

A critical goal in this regard was to secure surgical face masks for frontline health workers. Korea had moved quickly to direct the production and distribution of face masks but initial supply challenges had created obstacles to their export. Again, close coordination between the Embassy and IDA Korea and DFA and IDA HQs, led to an important telephone call between the then Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and Korean President Moon Jae-In on 4 May 2020. After intensive negotiations in Korea on the design and specification of the masks with another leading Korean company and on the conditions for export, this in turn led to the supply of 120 million surgical face masks to Ireland in the second half of 2020.

The whole of government character of the work was further exemplified by the assistance of the Department of Transport in securing the permission for return flights to Seoul by Aer Lingus on 13 consecutive days in July and August 2020 to secure the first consignment of 21 million masks.



Contract signing with Korean test kit manufacturing company Noble Biosciences Inc., 27 March 2020 © Noble Biosciences Inc.

As the clear demand for additional PPE to be procured for Ireland increased with the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak in Ireland, the Embassy of Ireland in Beijing engaged in constant communication with their IDA colleagues in Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen and their partners in the HSE, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, and with Aer Lingus to assist them, wherever possible and appropriate, in interacting with official channels in China. This assistance covered a range of areas including landing arrangements, aviation permits, and customs issues. This was done in close liaison with Department of Foreign Affairs headquarters.

Along with the HSE/IDA/Aer Lingus PPE procurement operations, the Embassy also assisted other partners engaged by the HSE, both Irish and Chinese, on similar issues involving Chinese official channels.

With the unprecedented pressures and difficulties presented by the rapidly evolving worldwide PPE supply and demand environment since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, it was essential that the Ambassador and the Embassy team were available on a 24/7 basis to assist the HSE, IDA and their partners in ensuring smooth and rapid procurement and transportation to Ireland of the necessary medical supplies and PPE.



SARAH FINN

Third Secretary | Asia Pacific Unit

I joined the Department in 2019 as Desk Officer for China in the Asia Pacific Unit. I was thrilled to take on this role, having previously lived in Beijing for two years where I completed my Master's degree in China Studies.

As desk officer for China I am involved in all aspects of Ireland-China relations, including political, economic, cultural, and people-to-people links. In normal times, this would involve organising both inward and outward visits to China, organising and attending events related to China in Dublin, preparing briefings for a broad range of China-related topics, as well as maintaining communication with the Chinese Embassy in Dublin and our missions in China.

While visits and events weren't able to take place in 2020, we were still able to maintain high levels of engagement with our Chinese counterparts, both via high level meetings at EU and multilateral level, and through virtual connections at national level. In addition to this, our team in HQ worked closely with our colleagues in Embassy Beijing in procuring PPE for Ireland as demand increased with the onset of COVID-19 at home. At the same time, this year also provided an opportunity for the China desk to focus on more strategic and long-term policy goals.

The importance of China across all areas of Ireland's foreign policy makes this an extremely dynamic and interesting role, and I have thoroughly enjoyed my time working with the team in the Asia Pacific Unit.

Supporting Ireland's People



Diaspora Strategy – Returning Emigrants

Our diaspora includes Irish citizens living overseas and those many millions of people of Irish descent around the world. It also embraces the reverse diaspora, people who have lived, studied or worked in Ireland before returning to their home countries. Together, these groups form the Global Irish.

In November 2020, the Government launched the Diaspora Strategy 2020 to 2025. It is the result of Government recognising the need to sustain and renew a meaningful connection with the Global Irish. With contributions from hundreds of individuals and organisations both in Ireland, and in Irish communities around the world, this strategy reflects the evolving circumstances and needs of the Global Irish and seeks to develop initiatives to strengthen the relationship.

Supporting members of the diaspora who want to return to Ireland to live is an important focus within the Diaspora Strategy. The provision of easy access information to help the returning Diaspora settle back home and the development supports for entrepreneurs to establish businesses in Ireland are just two of the important initiatives to flow from the Diaspora Strategy.

Citizens Information Board

The Department of Foreign Affairs working with the Citizens Information Board has overseen the development of a dedicated 'Returning to Ireland' portal on citizensinformation.ie. The website is responsive to the needs and concerns of Irish emigrants and provides specific information on a number of key areas. In 2020, popular pages included *Returning to Ireland and COVID-19* and *Getting your foreign qualification recognised in Ireland*. Over the course of the year there were 500,000 users and almost a million page views.

Back for Business

Back for Business is an innovative entrepreneurship and business development programme for returning emigrants who are starting up new businesses in Ireland. The programme matches Volunteer Lead Entrepreneurs who themselves have returned to develop a business with more recent returnees. The aim is that the wealth of experience that is shared leads people on a solid path to growing their business and so represents a catalyst for success.

In 2020, 44 participants from all parts of Ireland took part, eight of whom were completing a 'Further Development' module, having graduated the class of 2019. According to Enterprise Ireland, in 2020 the business success rate for the programme exceeded that of other comparable peer groups in Ireland.

GAA

Since 2007, a funding partnership arrangement with the GAA has facilitated the Emigrant Support Programme to support the GAA's Games Development Officers in the US and Britain. Since 2013, the Global Games Development Fund has provided funding for projects in GAA clubs in Europe, US and Canada, Australia and New Zealand, Asia, the Middle East, Africa and South America.

Clubs receive financial support for such things as equipment and coaching and to facilitate inter-club tournaments. This provides opportunities for the Irish diaspora and other communities abroad to play Gaelic Games. It also serves to strengthen Irish networks and Irish identity internationally and nurture a sense of Irish community.

The growth of Gaelic Games internationally, through the Global Irish Development Fund, has been very welcome. In 2020, the Department contributed €200,000 to the fund with matching support from the GAA. In 2020, 75 projects were funded around the world. Some 73 additional Covid related projects were supported during 2020, so providing essential assistance to those who were struggling as a result of the pandemic.

OUR CITIZEN’S ABROAD – CONSULAR ASSISTANCE

The Department also provided extensive non-COVID-19 related assistance, working on over 150 active cases at any one time. Consular assistance was provided for 8,855 cases in 2020, including for 253 families following the tragic death of a loved one abroad; 194 serious medical cases; and 197 vulnerable citizens with serious welfare concerns, as well as 27 prisoners and another 123 citizens who were arrested. The pandemic and related public health restrictions around the world significantly increased the complexity of these cases, and added to the distress encountered by citizens and their families. The Department continued to adapt its procedures to respond effectively and empathetically to the consular needs of our citizens.

HONORARY CONSUL NETWORK

Ireland’s network of Honorary Consuls are a core part of Team Ireland abroad, supporting our mission network in delivering consular assistance and services to Irish citizens, and in promoting Irish trade and cultural interests abroad. This was more evident than ever in 2020 when Honorary Consuls played a crucial role in the Department’s consular response to COVID-19, actively helping in many repatriation operations, and also assisting the many citizens who remained overseas.

Two new Honorary Consuls were appointed in 2020, one in Toronto, Canada, and another in South Carolina, USA.

In 2020, the Department initiated the Honorary Consul Digital Engagement project. Its aim is to better support the valuable work of our Honorary Consuls through the delivery of new ICT technologies, including a secure DFA managed email service and an online information hub for Honorary Consuls. The project is aligned with the Department’s Consular Strategy and ICT Strategy, and supports the Department’s goal to double our impact under Global Ireland 2025.

VISA SERVICE

The Department’s missions overseas play an important role in relation to visas. Due to the effective suspension of the visa service for much of 2020 as a result of COVID-19, visa volumes were approximately 70% lower than in 2019.

These figures are for visas processed across the global service, and include those processed in the Department of Justice Visa Office in Dublin. The vast majority of applications received by the Department of Justice Visa Office in Dublin originate abroad, via an Embassy or Honorary Consul, but a small number are sent by applicants directly to Dublin.

All Missions	2020
Arrests	123
Child Abductions	9
Child Welfare	19
Deaths Abroad	253
Deportations	28
Medical	194
Mental Health	60
Missing Persons	37
Other	628
Prisoners	27
Repatriation	409
Victims of Crime	43
Welfare	197
COVID-19	6,828
Total	8,855

	2020
Visa applications processed globally	42,335
Business visa applications processed globally	3,984

Supporting Our Effectiveness

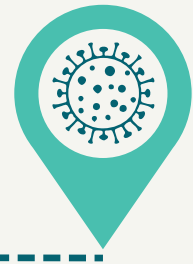


Managing the Department's Human Resources

1,619
staff members in 2020

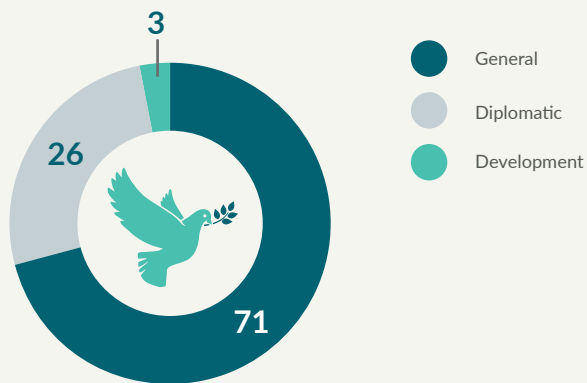


569 additional staff moves
in 2020 which were directly related to
our COVID response

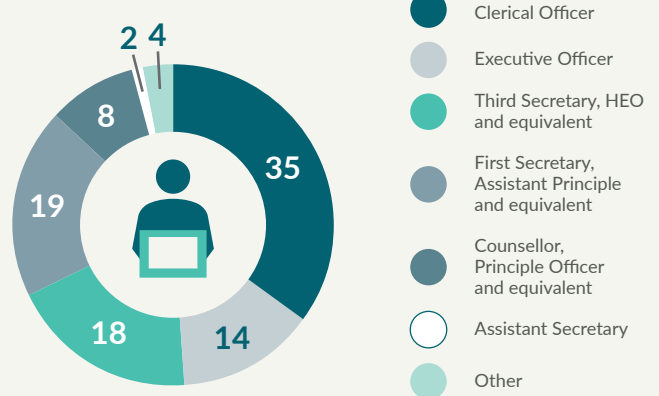


Excludes Local Staff figures: See next page

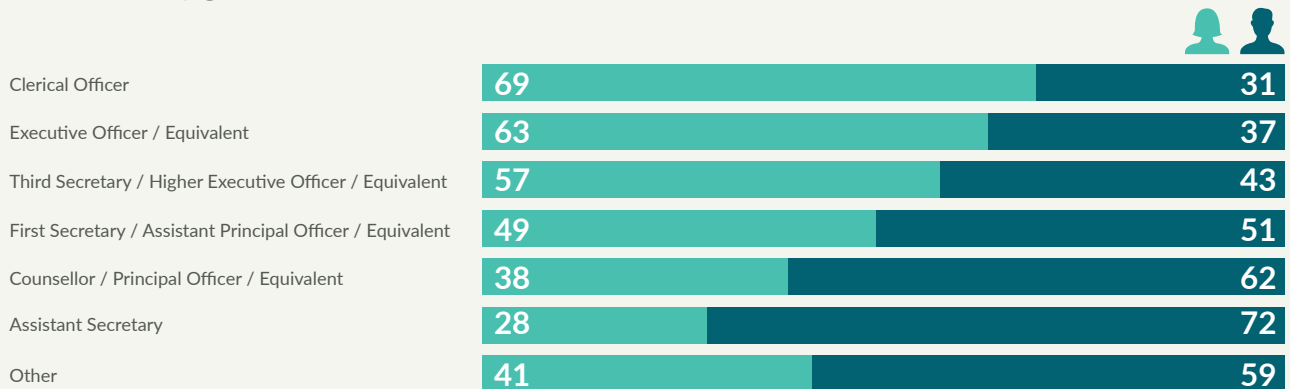
Breakdown by stream (%)



Breakdown by grade (%)



Breakdown by gender (%)



Overseas postings in 2020:



131
postings commenced

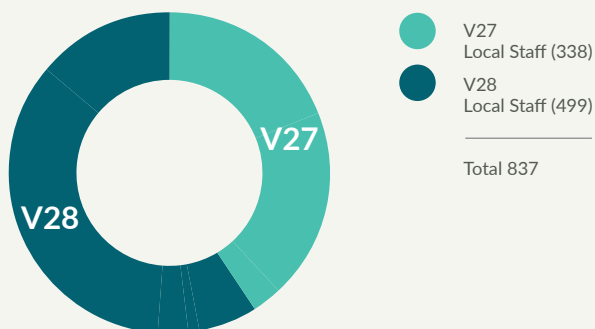


121
postings ended

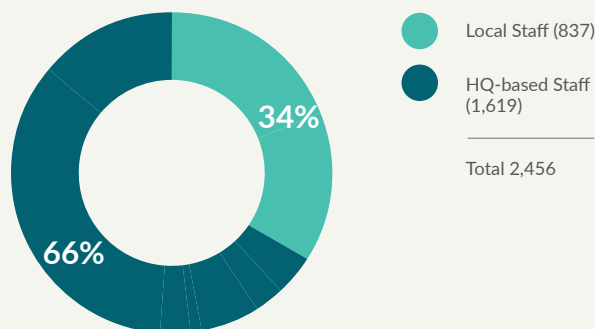


14
staff cross-posted from one location to another

Local Staff working in overseas missions as of 31 December 2020



Proportion of Local Staff to HQ-based staff



Arising from HR's frontline role in responding to COVID-19 developments, Human Resources Division undertook a reprioritisation of the goals and objectives of the HR Strategy in May 2020 with consideration given to how the Department's HR operations will be delivered in this pandemic environment; what our future workplaces will look like; how the wellbeing and ongoing resilience of our staff will be supported; and how our Department will be resourced to allow the Department to meet the challenges of the post pandemic national recovery etc. Some key highlights delivered out from the HR Strategy outside of the COVID response during 2020 included:

- » A DFA Foreign Languages Policy
- » A DFA Learning and Development Framework 2020-2022
- » A re-purposed Staff Induction Programme
- » A Head of Mission Leadership Programme
- » The launch of Strategic Workforce Planning Project
- » A Refreshed annual Wellbeing at Work Programme
- » A Maternity Leave Cover Policy

Language Training

Language Costs by Area in 2020



Breakdown of staff who undertook One Learning courses:



Training & Development

In 2020, due to COVID-19 restrictions around face-to-face meetings, Training & Development Unit successfully pivoted all staff training online. The highlight of 2020 was the rollout of a comprehensive online pre-posting programme. We presented and facilitated 54 individual sessions to 154 staff.

In 2020 there were 54 One Learning courses completed by 789 colleagues. We inducted 67 new colleagues into the Department & supported 31 officers through the Refund of Fees scheme at an approximate cost of €100,303.

2020 also saw the rollout of the Department's Learning & Development Framework, and the first Foreign Language Policy. These are key deliverables under the Department's HR Strategy 2019-2022.

Complementing the work of Training & Development Unit, to support the Department's digital diplomacy activity across the year, the Communications Unit produced a range of training materials to support missions in producing digital content and hosting online events.

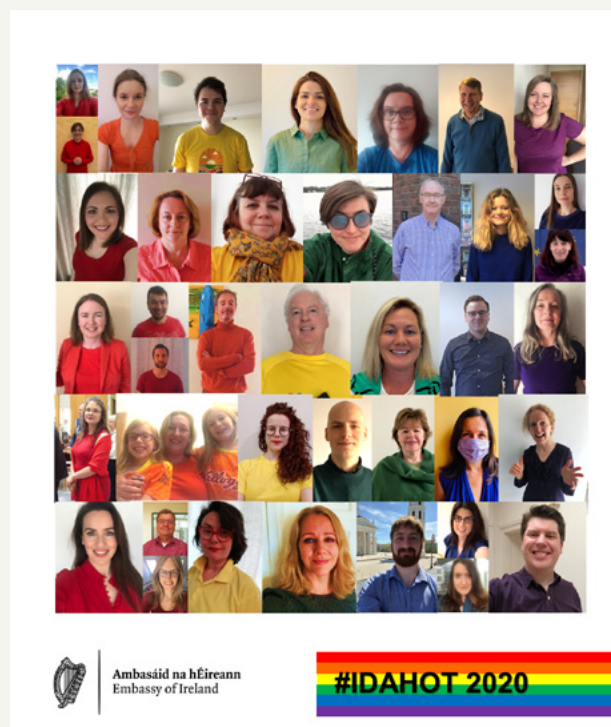
A more equal, diverse and inclusive Department

The Department's work on Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion continued apace in 2020 through the parallel strands of the HR Strategy 2019-2022 and the Management Board Sub-Committee for Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI). Our HR Strategy has a strong focus on equality, diversity and inclusion as one of its four key goals. As part of the Strategy, the Department appointed a Lead officer for GEDI in 2019 to coordinate between the HR teams and the MB Sub-Committee and develop an evidence-based approach to GEDI internally.

The Management Board Sub-Committee continues to act as the governance structure for the consideration of equality and diversity issues. Under the Sub-Committee structure, five voluntary staff Working Groups – on Gender, LGBT+, Social Inclusion, Disability, New Irish & Ethnic and Parents & Carers - build on the previous Action Plans for Gender Equality and for Equality & Inclusion and empower all colleagues to contribute to this agenda.

2020 saw a series of staff events on GEDI issues including events to mark International Women's Day, National Carers Week and Pride. As a supporter of the Willing, Able, Mentoring (WAM) programme, DFA offered two paid work placements to graduates with disabilities in 2020.

This Department also works closely with the Civil Service Management Board to develop new approaches to gender equality, including producing an annual report on the gender pay gap, and is represented on the committees of The 30% Club (public sector branch) and the Civil Service Women's Network.



A May 2020 Twitter card marking the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT), featuring Embassy staff from a range of EU-based missions © DFA

SUPPORT TO LGBTQ+ COMMUNITIES ABROAD

The Department's support to LGBTQ+ communities has included direct engagement with NGOs in countries worldwide. In Central Europe, letters of support from Ambassadors for equality initiatives (e.g. in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Austria); participation in Pride Parades; support for cultural initiatives, including showcasing of Irish

films at LGBT Film Festivals (Poland; the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Austria); ensuring that an Irish perspective is shared at seminars and panel discussions, including through the inclusion of Irish LGBTQ activists at events directly organised by Embassies or delivered in cooperation with local partners.

ICT in numbers

Department received

13 million
emails



and sent

6 million
emails



42,000
Video Conferences



38TB
Data used in 2020



960,000
Remote Access
Connections

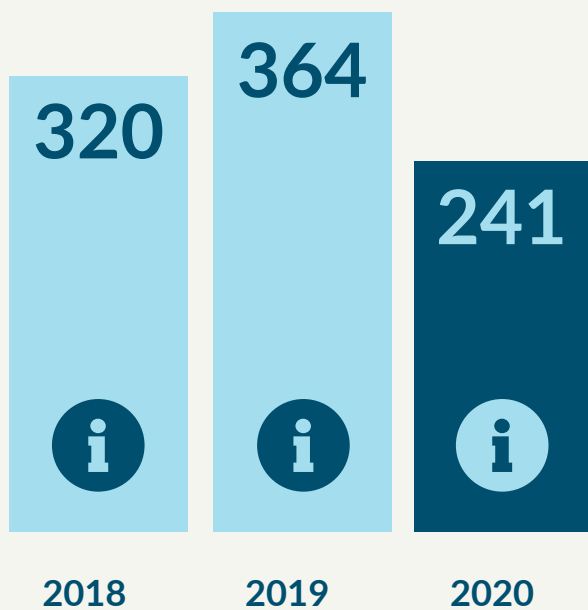


24/7 ICT
on call support

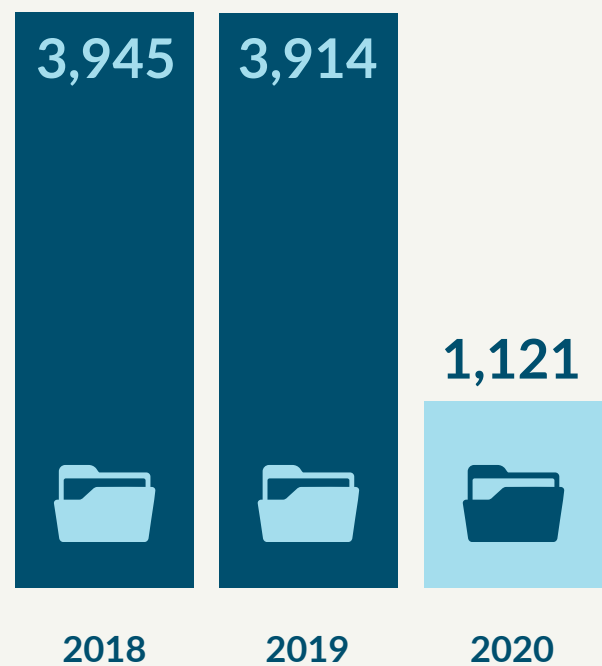


Freedom of Information and Archives in 2020

Freedom of Information requests



Files transferred to National Archives



Security at our Missions

The Department undertook three reviews of security at Irish Embassies in the early part of 2020 with the support of An Garda Síochána. Over one hundred people going on posting in 2020 were reached by web- and webinar-based personal security training in cooperation with the Permanent Defence Forces UN Training School. The Department subscribed to a global medical and security advice service in March 2020 following a competitive procurement process. The service, provided by International SOS, allows officers and their families access up-to-the-minute and around-the-clock medical and security advice and supports for every location in the world. The subscription gives access to web based information and alert services and a global network of call centres resourced by relevant experts.

Evaluation & Audit

The Evaluation and Audit Unit is an independent unit within the Department's corporate governance structure, reporting to the Secretary General. The Unit's role is to support, protect and enhance the delivery of the Department's mission by providing objective assessment, assurance, advice and insight regarding corporate performance, governance, risk management and internal control. An independent Audit Committee provides independent appraisal of the audit and evaluation arrangements, and publishes a report each year.

INCREASED ADVISORY SUPPORT

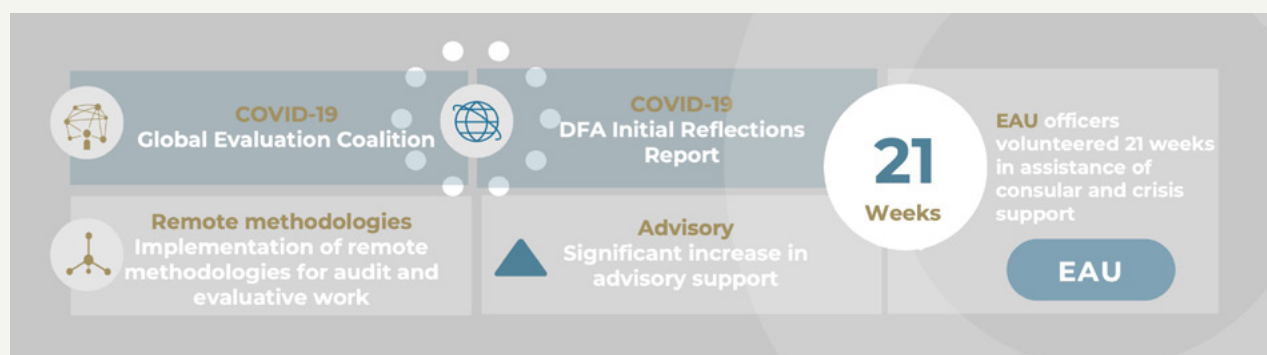
The COVID-19 pandemic required the Evaluation and Audit Unit to prioritise work to support the cross-Government response and to maintain key objectives and activities, adjusting to working fully remotely, supporting staff at Headquarters and at over ninety missions abroad, as well as providing consular support to Irish citizens globally. In 2020, as a result of the particular circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Evaluation and Audit Unit's level of advisory work increased significantly.

COVID-19 REFLECTION REPORT

A key contribution of Evaluation and Audit Unit to the Department's response was the preparation of "COVID-19: Department of Foreign Affairs Initial Reflections" report. EAU conducted an initial analysis of how the Department responded to the COVID-19 crisis in terms of:

1. Ensuring the normal business of the Department continued, including identification of notable adaptations made to governance and systems; and
2. Addressing the needs of Irish citizens abroad through the work of Consular Services and the Mission Network, and supporting the broader national effort coordinated by Government.

The exercise captured the experiences of staff across the Department and its missions during March-May 2020 of the COVID-19 pandemic to identify lessons learned and inform subsequent decision-making. It was completed in June 2020.



THE COVID-19 GLOBAL EVALUATION COALITION

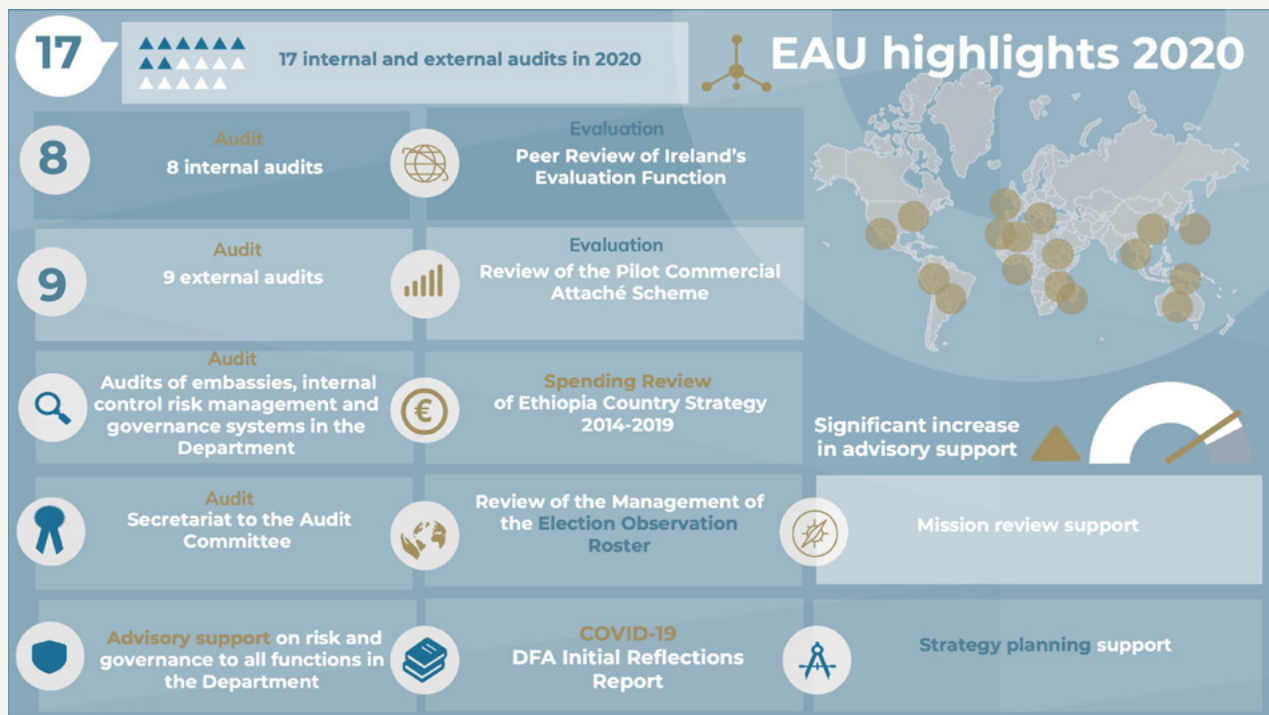
The OECD DAC Evaluation Network established a group of representatives from bilateral and multilateral evaluation functions to form the COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition. EAU represents Ireland as a member of the Coalition. The intention of the Coalition is to improve the speed and quality of evaluation, analysis, and communication in ways that provide credible evidence to inform policy and decision makers, generate lessons and good practices, and provide a basis for accountability of development partners, including the provision of information to the public. An example of work completed from the COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition was an early evidence synthesis to distil initial lessons from bilateral and multilateral COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. The synthesis should support actors involved to learn and take actions to improve the ongoing effort, and future crisis responses.

PEER REVIEW OF IRELAND'S EVALUATION FUNCTION

A key piece of work for EAU in 2020 was the Peer Review of the evaluation function, conducted jointly and mutually with counterparts of Finland and Switzerland. This review generated positive findings and constructive recommendations regarding the Department's evaluation function, and confirmed that the Department's evaluation function is operating to a high standard.

AUDIT COMMITTEE SECRETARIAT

The EAU continues to provide the Secretariat to the Department's independent Audit Committee, supporting the Committee in its role of advising the Secretary General on the suitability and robustness of the Department's systems and procedures for governance, risk management, internal controls, and evaluation of policies and strategies. The Audit Committee's activities and work for the year are captured in the Committee's 2020 Annual Report, which is published on the Department's website.



**KATY ELLIS**

Economist & Policy Analyst | Evaluation & Audit Unit

I am an Administrative Officer in the Evaluation & Audit Unit which engages in work across the entire Department as well as IGEES (Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service). My role includes conducting mission strategy and thematic evaluations and reviews; qualitative and quantitative analysis; report writing; liaising with stakeholders; and provision of advisory work. This involves engagement in multiple areas of the Department, including: development, consular, political, trade, and corporate services.

I joined the Unit in September 2019 and since then I have worked on very diverse and interesting pieces of work, such as; the *Review of the Pilot Commercial Attaché Scheme*, and the *Review of Ireland's Mission Strategy for Vietnam and the Mekong Sub-Region 2017-2020*. As part of my role, I have also worked on spending reviews for the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform. The spending review of *The Ethiopia Country Strategy Paper 2014-2019* was published in October 2020.

Protocol Division in 2020

OUTWARD VISITS

Visit to Kraków by President Higgins in January 2020 for the

75th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz



INWARD VISITS

State Visit to Ireland by **H.E. Mr. Prokopios Pavlopoulos**, President of the Hellenic Republic (Greece)

January



Visit by **Permanent Representatives to the UN**,

February



Visit by **H.R.H. The Duke of Cambridge & H.R.H. The Duchess of Cambridge**,

March



Visit by **US Special Envoy to Northern Ireland, Mr. Mick Mulvaney**,

September



Visit by H.E. Mr. Charles Michel, **President of the European Council**,

October



EVENTS INVOLVING THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS

New Year's Greetings

took place on 30th January 2020



Famine Commemoration

took place on May 17th 2020



(In light of Covid, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps represented the Diplomatic Corps)

National Day of Commemoration

took place on July 12th 2020



(In light of Covid, the Diplomatic Corps was represented by the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and 7 designated Ambassadors)

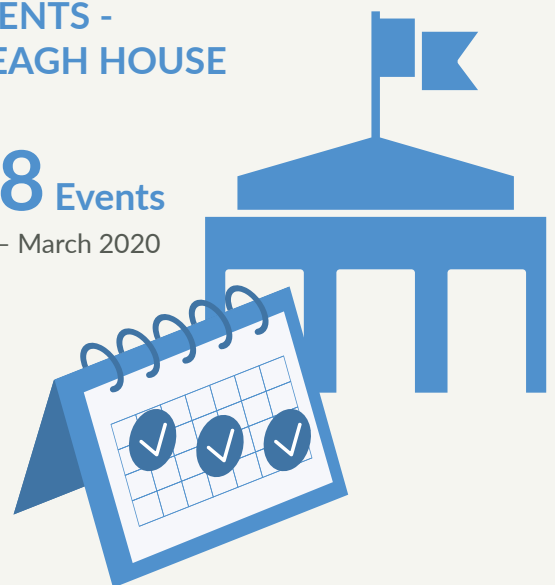
APPOINTMENTS OF HONORARY CONSULS

9 Honorary Consuls were appointed in 2020



EVENTS - IVEAGH HOUSE

28 Events
Jan - March 2020



Protocol Division in 2020

DIPLOMATIC CORPS PRIVILEGES & IMMUNITIES 2020

65 Resident Missions

(with over 1300 staff + family members)



86 non-resident Missions and
5 International Organisations.

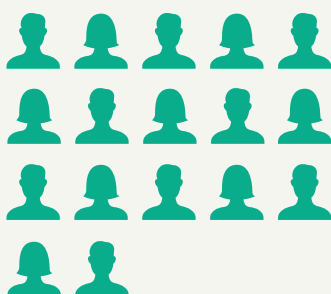
1,800+

Third Party Notes

received



55 Letters of Credence and
Recall for Irish Ambassadors



17

Ambassadors
presented
credentials

Diplomatic Clearance – over **1,200** requests
for diplomatic clearance



350+

Diplomatic visas processed



400+

DFA ID card



2043

Diplomatic, customs &
VAT requests processed

128 National
Day Messages sent



650+

Christmas &
New Year's
cards sent



Social Media and Press Relations

@DFATIRL

69,100

Followers of our official Departmental Twitter Account @dfatirl

An **increase of 40%**, since 2019

99 **Twitter accounts** with 10 operated by HQ and 89 by missions abroad

667,396 **audience** across all accounts

25% increase since 2019

@DFATIRELAND

64% increase since 2019

18,091 Facebook users "liked" the DFA HQ Facebook page.

The majority of our followers **are female** within the 35-44 age group

64 accounts with 4 operated from HQ and 60 by missions abroad

280,546 Facebook users "liked" our pages by the end of 2020

20% increase on 2019

More than **47,000** new 'likes' in 2020

DFALINKEDIN

23,142 followers across 6 LinkedIn accounts

13,778 followers of the DFA LinkedIn page, a **70% increase** on 2019

14% of our followers work in **government administration** while **5.62%** work in **Higher Education** and **4.37%** in **Law**

56% growth of our network since 2019

Top five locations of DFA LinkedIn followers

- Dublin
- London
- Belfast
- New York
- Cork

Press and Media

574 **press queries** handled in 2020

259 **media** accredited for visit to Ireland by HRH The Duke of Cambridge and HRH The Duchess of Cambridge, 3-5 March 2020

Over **40,000** attended **To Be Irish At Christmas** events, a digital platform for engaging the diaspora who couldn't return home for Christmas 2020



To Be Irish At Christmas supported a programme featuring over **300 creative, cultural and community events**

Our Online Presence in 2019

90

Diplomatic Mission Websites



66 Embassies



16 Consulates



8 Multilateral Organisations & Other



Website Visits:

11,837,147
2019

14,628,853
2020

↑ 24%



Busiest day of the year

When Minister for Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney T.D. issued a statement on COVID-19 Travel Advice

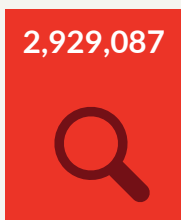


of visitors accessed via mobile/tablet devices



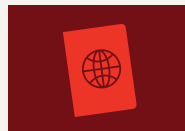
of visitors accessed via desktop

Top five pages accessed



Passport Online

2,709,072



Track Your Passport

572,326

COVID-19 Travel Advice

536,062

Travel Advice

517,384

Passport Online FAQs

Top ten Irish Embassy websites by number of visitors:

1. **Great Britain**
2. India
3. UAE
4. USA
5. Nigeria
6. Russia
7. Germany
8. Australia
9. Canada
10. Spain



Top ten cities outside the island of Ireland from which our websites were accessed:

1. **London**
2. Dubai
3. Abu Dhabi
4. New York
5. Manchester
6. Glasgow
7. Sydney
8. Birmingham
9. Ashburn (Virginia)
10. Bristol



Average amount of time spent on the website



2.34 Average amount of pages per session

**YVONNE GERAGHTY**

Executive Officer | Communications Unit

My role on the Web & Digital team in the Communications Unit is as dynamic as it is rewarding.

My main duties as part of Web & Digital include recording and editing videos for the Department, development and upkeep of the DFA and mission websites, and creation of multimedia assets for use by missions and HQ.

I was one of the few DFA staff to experience working in the HQ office during the COVID-19 pandemic - however it was not business as usual. Filming and editing essential Ministerial messages

became the focus for our multimedia team, and COVID-19 safety measures and procedures were paramount in this process. We had to adapt our approach and our studio; filming in masks from behind plexi-glass screens, and remaining distanced from the subject at all times.

Continuing our service through COVID-19 was not without difficulty, but I'm glad to have been able to contribute to the continuation of Departmental communications during a difficult and unpredictable time.

Financial Management



Our 2020 Budget

The Department's spending in 2020 was allocated across six Expenditure Programmes which correspond to the High-Level Goals as set out in the Department's Statement of Strategy 2017-2020.

Five of these Programmes were managed through the Vote 28 (Foreign Affairs) expenditure framework and the remaining one through the Vote 27 (International Co-Operation) framework. The budget allocations for each Programme included pay and non-pay administration costs incurred by DFA business units in Ireland and Ireland's diplomatic missions across the world. The Programmes were implemented in support of the Department's main work priorities as outlined throughout this Annual Report.

The provision of value for money to Irish taxpayers and to transparency in all our financial dealings is a key commitment of this Department.

The total 2020 gross expenditure allocation for Vote 28, including a Capital allocation of €10.5 million, was €281 million (versus €270 million in 2019, an increase of +4%). The overall administrative allocation for Vote 28 in 2020 was €207.56 million, which represented an increase of +4.7% on the 2019 allocation. The balance is represented by Programme expenditure.

The main focus of capital investment in 2020 was the Passport Reform Programme, the continuing investment in ICT to support Ireland's global network of diplomatic missions (and COVID-19 specific ICT responses), as well as investment in State properties and the opening of new diplomatic missions under the Global Ireland programme.

As detailed in this Report, the Department advised or assisted thousands of people to return safely to Ireland as part of the consular response to the COVID-19 crisis. In a small minority of cases, this included providing financial assistance to some Irish citizens who found themselves stranded or in particularly vulnerable positions overseas and did not have access to the necessary resources themselves. In all cases, the citizens undertook to repay any financial assistance on their return home. Finance Division initiated an online payment system, at short notice, using PayPal to facilitate citizens repaying promptly and in an efficient manner.

The Department also arranged repatriation operations to facilitate the safe return of stranded Irish, EU and other citizens from Lima, Peru; Goa/New Delhi, India and Lagos, Nigeria.

Any additional costs which arose from these repatriation operations were met through savings generated elsewhere in the 2020 allocation, primarily in the Travel and Subsistence budget due to the significant reduction in activities resulting from the pandemic. A significant portion of the costs relating to the three chartered repatriation operations were recouped through the EU's Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), which provides governmental aid in the aftermath of a disaster or crisis. The Department was able to recoup a total of €436,000 in respect of the three repatriation operations it arranged.

In addition, and following approval from the Management Board, Finance Division also diverted un-used budgets resulting from the pandemic to facilitate colleagues to purchase equipment for use while they worked from home.

The Government provided a gross allocation to Official Development Assistance (ODA) of €838 million in 2020. The Department's Development Cooperation and Africa Division (DCAD) under Vote 27 - International Cooperation administered €551 million of this overall allocation. This represented an increase of some €21 million in overall ODA (or approximately 3%, on 2019 levels). It also represented the fifth successive year in which the Government increased the overall allocation to ODA and further evidence of Ireland's commitment to making incremental, sustainable progress towards achieving the UN's ODA target of 0.7% of Gross National Income by 2030.



JOSEPH KEANE

Executive Officer | Finance Division

In February 2020 I became Executive Officer in the Finance Division, my role is to assist and advise missions and my team with their monthly accounts and ensure correct accounting procedure is adhered to. By mid March 2020 – only 3 weeks into my new position – the COVID-19 pandemic took hold across the world and all officers were sent home and began a work from home protocol.

At the start of the pandemic many Irish citizens around the world were encountering issues trying to return home to Ireland. The Department quickly set up a repatriation project and I was asked to assist with the delivery and accounting of this project. This involved drawing up new methods

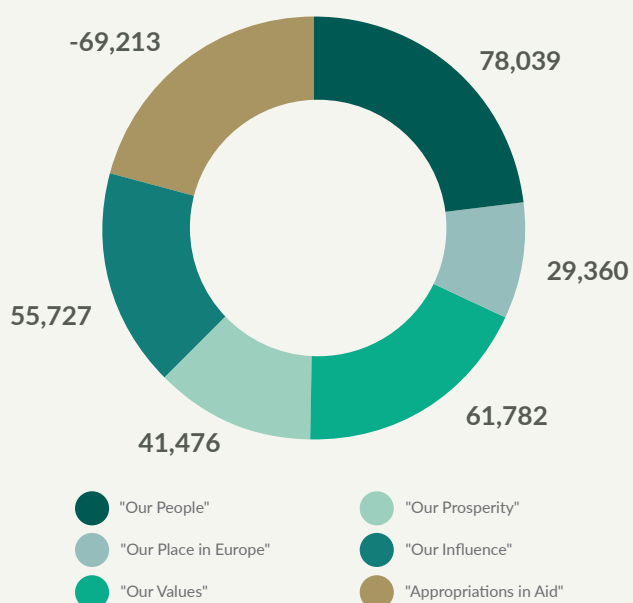
and procedures in order to invoice everyone who had been repatriated, answer queries and liaise with our missions and colleagues around the world when required.

The first number of weeks were quite intense due to the number of people who were being repatriated and trying to assist people in different time zones. However, I really enjoyed the work, I learnt a lot of new skills and was happy to have been involved in some way in assisting Irish citizens return home safely.

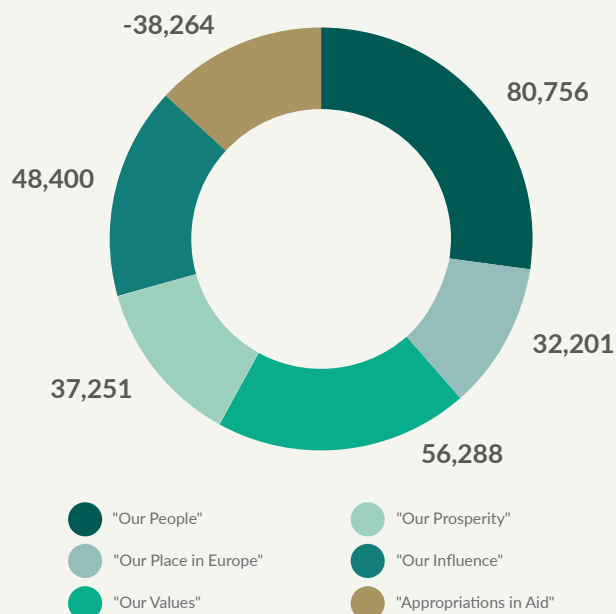
Department of Foreign Affairs Accounts Vote 28

Programmes		Outturn 2019	Outturn 2020
A	"Our People"	€78,039m	€80,756m
B	"Our Place in Europe"	€29,360m	€32,201m
C	"Our Values"	€61,782m	€56,288m
D	"Our Prosperity"	€41,476m	€37,251m
E	"Our Influence"	€55,727m	€48,400m
Total Expenditure		€266,384m	€254,896m
F	Appropriations in Aid	- €69,213m	- €38,264m
		€197,171m	€216,632m

Outturn 2019 (€m)



Outturn 2020 (€m)



Department of Foreign Affairs Accounts Vote 27: International Cooperation

PROGRAMME: WORK ON POVERTY AND HUNGER REDUCTION

Outturn by Subhead Figures in €000's

Subhead	Outturn 2019	Outturn 2020
A.1 Administration – pay	17,642	18,968
A.2 Administration - non pay	14,793	12,947
A.3 Bilateral co-operation and humanitarian assistance	411,086	414,013
A.4 Contributions to international funds for the benefit of developing countries	59,459	57,137
A.5 Contributions to United Nations and other development agencies	40,621	44,654
Gross Expenditure	543,601	547,719
B Appropriations-in-Aid	1,186	1,046
Net Expenditure	542,415	546,673



An Roinn Gnóthai Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs

