

Travel Safely Slán Abhaile

Department of Foreign Affairs – Consular Services Charter



DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AN ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA

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Introduction by the Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr. Dermot Ahern, T.D.

I am very pleased to introduce the Department of Foreign Affairs Consular Charter. The Charter is intended to present a clear guide to the services which are provided by the Department to Irish citizens travelling abroad. It also contains easily accessible information on whom to contact and where to get consular assistance if required.

Irish people are travelling abroad in ever greater numbers. On the basis of the latest CSO figures, Irish residents will make about 8 million overseas trips this year. Most of these journeys will take place safely and uneventfully and the only contact which people will have with the Department will be in relation to obtaining a new passport should they require one. For a minority however, things will go wrong and help will be needed.

This Charter sets out what support is available both through the Department's Consular section as well as its Diplomatic and Consular network abroad. It makes clear our commitment to provide these services in a timely and effective manner and to handle consular cases with sympathy and professionalism. At all times we place the welfare of the citizen at the centre of our activities.

At the same time, the primary responsibility for ensuring a safe journey abroad rests with the citizen him/her self. Exercising common sense and taking sensible precautions will guarantee that the vast bulk of overseas trips will be happy and safe. The Charter therefore sets out some guidelines for what people can do themselves to make certain that they travel safely.

The Charter is part of our ongoing commitment to maintain and improve our services to the public. Other important elements in this improvement include the further development of the Department of Foreign Affairs website, www.dfa.ie, in particular the Travel Advice section; the implementation of an initiative to

allow for online registration for people travelling overseas; the provision of additional consular resources for major sporting events abroad; and the further development of our network of Diplomatic and Consular Missions.

These initiatives are all intended to make it easier and more convenient for people to access our services and, above all, to travel safely. I am committed to further enhancing our present first class system of consular protection so that Irish citizens receive the best of care.

I very much hope that you will find this Charter useful and informative.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dermot Ahern". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Dermot Ahern, T.D.
Minister for Foreign Affairs

Before You Go

Travel abroad by Irish people is now so frequent that it is easy to forget that being abroad is not the same as being at home and that if problems arise they may not always be easy to deal with. The Department of Foreign Affairs website, www.dfa.ie, contains up to date travel advice and other useful information for travellers, and it is recommended that people should study it when planning their travel. The vast majority of people who travel enjoy a positive and safe experience. However, some basic measures can make trips safer and, if problems do arise, make them much easier to resolve.

On line registration is now available at www.dfa.ie and travellers overseas, particularly to more remote areas, are encouraged to register their travel plans with the Department.

When planning a trip, check in good time that travel documentation is in order and, in particular that you are in possession of a valid passport. Passports should be in good condition and not defaced in any way, e.g. written on, or have missing or damaged pages. Many countries will not allow you to enter in these circumstances. In addition, some non-European Union countries will not allow you to enter unless your passport has at least 6 months validity before the expiry date.

For some countries outside the Member States of the European Union a visa may be required. This needs to be checked with the nearest Consular Mission or Embassy of the country in question. If travelling through other countries on the way to the country of final destination, a transit visa may be required. As obtaining a visa can be a slow process, it is important to allow plenty of time. Travellers should ensure that their visa is valid for all of their intended stay, as overstays can lead to you being fined, imprisoned or deported. In addition, any conditions attached to the visa, for example in relation to whether you are allowed to work, should be carefully observed.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Ireland's Consular service have no role in obtaining visas for Irish citizens from other countries. However, information on foreign embassies and consulates is available on the Department of Foreign Affairs website www.dfa.ie. Most foreign consular services now have websites where information regarding visa and other entry requirements to the country in question is available.



Passports

A passport is an important document and should be kept securely at all times. Passport fraud is a major international concern and it is important that passports are treated responsibly. If your passport is lost or stolen while abroad, we will provide a replacement passport to allow you to complete your journey, or an emergency travel document to enable you to return home. The following steps will ensure that the replacement process can take place quickly and easily.

- Keep some other form of ID, for example a driving licence or debit/credit card, separately from your passport.
- Make two photocopies of the ID page of your passport. Bring one with you and keep it separately from your passport. Leave the other one with a friend or relation at home who can be contacted easily if the need arises. If you can, scan the photocopied pages and e-mail them to an easily accessible address.



Travel insurance

Comprehensive travel insurance is essential for anyone travelling abroad. Failure to take out insurance can lead to considerable financial and logistical difficulties for the traveller and his/her family should problems arise. This applies to weekend trips to London as much as to long periods of overseas travel to distant

parts of South America or East Asia. While a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) will entitle you to some reduced price, or free emergency care, in the European Union, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland, it should not be regarded as a substitute for proper travel insurance provided by a reputable insurer. Details on how to obtain a European Health Insurance Card are available from <http://www.ehic.ie>.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and its Consular officials do not have funds to pay medical or other expenses incurred by Irish citizens abroad.

As with your passport, it is useful to make a few copies of the insurance certificate. Keep one with you at all times and leave the other in a safe place, e.g. hotel safe. In particular, make a note of any call centre numbers which health providers may need to contact before health services are provided under the policy.

It is vital that a relative or a friend in Ireland is aware of the details of your insurance policy and has details of the emergency contact details of the insurer.

As with any insurance policy it is important to make full disclosure in relation to any relevant factor, e.g. a pre-existing health condition, which might affect your insurance risk when taking out the policy. Failure to do so may lead to a situation where the insurer declares the cover to be invalid.

Frequent travellers

Frequent travellers are strongly advised to take out an annual travel insurance policy. These are offered by a wide range of service providers and eliminate the need to take out travel insurance for each individual trip.



Adventure sports

Younger and more intrepid travellers are particularly advised to make sure their policy covers any more “adventurous” activities which they might find themselves involved in. While most people will take out ski insurance if going on a skiing trip, people often decide at the last minute to hire mopeds, go diving, quad bike riding and bungee jumping! These and similar activities may not be covered by a standard insurance policy, or the policy may be invalidated owing to circumstances such as alcohol or substance consumption. Insurers may also refuse to pay if safety equipment like helmets is not used, or if the company providing the leisure or sports service is not bona fide. In these cases you may find yourself with large medical and other bills and considerable difficulty in paying for them while abroad.

While individual requirements will differ, a good travel insurance policy should include coverage for the following:

All medical bills;

Any pre-existing medical conditions;

Any hazardous sports activities. Small print should always be checked and safety precautions adhered to so as to ensure the policy is not invalidated in any way;

Bringing a body home in the event of a death;

Bringing home family members in the event of illness, death or injury;

Replacing and/or bringing home a car; and

Provision of an air ambulance in case medical evacuation is necessary.



Vaccinations and medicines

At least 6 weeks before travel, check what vaccinations may be needed. Information regarding vaccination recommendations and requirements is available from your local GP. Many private health centres also provide travel vaccinations. Details can be found in the Golden Pages.

Do not assume that vaccines are unnecessary because a destination is “European”.

Check if any extra health precautions are needed, e.g. if malaria may be present.

Travellers who require prescribed medication should have a complete supply for their trip, as well as their prescription and a note from their GP. All medicines, both prescribed and over the counter, need to be carried in their original containers. Otherwise, travellers may have problems with security at airports and other points of entry.

Certain prescription medications readily available in Ireland may just possibly be illegal in other countries. If you require these medications, then check this out before deciding to travel. If you require syringes, you will also need to check the position in this respect. Equally, on your return, you need to check if you have purchased medication while abroad that may not be legal in Ireland.



In general

Before you plan your trip, and again before you travel, check the Travel Advice section of the Department of Foreign Affairs website at www.dfa.ie. This will provide risk assessment in relation to countries or regions where it may not be safe to travel, or where it may be wise to take extra precautions. You should also register online. However, in some cases, of course, you may well need to reconsider your trip entirely.

Make a note of the nearest Irish Diplomatic or Consular Mission in the country you are visiting and keep this information with the other important numbers you might need if any problems should arise. If you are going to a place that is off the beaten track, or that is known to be problematic for travellers, you are strongly advised to register with your nearest Irish Mission and give them your contact details and your travel plans. Contact details should also be left with friends and family at home, and contact with them maintained, so that you help avoid the possibility that they need to institute an official search for you.

In general, be aware of your surroundings and what is happening around you. An investment in a good guidebook can save a lot of trouble later. This applies particularly with respect to getting information on local customs, on areas/localities which may be particularly dangerous for foreigners, and on health hazards.

Consular Assistance

How we can help if you encounter problems while abroad

The Department of Foreign Affairs, through its Embassies and Consulates around the world, provides a wide range of services to Irish people who require assistance when abroad. Consular assistance is provided in particular in the following situations:



Illness or hospitalisation

If you become ill or require hospital treatment while abroad, you or your friends and family can contact your nearest Irish Diplomatic or Consular Mission for assistance if you need help in dealing with the situation. It is important to stress that Irish Diplomatic and Consular Missions, and Consular officials, do not have funds to pay hospital bills or meet other medical expenses on your behalf. However, we can provide practical help which can benefit the sick person and their family greatly.

Consular officers can:

- Advise regarding details of English speaking local doctors and available medical facilities;
- Help you liaise with your insurance company or medical evacuation company, and also contact your family and friends in Ireland;
- Consular officials can also help if there are problems communicating with medical personnel or hospital authorities, and can assist with the transfer of funds from friends and family at home if this is required; and
- It may well be possible for a Consular officer to visit you in hospital. This, however, will depend on a range of circumstances, including whether you are travelling alone, the distance from the Mission or Consulate, and whether other commitments will allow for the visit to be made. Visits would normally be made only when the illness is a serious one and if you do not have friends or family with you.

Victims of crime

Lost/stolen passports



If your passport is lost or stolen while you are abroad, we will provide you with a replacement passport to allow you to complete your journey, or an emergency travel document to enable you to return home. You will need to provide a police report as evidence of loss and also some proof of identity (ideally a photocopy of your passport) and of your Irish citizenship.

While every effort will be made to provide replacement travel documents without delay, there may be some time lapse when passports are reported lost over weekends or at destinations which are distant from the nearest Irish Diplomatic or Consular mission.

Loss of money/credit cards etc.

If you have had your money and credit/debit cards lost or stolen, our Missions can provide you with details of how funds can be transferred to you from Ireland, and can also help you contact your travel insurer in order to make any necessary arrangements with them. You will normally require a police certificate detailing any loss before an insurance company will meet your claim.

Accident/assault victims

Our officials will do everything possible to assist you if you have been the victim of an accident or assault. If you request it, and it is possible for us to do so, we will visit you in hospital or in prison if you have been arrested.

While we cannot give you legal or medical advice, or formally recommend or pay for doctors or lawyers, we can provide information on local legal and medical practitioners, and also help out with police formalities and in contacting your insurance company. This is particularly helpful when there are language difficulties. We can also help you to contact friends and family and assist with arrangements to get you home, if that is your wish.



Victims of rape/sexual assault

Victims of rape and/or sexual assault who look for consular assistance will of course be treated in complete confidence. Victims are advised to attend hospital immediately after the assault and then to seek our Mission's assistance. A Diplomatic or Consular Mission will endeavour to put you in contact immediately with either the relevant counselling authority in the country where the incident took place, or, if that is not possible or suitable, with an Irish counselling service. Our Consular officers will also help you with any police and medical formalities which may be required, as well as with your travel insurance company. We will also contact your family and assist with arrangements for you to go back to Ireland, if that is your wish.

Travellers will be aware that not all countries treat these kinds of crime in the same manner. The Diplomatic or Consular Mission can give a victim some helpful information in this respect but we would usually recommend that a local lawyer be engaged to look after your interests if a prosecution is being considered. The Diplomatic or Consular mission will be able to give you information regarding local English-speaking lawyers. However, we do not formally recommend, or pay for, lawyers or legal advice.



Cases of financial distress

Due to unforeseen circumstances, people occasionally run out of money while travelling. More unusually, they can also find themselves in financial difficulty after many years of living and working abroad.

Such situations can usually be resolved by arranging for a relative or friend to transfer money to you from Ireland through well-known commercial agencies, such as Western Union. Diplomatic and Consular Missions will be able to advise in this regard, and can contact family or friends for you if you wish.

If this kind of channel is not available, then a Consular officer can contact your friends or family in Ireland and ask them to arrange to send you funds through the Department of Foreign Affairs.

A small statutory fee applies for any transfer of funds made through the Department. The Department is not able to make loans or to pay hotel or other expenses incurred by you.

Repatriation

Sometimes an individual or family may decide that the best solution for someone who has become destitute, or is experiencing hardship abroad, is repatriation. On rare occasions, repatriation may also be necessary because of ill-health or for other pressing reasons. In those cases, if the individual is unable to access funds through any of the sources outlined above, the Department may assist with the actual costs of repatriation, subject to a number of conditions. These conditions include an undertaking to repay in due course the expenses incurred by the Department. There is also a small statutory fee for provision of this service.



Death abroad

The death of a family member or friend abroad is obviously particularly distressing. People can feel overwhelmed when, in addition to normal feelings of bereavement, they also need to deal with a foreign bureaucracy through an unfamiliar language. They may have to cope with complex consultations in order, for example, to have a body brought home, or to arrange for a local burial.

If a Diplomatic or Consular mission is informed of the death of an Irish national abroad, arrangements will be made with the Garda Síochána to have the next of kin in Ireland informed immediately.

Consular officials will also assist with the logistical issues that arise when someone dies abroad. They can assist in dealing with local authorities to obtain death and other certificates, and will put you in touch with local undertakers who can either make the arrangements to have someone buried (or cremated) locally, or to arrange for the remains to be flown back to Ireland.

Families should be aware that the time required in order for remains to be repatriated may vary depending on the formalities required by different countries, and also on the individual circumstances surrounding a death. While a week to ten days would be quite usual, there may be circumstances where repatriation can be delayed for longer. The Diplomatic or Consular Mission will keep in touch with the relevant authorities so that families can be kept informed of the position.

While Consular officers will do their utmost to see that the wishes of the dead person and the family are respected with regard to funeral arrangements, and are happy to act as liaison for families with the local authorities and undertakers, there may be some cases where because of local law, weather conditions etc., it may not be possible for family wishes to be fully complied with.

The Department does not pay for repatriation of remains, except in some very exceptional circumstances. Neither are we in a position to provide funds for funeral expenses or for relatives to travel to where the death occurred, or to accompany the remains to Ireland.

Follow-up

In some cases, e.g. where the death has been the result of a crime or car accident, it may be necessary for the Irish Diplomatic or Consular Mission to remain in contact with the victim's family for some years as police or judicial investigations progress. In these cases, the families will be kept informed of all new information as it is made known to the Mission by the relevant authorities of the country concerned. They will also be informed when changes of personnel at the Mission require that a new officer will take over handling of the case. However, the Department does not have investigative powers and all investigations and enquiries into crimes committed abroad are the responsibility of the local police and judicial authorities.



Arrest and detention abroad

Irish citizens who are arrested and imprisoned abroad are entitled to seek consular assistance. Such assistance is provided, on request, to all Irish citizens in a non-judgemental manner, regardless of the nature of the alleged offence, whether the person is innocent or found guilty, on remand or already sentenced by a court of law. Consular assistance in short aims to support Irish citizens who, for whatever reasons, find themselves in this situation.

Consular assistance is generally governed by an international agreement called the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, (1964). While consular assistance may be provided to dual nationals, the right of an Irish dual national to receive consular assistance from our Missions is effectively determined by the attitude of the host country in circumstances where the Irish citizen is detained either in the country of their other nationality, or is travelling on the passport of another country.

What a Consular officer can do

If you are arrested and detained overseas, it is your right to request that your local Mission or Consulate be informed of your detention. If it is possible, and the host country prison authorities allow, a Consular officer may then visit you or, if a visit is not possible, arrange for telephone contact. In most cases, visits tend only to be possible after you have been formally charged with an offence.

A Consular officer can:

- Assist in getting information for you about prison arrangements;
- Provide you with information regarding local lawyers;
- Provide you with general information on how the country's legal processes work;
- Arrange for your next of kin to be informed of your detention, if you wish;
- Give your family information regarding the prison and legal arrangements in the country of your detention;

- Help you keep in contact with friends and family and arrange for funds provided by them to be transferred to you safely;
- Ensure that you are not discriminated against as a foreign prisoner and that any concerns you may have regarding your safety and treatment, including any health concerns, are brought to the attention of the relevant authorities within the prison system, and other authorities as necessary;
- Put you in touch with relevant NGOs (voluntary agencies) such as the Irish Commission for Prisoners Overseas, an agency of the Irish Bishops Conference which helps overseas prisoners and their families, and which receives funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs; and
- Give you information on whether it would be possible for you to serve part of your sentence in Ireland under the Transfer of Sentenced Persons Convention.

At the same time, there are limits to what the Irish Consular or Diplomatic Mission and its officials can do in these circumstances. A Consular officer cannot get you out of prison, pay fines or give the arresting authorities guarantees on your behalf. We are not able to offer formal legal advice, formally recommend or pay for a lawyer, initiate court proceedings on your behalf or interfere in the local judicial process. We cannot conduct criminal investigations on your behalf or support you financially in prison. Some help with basic necessities in developing country prisons may, however, be made available.

Following conviction

If you are convicted and are required to serve a sentence overseas, a Consular visit will be made to you, if you wish, at least once a year (and more frequently, if at all possible). A small hardship fund will shortly be available to help overseas prisoners who find themselves in particularly onerous or deprived circumstances owing to local prison conditions.

Strasbourg Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons

If the country in which you are detained is a party to the Strasbourg Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons, it may be possible for you, once your sentence has been finalised (i.e. once all appeal procedures have been gone through), to apply under the terms of the Convention to serve the remainder of your sentence in Ireland. A Consular official will be able to give you more information in this respect. Information is also available on the website of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, www.justice.ie

Welfare or whereabouts enquiries

The Department, our Embassies and Consular Missions will assist in making enquiries about the welfare or whereabouts of Irish people abroad. We will in particular facilitate contact between the person making the enquiry and the appropriate police or other authority in the country concerned. We are not, however, in a position to carry out detailed investigations ourselves. Further information is available from the Consular Section of the Department. Tel: +353 1 4082876.



Children's issues

There are particular issues which can arise when travelling with children that it can be useful to be aware of. In particular, if a child is a dual national, and/or there are any issues concerning parental custody, it is important to get advice before you give consent to the issue of a passport for the child, or before agreeing that the child may travel to another country even if you are accompanying them.

Particular care should be exercised if the proposed destination is a country which is not party to The Hague Convention on International Child Abduction, or where the country's legal system may have a reputation for favouring one gender or religion above the other in relation to family matters.

Documentation

Most countries these days, including Ireland, require a child to have his/her own passport. The practice of allowing children to be included on a parent's passport is being phased out internationally. If your children are named on your passport, and do not have passports of their own, you are strongly advised to take out individual passports for them. At a very minimum, you will need to check if the country you intend to visit will allow them to enter and to leave again if they do not have their own passports.

Lone parents travelling with children should be aware that some countries require extra documentation showing that the other parent has consented to the travel in question. It is recommended that you contact the Embassy of the country you are travelling to in order to see what their requirements are.

Child abduction

The requirements outlined above are necessary to help immigration officials find missing children. They also help prevent cases of parental child abduction where custody disputes lead to one parent removing a child to, or keeping a child in, a foreign country without the consent of the other parent. If a child is abducted in this way, the other parent may have recourse to the Hague Convention on International Child Abduction. Under the terms of the Convention, children abducted in this manner are returned to the country of their habitual residence in order that the courts there may resolve issues regarding custody and guardianship of the child. The national authority in Ireland for dealing with cases under the Hague Convention is the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform; further information is available on their website at www.justice.ie

They can also be contacted at:

Central Authority for Child Abduction
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
Bishop's Square
Redmond Hill
Dublin 8

Tel: +353 1 4790200

Fax: +353 1 4790201

E-mail: child_abduct_inbox@justice.ie

If the country to which a child has been abducted is not a party to the Hague Convention, the Department of Foreign Affairs' Consular Service can assist in getting lists of English speaking lawyers and information about the legal procedures and customs in the country to where your child has been taken. We can also help you to make contact with the relevant local authorities and organisations, and with practical arrangements, including trying to help you to keep in touch with an abducted child. Further information is available from the Department of Foreign Affairs Consular Section. Tel: +353 1 4082320

Taking care

Being abroad is not in itself particularly more risky for children than being at home, and normal parental vigilance should be enough to keep children safe in all but the most unusual circumstances. It may be useful to check before you travel whether you will be able to source locally any special requirements your children may have; do not take it for granted, for instance, that baby formula and other basics will be easily available. It is also a good idea to make sure that younger children carry a note with their names and your current contact details on them at all times. This will make it easy for them to be returned to you if they manage to stray in spite of your best efforts.

Many holiday tragedies involve car accidents or drowning incidents, and this is where some extra care and awareness of danger is most needed.



Major emergency abroad

With the increase in global tourism, as well as greater awareness of the risk of international terrorism, Ireland's Consular Services have actively planned for the possibility that Irish people may become involved in a major emergency abroad. These events can range from terrorist attacks to natural catastrophes, and even the outbreak of war. Recent such events include the Asian Tsunami and the outbreak of war in Lebanon in summer 2006.

Emergency plan

The Department of Foreign Affairs has in place an emergency plan which will be activated in the event that a major emergency occurs abroad affecting significant numbers of Irish people.

Under this plan, the Department has established a fully equipped Crisis Centre which will be staffed and up and running immediately after we are advised of a major emergency involving Irish citizens. Arrangements are also in place for special free phone numbers to be activated in the event of such an emergency. This will ensure that there is sufficient capacity to handle relatives' enquiries and to give them accurate and reliable information. Regular updates on the situation will also be provided through the Department's website www.dfa.ie

The Department has also in place an Emergency Consular Assistance Team, which will be ready, as required, to travel to the scene of the emergency in order to provide assistance, in addition to that of the local Mission, to those Irish people who have been affected.

What to do if affected by a major incident

If you do become involved in a major crisis, once you are safe and have assured the safety of others travelling with you, you should contact a family member as soon as possible and let them know that you are safe. You should also contact the nearest Irish Diplomatic or Consular Mission, or the Department of Foreign Affairs, as concerns may already have been raised and the information that you are safe will free up resources to attend to others who may be in need. If it is possible, please monitor the Department's website, www.dfa.ie, as ongoing information about the emergency and details of any evacuation plans will be made available there.

If you or any of your travelling companions are injured, or you are aware of people who are missing, please let a friend or family member, the Department, or the nearest Irish Mission know as soon as possible. In particular, any information you may have regarding the location of people who may have been affected by the incident will be of great importance.

Who to contact if there is no resident Irish Mission

If there is no resident Irish mission in the country where the incident has taken place, as an EU citizen you are entitled to seek Consular assistance from any other EU country's Consular Mission or Embassy. You may also contact the Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin directly for advice, on +353 1 4082000.

Who Is Entitled To Consular Assistance?

The provision of Consular assistance by a Diplomatic or Consular Mission to its citizens is governed by the terms of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, (1964). You may seek Consular assistance at an Irish Consular Mission or Embassy if you are an Irish citizen.

While Ireland's Diplomatic and Consular network has expanded greatly in recent years, there remain many areas where Ireland has no career Consular representation or where services are provided through our Honorary Consular network. In these cases, while the Department will endeavour to provide all appropriate assistance, provision of the complete range of consular services may not always be possible.



Dual nationals

If you hold dual nationality, Consular Assistance to you when you are in the country of your other nationality may be limited according to international law and the laws of that country. Some countries may not recognise your Irish nationality if you also have citizenship of their country, and this can have implications. There may also be military service or tax obligations. Some countries, such as the USA and Australia, may insist that you enter and leave those countries using their passport. In short, if you do have dual nationality, it is important to establish what the situation is before you travel to the country of your other nationality.

If you hold more than one nationality, and are travelling abroad on the passport of your non-Irish nationality, then you may be regarded by the authorities of the country you are travelling in as a national of the second country. They may take the view, therefore, that Consular assistance should be provided to you by that second country. However, Irish Consular officials will always seek to provide assistance if it is requested.



EU consular assistance

If you are an EU national in a country where your own country does not have a Consular mission then you may apply to any EU Consular Mission for assistance. Irish citizens may therefore apply to any EU Mission if the country in which they are travelling does not have an Irish Mission.

Non-EU nationals

Our officials will always do their best to provide assistance if requested to do so by a non-national who is a resident of, or has longstanding and close ties to, Ireland. Consular assistance can also be sought from the Diplomatic or Consular mission of the country of nationality of the person.



Customer service/complaints

The Department of Foreign Affairs is committed to the provision of a quality customer service, as set out in our Customer Service Charter. As part of this service, we aim to provide Consular assistance in as sympathetic and professional a manner as possible. While aware that people confronted with difficult and demanding situations abroad may occasionally act out of character, our staff should be treated at all times with courtesy and respect. While allowances will be made for behaviour caused by stress, abuse of staff by members of the public will not be accepted. Staff in such situations may ask to be removed from a case.

If someone wishes to make a complaint about an individual staff member, or a general complaint about how their case has been dealt with, they should contact a local supervisor in the first instance. If still not satisfied with the response, a formal written complaint can be made to:

The Customer Service Officer
 Department of Foreign Affairs
 80 St. Stephen's Green
 Dublin 2

Complaints will be dealt with fairly and impartially, and we offer an assurance that it will not affect how the complainants are dealt with in the future.



Citizenship

Irish citizenship is governed by the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Acts 1956 – 2004.

A summary in relation to general entitlement to Irish citizenship is set out below. This is not a legal text and does not cover all possible cases of entitlement. There may also be some exceptions to these general rules of entitlement. Fuller information in regard to Irish citizenship and the procedures to be followed to establish entitlement to, or to acquire, citizenship is available on the websites of the Department of Foreign Affairs www.dfa.ie, as well as the website of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service www.INIS.gov.ie, which is part of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform is the responsible authority for citizenship matters, and should be consulted if there is any doubt regarding entitlement.

Citizenship through birth

Anyone born on the island of Ireland was entitled to Irish citizenship, regardless of the nationality of their parents, prior to the coming into force of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 2004.

From 1 January 2005, the citizenship entitlement of every person born on the island of Ireland is governed by the citizenship of the person's parents at the time of the person's birth, or by the residency history of one of the parents prior to the birth.

Citizenship by descent

Under the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Acts, 1956 – 2004, a person who was born outside Ireland is automatically an Irish citizen if one of that person's parents was an Irish citizen who was born in Ireland.

If a person is born abroad to a parent who, although not born in Ireland, was otherwise an Irish citizen at the time of the person's birth, that person can become an Irish citizen by applying for Foreign Births Registration, either to their nearest Irish Diplomatic or Consular Mission or, if resident in Ireland, to the Department of Foreign Affairs. The Department's website www.dfa.ie has further information regarding the fees, forms and documents required for Foreign Births Registration. Information can also be obtained by telephone +353 1 4082555.

Citizenship through naturalisation

Citizenship through naturalisation may be acquired through making an application to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform for a Certificate of Naturalisation. In addition to other requirements, applicants for naturalisation must have a period of continuous residence in the State for one year immediately prior to the date of application and, during the eight years immediately preceding that one year period, have had a total residence in the State amounting to four years.

Declarations of intention to retain Irish citizenship

Naturalised Irish citizens residing outside Ireland should register annually in a prescribed form their names and declarations of their intention to retain Irish citizenship either with an Irish Diplomatic or Consular Mission or direct with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in Dublin.

Under the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Acts, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform may revoke a Certificate of Naturalisation if satisfied that the person to whom it has been granted has been resident outside Ireland for a continuous period of seven years and during that period has not registered annually in this manner.

Marriage

Following the entry into force of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 2001, there is no longer a provision in Irish law for the acquisition of citizenship solely through marriage. Non-national spouses of Irish citizens, in addition to other requirements, may apply for a Certificate of Naturalisation if the marriage is of not less than three years duration and if they have had a period of continuous residency in the island of Ireland for one year immediately prior to the date of application and, during the four years immediately preceding that period, have a total residency in the island of Ireland amounting to two years.

Adoption

The position regarding citizenship of adopted persons is that, under the Adoption Act, 1991, the Irish Adoption Board may recognise foreign adoption orders. Each foreign adoption so recognised is registered and a Certificate of Entry in the Register of Foreign Adoptions is issued. Once an adoption is entered in the Register, and provided that one of the adoptive parents was an Irish citizen on the date of the adoption, the adopted child, if not already an Irish citizen, would become an Irish citizen, in accordance with Section 11 of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1956, with effect from the date the adoption is recognised under Irish law.

Persons wishing to adopt children from abroad and who wish to have further information are advised to contact the Adoption Authority of Ireland, www.adoptionboard.ie. Tel: +353 1 2309331.

If an Irish citizen adopts a non-national child within Ireland, the child automatically becomes an Irish citizen once the adoption order is granted.

Declarations of alienage

An Irish citizen of full age who wishes to renounce his/her Irish citizenship may do so, under certain limited circumstances, by lodging either directly with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, or through an Irish Diplomatic or Consular Mission, a “declaration of alienage” made on a prescribed form. Further information and forms are available on the website of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, www.justice.ie

Passports

The Passport Office, which is an integral part of the Department of Foreign Affairs, issues passports to Irish citizens. The Passport Office website, www.passport.ie, carries up to date information on forms, documentation and other requirements concerning passport applications. The Irish passport is a valuable document which has been designed to the highest international standards.

All Irish citizens are entitled to apply for an Irish passport. Services are provided by the Passport Offices in Dublin, Cork, Balbriggan and London, and by Irish Diplomatic and Consular Missions overseas.

Type of passports required

Standard 32 page passports are used as follows:

Infants, (up to 3 years) are issued with a 3 year passport.

Children aged 3 – 17 are issued with a 5 year passport.

Persons aged 18 and over are issued with a 10 year passport.

Large 66 page passport

This is intended for use by frequent travellers who are likely to require a greater number of pages for visas, immigration control stamps etc.

Restricted Validity passports

In certain cases (e.g. where more than one previous passport has been lost or stolen), the passport office may restrict the validity of a replacement passport.



How to apply for an Irish passport

Passport application forms are available from all Garda Stations, Post Offices which provide the Passport Express service, many libraries and citizenship advice centres and also from the Passport Offices in Dublin Cork and London and from overseas Missions.

If you live in Ireland, outside of Munster, you should submit your application to the Passport Offices in Balbriggan or Dublin. If you live in Munster, it should be sent to the Passport Office in Cork.

Irish citizens living in Britain should apply to the Passport Office in London.

If you live abroad, your nearest Irish Diplomatic or Consular Mission will provide you with an application form and accept your application. Please see the back of this booklet for details.

The notes which accompany the application forms will specify what documents need to be enclosed with an application. Applicants should pay particular attention to the quality of the photographs submitted. Applications are sometimes rejected due to photographs not meeting the required standard, and delays can occur while acceptable replacements are provided.

Applicants within the State should use Application form APS1E. Applicants outside the State should only use Application form APS2E. Irish versions are available (forms APS1G and APS2G).

Once you have completed your form and have the relevant documents and appropriate fee, you may also apply for your passport through any of the following services:

Passport express service

This service is available through An Post. Applicants using the Passport Express Service are guaranteed that their passports will be issued within 10 working days from receipt of the application by the Passport Office, provided that the applications are in order. This is a convenient way of making an application. Applications are submitted through participating post offices who charge a small processing fee, which includes the cost of postage to and from the Passport Office.

Regular postal applications

You should only apply by regular post if you do not require your passport for 4 – 6 weeks. Applicants in Munster should apply to Cork, applicants in the rest of Ireland to Dublin. The addresses are as follows:

The Passport Office
PO Box 9718
Co. Dublin

The Passport Office
1A South Mall
Cork

Applying in person

The Passport Offices in Dublin and Cork are open from 9.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday. These offices normally provide a ten-day issuing service.

Express service in Northern Ireland and Great Britain

The Passport Express service is now available from seventy branches of the Post Office in Northern Ireland and two in Great Britain. This is a 10 working day return service. Passport applications can be obtained from these post offices, and applications can be submitted through them for a small processing fee. This includes the cost of express postage.

Applications abroad

In general, 4 weeks should be allowed for passport applications made through an Irish Diplomatic or Consular mission. This includes the transmission of your application by e-mail to the Dublin Passport Office where the passport is printed, and the return of the passport to the Mission.

Please see the back of this booklet for information on how to contact your nearest Irish Embassy or Consular Mission.

Late/urgent applications

If you have left your application late, and require a passport in less than ten working days, you **must** apply in person to the Dublin or Cork office. In such cases it is important that your application is correct and that you also bring proof of travel, e.g. internet booking or travel tickets. An additional Urgent Processing Fee may be payable.

If you live outside Ireland and require a passport urgently, you should contact your nearest Diplomatic or Consular Mission.

Weekend emergency service

The Dublin and Cork offices are closed at weekends but an emergency service is available out of office hours. Please call + 353 1 4780822 for information. An administrative fee is charged for this emergency service.

The Dublin and Cork passport offices can be contacted on:

PPO Dublin +353 1 6711633 or LoCall 1890 426 888

E-mail enquiries to passportdublin@dfa.ie

PPO Cork +353 21 494 4700 or LoCall 1890 426 900

E-mail enquiries to passportcork@dfa.ie

On-line tracking

You may track the progress of your application on the Passport Office website, www.passport.ie. You will need to keep a record of the relevant eleven digit application number on your form for this purpose. The number is located at the top left hand corner of the first page of the application form, underneath the barcode.

Other Consular Services



Marriage abroad

Some countries may require non-nationals, before they can get married in their jurisdiction, to produce a certificate from their country of origin that they are free to marry. These are usually known as Certificats de Coutume and may be issued to Irish citizens abroad who apply to the Irish Diplomatic or Consular Mission nearest to where they normally reside.

If living in Ireland, outside of Munster, applicants should apply to:

Consular Section
Department of Foreign Affairs
St. Stephen's Green
Dublin 2

Tel: +353 1 4082568

Applicants from Munster may apply to:

Consular Services,
Department of Foreign Affairs
1A South Mall
Cork

Tel: +353 21 4944763 / +353 21 4944777

Application forms for Certificats de Coutume and details of the requirements, procedures and fees in local currencies, will be provided on request by Consular section or by the relevant Mission.

Certificats de Coutume will not be issued to persons under 18 years of age without the consent of their parents or guardians.

It is not possible to marry in an Irish Embassy or Consular Mission, and Irish Consular officers do not perform marriage ceremonies.



Authentication and legalisation of documents

The Department of Foreign Affairs can authenticate documents executed in Ireland that are to be used in other countries. Likewise, Irish Diplomatic and Consular Missions abroad can legalise documents executed abroad for use in Ireland. Fees are charged for these services.

Authenticating a document simply means confirming that a signature, seal or stamp appearing on the document is genuine. Legalising a document means authenticating it for the purpose of making it acceptable to an Irish court.

Authentication and legalisation do not mean that the content of a document is accurate, or that the Department of Foreign Affairs approves of the content.

Apostille

The 1961 Hague Convention abolished the requirement for Foreign Public Documents (e.g. birth, death and marriage certificates), to be legalised for countries that are parties to the Convention. The Convention entered into force for Ireland on 9 March 1999.

However, countries that are parties to the Convention may request the bearer of a document issued by a public authority to obtain an Apostille from the Authorities of the country that issued the document.

An Apostille involves the addition of a certificate, either stamped on the document itself or attached to it. It certifies the country of origin of the document, the identity and capacity in which the document has been signed, and the name of any authority which has affixed a seal or stamp to the document.

Authentication

Documents that have been executed in Ireland, and which are to be authenticated or have an Apostille affixed, should be brought or sent to:

Consular Section
Department of Foreign Affairs
Hainault House
69-71 St. Stephen's Green
Dublin 2
Tel: +353 1 4082174

or:

Consular Services,
Department of Foreign Affairs
1A South Mall
Cork
Tel: +353 21 4944765 / +353 21 4944766

All documents to be Apostilled or authenticated should bear an original signature, seal or stamp from a Notary Public in Ireland.

A fee is charged for each Apostille or Authentication. A special fee is charged in relation to a series of Apostilles or authentications in relation to the adoption of a child.

Legalisation

Documents for legalisation abroad should be brought or sent to the nearest Irish Diplomatic or Consular Mission. Fees for these services are available at the relevant Mission.

Irish Diplomatic and Consular Officers abroad are empowered under Irish law to administer oaths, affirmations and statutory declarations. They can also certify copies of original Irish documents or translations. Further information in this regard is available from Consular Section. Tel: +353 1 4082374

If you require any of these services, contact your nearest Irish Diplomatic or Consular Mission. Fees are charged for these services.

Contact numbers for Consular Assistance Abroad

Please note that numbers are given as if dialling from outside the country. If dialling from within the country, the international prefix should be dropped and normally a '0' added before the area code. Numbers are correct at time of going to print but may change over time. To obtain the correct phone number for any mission or to check where your nearest Consular mission may be, please phone the Department of Foreign Affairs main Dublin number + 353 1 4780822 or check the website at www.dfa.ie. If calling from within Ireland you may use LoCall 1890 426 700.

Irish Embassies

Country	Telephone
Argentina	+54 11 57870801
Australia	+ 61 26273 3022
Austria	+ 43 1 7154246
Belgium	+32 2 235 6676
Brazil	+55 61 32488800
Bulgaria	+359 2 9853425
Canada	+ 1 613 233 6281
China (PRC)	+ 86 10 6532 2914
Cyprus	+ 357 22 818183
Czech Republic	+ 420 257 530 062
Denmark	+ 45 354 23 233
Egypt	+ 2 0 2 27358264
Estonia	+37256908340
Ethiopia	+ 251 911 217166
Finland	+ 358 9 646006
France	+ 33 1 44176700
Germany	+ 49 30 2207 20
Great Britain Embassy	+ 44 20 7235 2171
Great Britain Passport and Visa Office	+ 44 20 72257700
Greece	+ 30 2107232771
Holy See	+ 39 06 5810777
Hungary	+ 361 3014960

India	+ 91 11 24626733
Iran	+ 98 21 22297918
Israel	+972 3 6964166
Italy	+ 39 06 6979121
Japan	+ 81 3 32630695
Latvia	+37167039370
Lesotho	+ 266 22 31 40 68
Lithuania	+370 5 262 9460
Luxembourg	+ 352 450610 1
Malawi	+265 1 776408
Malaysia	+ 60 3 2161 2963
Malta	+ 356 21 334 744
Mexico	+ 52 55 5520 5803
Mozambique	+ 258 21 491 440
Netherlands	+ 31 70 363 0993
Nigeria	+234 9 4131753
Norway	+47 2201 7200
Poland	+ 48 22 849 66 33
Portugal	+ 351 213929440
Romania	+40 21 3102131
Russian Federation	+ 7495 937 5911
Saudi Arabia	+966 1 4882300
Singapore	+ 65 6238 7616
Slovak Republic	+ 421 2 59309611
Slovenia	+386 1 300 8970
South Africa	+27 12 3425062
South Korea	+ 82 2 774 6455
Spain	+ 34 914364093
Sweden	+ 46 8 6618005
Switzerland	+ 413 1 352 1442
Tanzania	+ 255 22 2602355
Timor Leste	+ 670 7230605
Turkey	+ 90 312 4466172
Uganda	+ 25641 4344344
USA	+ 1 202 4623939
Vietnam	+ 84 4 9743291
Zambia	+ 260 211 290 650

Irish Consulates

These consulates are staffed by officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and offer the full range of Consular Services

Australia – Sydney	+ 61 2 9264 9635
Peoples Republic of China – Shanghai	+ 86 21 6279 8729
Great Britain – Edinburgh	+ 44 131 226 7711
Great Britain – Cardiff	+ 44 29 20662000
USA Boston	+1 617 267 9330
USA Chicago	+ 1 312 337 1868
USA New York	+ 1 212 319 2555
USA San Francisco	+ 1 415 392 4214

Irish Consulates headed by Honorary Consuls

These consulates are headed by Honorary Consuls who will usually be prominent Irish or local business people. While most Consulates will be in a position to offer some consular assistance, they may not be in a position to offer the full range of Consular Services, or have an out of hours service. If an emergency arises out of normal office hours citizens are advised to call the nearest Irish Embassy, or the Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin who will advise on the best means to access Consular assistance.

Country/Honorary Consul	Phone Number
Australia, Melbourne	+ 61 3 93978940
Australia, Perth	+ 61 8 93858247
Bahrain	+ 973 1 7728146
Belgium, Antwerp	+ 32 3 289 0611
Bermuda	+ 1 441 2956574
Bolivia	+ 591 2 2421408
Botswana	+ 267 3953077
Brazil, Sao Paulo	+ 55 11 3147 7788
Canada, Vancouver	+ 1 604 6839233
Canada, Calgary	+ 1 403 243 2970
Canada, St. Albert	+ 1 780 4580810
Canada, Toronto	+ 1 416 366 9300
Canada, Montreal	+ 1 514 8487389
Canada, St. John's	+ 1 709 7385512

Channel Islands	+ 44 1 534 745551
Chile	+ 56 2 245 6616
China, Hong Kong	+ 852 25274897
Colombia	+ 57 1 4466114
Croatia, Zagreb	+ 385 1 631 0025
Croatia, Split	+ 385 21 343715
Ecuador	+ 593 2 3570156
Egypt, Alexandria	+ 23 4843317
El Salvador	+ 503 2638236
Finland	+ 358 500 814811
France, Antibes	+ 33 6 77691436
France, Cherbourg	+ 33 2 33234444
Germany, Munich	+ 49 89 20805990
Germany, Hamburg	+ 49 40 44186113
Germany, Frankfurt	+ 4969 977883883
Germany, Cologne	+ 4922 04609860
Ghana	+ 233 21 518112
Greece, Corfu	+ 30 26610 33411
Greece, Crete	+ 30 2810 215060
Greece, Rhodes	+ 30 22410 75655
Greece, Thessaloniki	+ 30 2310 465177
Guatemala	+ 502 23849446
Guyana	+ 592 2269 339
Iceland	+ 354 5542355
India, Mumbai	+ 91 22 66355635
India, Bangalore	+ 91 80 28082006
Italy, Milan	+ 39 02 551 88848
Japan, Osaka	+ 81 6 62042024
Jordan	+ 962 6 5516807
Kenya	+ 254 20 556647
Korea	+ 82 2 2656 7031
Lebanon	+ 961 1 863040
Malawi	+ 265 623 950
Monaco	+ 377 93 157000
Morocco, Casablanca	+ 212 22660306
Morocco, Agadir	+ 212 28821212
Netherlands, Rotterdam	+ 3110 89030670

New Zealand	+ 64 9 977 2252
Nigeria, Lagos	+ 234 1 2624820
Oman	+ 968 2 4701282
Pakistan	+ 92 21 9206654
Panama	+ 507 264 6633
Peru	+ 51 1 242 9516
The Philippines	+ 63 2 8964668
Serbia	+ 381 11 2183581
Sierra Leone	+ 232 22 222017
Spain, Barcelona	+ 34 93 4915021
Spain, Tenerife	+ 34 922 245671
Spain, Gran Canaria	+ 34 928 297728
Spain, Malaga	+ 34 952 475108
Spain, Mallorca	+ 34 971 722504
Spain, Seville	+ 34 914 364093
Spain, Alicante	+ 34 965 107485
Spain, Bilbao	+ 34 944 230414
Spain, El Ferrol	+ 34 981 351480
Spain, Lanzarote	+ 34 928 815262
Sri Lanka	+ 94 11 2587895
Sudan	+ 249 1 83 472616
Switzerland, Zurich	+ 41 1 2892515
Syria	+ 963 11 3342144
Thailand, Bangkok	+ 662 6777500
Thailand, Phuket	+ 66 76 281273
Trinidad and Tobago	+ 1 868 6282385
Tunisia	+ 216 98 307364
Turkey, Istanbul	+ 90 212 2842434
Ukraine	+ 380 44 2855902
USA, Missouri	+ 1 314 7271000
USA, Texas	+ 1 713 9615263
USA, Nevada	+ 1 775 853 4497
USA, California	+ 1 714 6589832
USA, Florida	+ 1 239 6491001
Venezuela	+ 58 212 9513645
Zimbabwe	+263 4 771949

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