



## Irish Abroad Unit



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

# Review of Implementation of Global Irish – Ireland's Diaspora Policy

[www.dfa.ie/global-irish/](http://www.dfa.ie/global-irish/)

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## Introduction

*Global Irish – Ireland’s Diaspora Policy* was published in March 2015<sup>1</sup>. It was the first comprehensive articulation of the Irish Government’s policy in relation to the Irish diaspora around the world. The vision put forward is of a Government policy which supports, engages and encourages:

**‘A vibrant, diverse global Irish community, connected to Ireland and to each other.’**

One of the most important initiatives of *Global Irish – Ireland’s Diaspora Policy* (hereafter referred to as the Diaspora Policy) was the creation of a new *Inter-Departmental Committee on the Irish Abroad*. The role of the Committee is to ensure that government works in a joined-up way to realise the objectives of the diaspora strategy, including addressing issues affecting the Irish abroad and those seeking to return. The Policy commits the Committee to review the implementation of this policy after two years.

Having considered in some detail the implementation of the Policy to date, and building on input from diaspora stakeholders through events like the Global Irish Civic Forum, Part I of this document sets out a renewed focus for support for the diaspora over the coming period.

The Diaspora Policy committed the Government to actions under five headings:

These priorities will inform the work of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in particular, as it continues to work to achieve the vision of the Diaspora Policy.

Part II of this document contains an overview of the commitments contained in the Policy and a detailed review of the actions taken to give effect to them since the Diaspora Policy was published in March 2015.



1. Full document available at <https://www.dfa.ie/media/globalirish/global-irish-irelands-diaspora-policy.pdf>

## Part I

Building on the work that has been achieved so far, in the coming period, the Government focus in diaspora engagement will be to continue to deliver support for our diaspora that is:

- **More accessible**
- **More accountable**
- **More strategic**
- **More targeted and prioritised**
- **More joined up/comprehensive**

### More accessible support

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has listened to organisations who have highlighted that the current procedures for the Emigrant Support Programme may be overly onerous for small community groups who have worthwhile projects that can have a particular impact for the Irish community in a local area. In 2018, additional funding of €300,000 is being made available to Irish Embassies and Consulates abroad so that they can fund deserving small local projects directly and quickly, without the need for small organisations to fulfil all the criteria and documentation associated with the Emigrant Support Programme which is more suited to larger projects and organisations.

For those organisations which do wish to apply through the Emigrant Support Programme, new administrative procedures are being put in place in 2018 to facilitate faster decision making for some smaller grants, enhancing the role of our Embassies and Consulates in Britain, the United States, Australia and Canada.

These are among a number of key changes being made to Emigrant Support Programme procedures to make this important funding more accessible to diaspora groups. The operation of these revised procedures will be subject to internal review once the 2018-19 ESP grant round is finalised, at which point it is hoped that further consideration can be given to the possibility of multi-annual funding for some organisations.

The availability of clear information is another key pillar of improving accessibility to the Emigrant Support Programme. Key guidelines and information documents have been extensively reviewed and are now all available on-line to assist interested organisations, and to make clearer information more available as to how decisions are made in respect of ESP grants.

Better use of available technology is a key objective in more accessible support. A comprehensive on-line Diaspora Directory has been compiled to assist individuals in accessing Irish community organisations worldwide, and to assist organisations contact and collaborate with each other. The development by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the 'TravelWise' smart phone app, is a further resource to assist the Irish abroad, especially in times of crisis.

## More targeted/prioritised support

As set out in the Diaspora Policy itself, the key objective of the Emigrant Support Programme has been and will remain on supporting the welfare needs of the most vulnerable Irish individuals and communities abroad. This prioritisation of welfare support has been maintained over the review period, and will be maintained again in 2018-19.

While maintaining this commitment, we are also asking our partner organisations to do more to demonstrate the impact of our funding and the needs being addressed through ESP-funded projects. We are also encouraging more collaboration between organisations to ensure maximum impact for funding. Further to discussions at the Global Irish Civic Forum in May 2017, specific funding of €200,000 will be made available in the 2018-19 ESP grant round for new collaborative projects involving two or more organisations.

In the period since the publication of the Diaspora Policy, the migration patterns have changed somewhat and with that change has emerged a new need - the needs of returning emigrants, those Irish citizens who previously left Ireland to live and work abroad but who are now returning to live in Ireland. Significant work has been undertaken, including through the Inter-departmental Committee on the Irish Abroad, to highlight the needs of returning emigrants and to seek to highlight and address potential barriers to people who are returning having lived abroad. This work will continue in 2018.

This work in addressing potential barriers for our returning emigrants has been complemented by a proactive approach in devising innovative schemes to assist their return.

Research suggests that time spent living abroad improves capacity to succeed in creating and growing businesses. At the same time, returning emigrants face challenges unique to them in setting up a business. These include gaps in personal and professional networks, support, and up to date local knowledge which would be crucial to successful establishment of new businesses. To address this potential deficit for returning emigrant entrepreneurs, a new initiative called 'Back for Business' was established by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade last year. The Back for Business mentoring programme is now up and running to assist 48 participants (26 female, 16 male) from all over the country. The programme and its economic impact will be reviewed during the course of 2018.

The emotional and mental health of emigrants will continue to be a priority area in terms of diaspora support. In addition to those projects instigated already over the review period, 2018 will see a further new initiative being taken forward with the Samaritans (see Part II). On a pilot basis, Irish citizens in China, the United Arab Emirates and Poland will have direct, free phone access to the Irish Samaritans with the associated costs being borne through the Government's Emigrant Support Programme. These pilot locations were identified as countries which would benefit most from this service in the initial phase of the project following consultation with the Consular Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Seeking a solution for our undocumented citizens in the United States, will remain a priority. While uncertainty remains about prospects for Immigration Reform in the current political environment in the US, the appointment by the Taoiseach of Billy Lawless to Seanad Éireann in May 2016, and of Deputy John Deasy as the Government's Special Envoy to the US Congress on the Undocumented Irish in June 2017, is indicative of the priority which the Government continues to attach to this issue. In addition, Ireland's Embassy in Washington DC, working in cooperation with our six Consulates across the United States, remains in ongoing active contact with US policy-makers at federal, state and municipal level, highlighting and explaining to them the contribution of Irish immigrants to the US. The Embassy and Consulates also work very closely with Irish immigration centres throughout the US in providing practical support to Irish citizens in the US, including our undocumented citizens. The Government will continue to prioritise Emigrant Support Programme funding for organisations and projects which support our undocumented citizens and their needs.

In terms of diaspora engagement more generally, we will work to ensure that the diversity of modern Ireland and our diaspora today is more fully reflected in our engagement and support. In addition to the Emigrant Support Programme budget, the separate 'Diaspora Affairs' budget line of €600,000 will be used as a Diaspora Development budget to extend the reach of the Government's current diaspora engagement. As well as engaging with traditional diaspora groups, opportunities will be proactively identified to extend our reach into additional groupings within the diaspora, reaching out in particular to 'non-traditional' or previously under-represented diaspora groups e.g. younger people, women, those with Ulster-Scots links, the LGBTQI community and the affinity diaspora.

## More accountable support

Since its establishment in 2004, the Emigrant Support Programme has represented an overall commitment of €159,924,963 by the Irish taxpayer in our communities abroad.

Over time our auditing systems have evolved to ensure best practice monitoring of the financial expenditure associated with these grants. Between 2014 and 2017, the Department of Foreign Affairs has undertaken 28 routine audits of ESP organisations using an external supplier. The annual figure more than doubled this year – with 11 organisations being audited<sup>2</sup>. It is intended to increase this number further in 2018, following a competitive tendering process that will be undertaken on the completion of the current auditing contract, to facilitate a wider routine auditing and quality assurance function within the ESP.

In addition, we are also looking more to increased and improved measurement of the impact of the grants, with a view to identifying more clearly for the Irish public the difference that their support makes in the lives of Irish individuals and communities abroad. As part of this we are working closely with funded organisations to ensure that their own internal governance structures facilitate high impact engagement. This year we will also amend further our monitoring and reporting procedures so that the outcomes and impacts of our grants are front and centre of the reporting by individual organisations.

2. 2014-6; 2015- 6; 2016- 5.

## More joined up/comprehensive support

The period since 2015 has seen better connections and communications between diaspora organisations. The hosting of two Global Irish Civic Forums, in 2015 and 2017 was a key development in that regard, with organisations coming together to discuss common challenges and opportunities, and to forge direct and personal contacts and engagement. The importance and benefit of collaboration and joined up thinking by such organisations was a key theme at the 2017 Civic Forum. To support and encourage these efforts, for the first time the Government will ring-fence funding within the Emigrant Support Programme for collaborative projects involving two or more organisations. With regard to our community in Britain specifically we are funding a new project which is focussing on practical methods to address social isolation and the importance of inter-generational engagement in promoting healthy living for aging communities. Work is already underway through the GAA and Irish in Britain 'Good Match' project to link the older Irish community with newer arrivals.

This desire for more joined up action is also reflected in the work being taken forward by the Inter-departmental Committee on the Irish Abroad in ensuring there is better awareness within all Government Departments in respect of what others are doing to support and engage with the Irish abroad across a vast range of activities and issues.

In 2018, a particular focus for the Diaspora Affairs budget line will be on supporting strategic diaspora related projects that support existing Government Strategies, in particular those strategies which are most relevant to engagement with the Irish abroad including Ireland Connected; the International Education Strategy for Ireland; Creative Ireland; the National Tourism Strategy and All-Island / North-South engagement.

## More strategic support/next generation

As we look to the future of our diaspora engagement, in the face of changing patterns of international migration and, in particular, changing demographics in our traditional emigration and diaspora locations, there is no doubt that engagement through Irish culture and heritage will become more important. The 2016 Commemorations programme demonstrated how cultural and heritage projects engaged new audiences across many countries, and this is a legacy which can be built upon. In order to maximise the impact of this kind of engagement, it will be important for Ireland to utilise the entirety of the cultural infrastructure available to us globally and to develop that infrastructure for our future needs.

The construction of the new Irish Arts Centre in New York, with significant support from the Government of Ireland, is a very important development in this regard. The importance and future potential of having a state of the art flagship cultural institution in key global cities like New York cannot be underestimated. Neither should we underestimate the importance of the signal that will be sent to the Irish community, the global Irish cultural community and local authorities by the Government of Ireland supporting such centres.

These centres are used to support promotion of Irish artists and also to achieve wider cultural engagement especially with our diaspora. Good work is already underway to increase collaboration between such centres. Working with Embassy Washington and Consulates in the US, in January 2017 Culture Ireland hosted the first conference of Irish cultural centres across the United States and increased coordination and collaboration between them is now progressing. There is potential to develop Irish cultural infrastructure through wider support of Irish cultural centres worldwide - for example in key global cities; areas with large diaspora populations; and in other locations where there are strong cultural links with Ireland. In terms of Ireland's longer-term engagement, particularly in the United States, in the absence of large numbers of current emigrants to replace aging Irish-born communities, realising local infrastructure to support our diaspora engagement efforts will be crucial. It is intended in 2018 that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht will work together to strategically review our global Irish cultural footprint and infrastructure and consider options to strengthen and support this infrastructure.

Irish culture has a key role to play in the engagement of younger members and the next generations of our diaspora, which is central to Ireland's diaspora policy. Social media too will play a growing role in engaging our diaspora and the younger generations in particular. This is a specific priority for the Government's diaspora engagement efforts in 2018.

In addition to the funding made available to Ireland's Embassies and Consulates for 2018, specifically to reach out to younger generations in our diaspora, and other groups who may be under-represented in our engagement to date, further funding of €200,000 will be 'ring-fenced' within this year's Emigrant Support Programme grant round to support projects aimed at younger people and/or intergenerational engagement.

## PART II

### 1. Supporting the Diaspora

In the Diaspora Policy we undertook to:

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

#### Actions taken:

##### Emigrant Support Programme

As set out in the Diaspora Policy itself, the Emigrant Support Programme (ESP) is a tangible expression of the Government’s support of, commitment to and interest in the global Irish community. Through this important Programme, the Government aims to strengthen the international Irish community and its bond with Ireland. Since the Diaspora Policy was published in 2015, the Government has maintained its allocation for the ESP at €11.595 million. This ongoing commitment allows the continuation and development of the important work of Irish organisations and communities across the world in support of Irish emigrants and the wider Irish diaspora.



It is also worth noting, in terms of Ireland’s wider foreign policy strategy, as articulated in *The Global Island – Ireland’s Foreign Policy for a Changing World*<sup>3</sup> published in January 2015, that support for and engagement with the global Irish represents a tangible example of the key pillars of our foreign policy at work. The Diaspora Policy and the ongoing work to implement it with communities across the globe is an important practical example of the Government’s ongoing commitment to, and the work that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade does to positively deliver on, Our Values; Our People; Our Prosperity; Our Place in Europe; and Our Influence.

This is particularly visible through the different funding pillars of the Emigrant Support Programme, through which the Government supports projects in categories including Welfare; Culture/Sport/Heritage; Capital; and Business. However, it is also clear that there is a lack of awareness both domestically and among our wider diaspora about the Emigrant Support Programme, and the commitment of Irish taxpayers to the global Irish. More work must be done to bridge this important knowledge gap, and this will be a particular focus for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 2018 and beyond.

### Multiannual Funding

A Service Level Agreement for multi-annual funding is in place with the Irish in Britain organisation. Consideration of further movement to multi-annual grants has become part of a wider review of processes and procedures relating to the Emigrant Support Programme, which is focussed on ensuring best practice accountability and procedures in the management of this funding programme. This has included both internal and external reviews of current processes, and a refinement of reporting and monitoring procedures. This work will continue into 2018, in parallel with a wider project seeking to improve overall grant management processes in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, after which further consideration will be given to the appropriateness of, and/or criteria attaching to, introducing further multi-annual funding arrangements for certain organisations or categories of organisation being funded through the ESP.

### Welfare

Welfare remains at heart of the ESP. Of 387 projects funded through the ESP in 2017, 197 were in the Welfare category, totalling €7,251,669 or 61% of the overall ESP allocation that year. Significant funding is dedicated to welfare projects where the welfare needs of our communities are greatest – for example, in 2017, 80.9% of the total Emigrant Support Programme funding that was allocated to fund projects in Britain supported welfare-related projects<sup>4</sup>.

3. Full document available at <https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/alldfawebstemedi/ourrolesandpolicies/ourwork/global-island/the-global-island-irelands-foreign-policy.pdf>

4. ESP funding of €4,621,731 allocated to support welfare projects based in Britain, of total €5,712,702 allocated for projects based in Britain. See ESP Annual Report 2017.

### Small Grants

As noted in the Diaspora Policy, while rigour is warranted in the management of public monies, we should ensure that such rigour is focused where it is most needed. In response to the commitment in the Diaspora Policy to look at ways of simplifying the application process for recipients of amounts less than €5,000, a special category known as the Mission Fund was developed, targeted at small projects which foster vibrant and diverse communities abroad. This Mission Fund grew from funding 5 projects in 4 countries totalling €7,104 in 2015, to funding 20 projects in 11 countries totalling €32,459 in 2016, and a further 17 projects totalling €56,116 in 2017.

The positive experience with the Mission Fund, together with feedback from smaller organisations themselves and from the Emigrant Service Advisory Committee in Britain, which plays a key role in working with the Government on policy around the ESP, has indicated that we can do more to ease the administrative burden in relation to small grants. As part of the overall review and renewal of ESP processes and procedures which will take place over the coming year in particular, this will be a priority.

### Quality Assurance

Between 2014 and 2017, the Department of Foreign Affairs has undertaken 28 routine audits of ESP organisations using an external supplier. The annual figure more than doubled this year – with 11 organisations being audited. (2014-6; 2015- 6; 2016- 5). It is intended to increase this number further in 2018, following a competitive tendering process that will be undertaken on the completion of the current auditing contract, to facilitate a wider routine auditing and quality assurance function within the ESP.

### Mental Health

Supporting the emotional and mental health of emigrants and Irish communities abroad has been a particular focus over the last two years. Funding has been given through the Emigrant Support Programme to a number of new initiatives, including a Pieta House project in the US, and a new Helplink telephone counselling service accessible worldwide that ensures Irish emigrants have access to culturally appropriate assistance. Further initiatives delivered have also included enhanced training for DFAT frontline staff on providing services to citizens presenting with mental health difficulties, and in conjunction with the Minister of State at the Department of Health with special responsibility for Mental Health, a 'Mental Health First Aid' training session at the Consulate General in Sydney for Irish community organisations.

### **Undocumented Irish citizens in the US**

In response to developments in the United States in 2017, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade worked with the Coalition of Irish Immigration Centres to find practical ways to help ease concern within our undocumented community. Working through our Embassy in Washington, additional funding was provided to the CIIC for the provision of detailed legal advice and the publication of an information sheet to assist our undocumented citizens. In view of the importance associated with this difficult issue, a stand-alone panel event on ‘The Undocumented Perspective’ took place on the eve of the Global Irish Civic Forum in May, which included Ireland-based families of the undocumented. This event highlighted different perspectives and views on the current situation concerning our undocumented citizens in the US, building on the wide outreach that Ireland’s Embassy in Washington and our Consulates across the US are undertaking as part of their very active engagement on this important issue. In 2017, welfare projects in the US, which include the Irish welfare and immigration centres which provide frontline services and advice there, including to our undocumented citizens, were in receipt of ESP funding of €1,487,710.

### **Pre-departure Information**

Progress has also been significant in using new technology to better inform Irish citizens about destinations abroad. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has launched an award winning ‘Travel Wise’ smart phone app. The Department’s website, which includes travel advice for all destinations and information about Irish communities and organisations abroad, has been redeveloped to make it more user and mobile friendly. A Diaspora Directory, compiled by the Irish Abroad Unit in DFAT and Missions worldwide, has also been added to the Global Irish Hub section of the website as a means of assisting the global Irish in identifying organisations in particular locations abroad who may be able to provide advice or assistance to them. The Government continues to fund organisations, such as Crosscare, which work to inform people on emigration destinations, and has also worked with the Union of Students of Ireland on an information booklet specifically aimed at J1 students travelling to the US.

## PART II

### 2. Connecting with the Diaspora

In the Diaspora Policy we undertook to:

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

## Actions taken:

### The Inter-departmental Committee on the Irish Abroad

The Interdepartmental Committee on the Irish Abroad was set up following the publication of *Global Irish – Ireland’s Diaspora Policy*, in March 2015. The Committee is chaired by the Minister for the Diaspora and brings together key Government Departments and State Agencies to ensure that Government works in a joined-up way to realise the objectives of the diaspora policy.

The Committee has also worked to ensure that the transition for Irish people returning to Ireland to live is as straightforward a process as possible from an administrative point of view, and has worked to address disproportionate administrative barriers and other issues that may disadvantageously affect returning emigrants. Among other issues considered by the Committee were voting rights for citizens abroad in Irish presidential elections, the Global Irish Civic Forum, and access to driving licences.

In line with the Diaspora Policy commitment that the Inter-departmental Committee will report periodically to Government on progress, a report on the work of the Committee was brought to Government in June 2017. To complement the Committee’s work to date, and inform its future action plan, the Government approved the commissioning of an economic report into barriers disproportionately affecting Irish citizens choosing to return home. The report, which was published in March 2018, will inform Government policy and actions in relation to difficulties it highlights.

It has been decided that the IDC will meet every four months rather than quarterly. This will allow Departments and State agencies more time to engage with issues raised at Committee meetings and report back with detailed updates on work done.

In relation to those seeking to return to Ireland, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has also developed a new Returning Emigrant Entrepreneur Mentoring programme entitled ‘Back for Business’ which was launched in October 2017, to assist those returning who wish to get involved with new businesses. This programme will be convened regionally and as such is intended to bring value to individuals and communities outside the main urban centres.

### Local Activation for Global Reach

Including a regional focus in the new Returning Emigrant Entrepreneur Mentoring Programme is part of the Government’s wider commitment to ensure that diaspora engagement occurs across the country. In 2016, the Department of the Taoiseach funded local authorities to develop local diaspora engagement plans, and also funded the development of a Local Diaspora Engagement Toolkit. Through a Local Diaspora Engagement Fund set up for that year, funding was also given to local groups for projects which encouraged local engagement with the global Irish. This engagement with local authorities continues. The inter-departmental approach will involve collaboration between the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, given that diaspora tourism is a priority in the new national Tourism Action Plan, and Creative Ireland which gives a lead role to Local Authorities.

In addition to the Emigrant Support Programme fund, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will maintain a separate budget line to support strategic diaspora engagement projects, with a focus on initiatives which have a strategic aim linked to existing overarching Government policies such as Creative Ireland or the Tourism Action Plan. Priority will also be given to projects in Ireland that increase engagement between diaspora groups and Irish schools and school children, to ensure that awareness of Ireland’s diaspora story, both historical and contemporary, is maintained across generations.

### **All-island Engagement**

Representatives from Northern Ireland took part in the Global Irish Civic Forum at Dublin Castle in May 2017. In the context of the Government’s broader commitment to respecting all traditions on the Island, there is more work that can be done to explore and support the Scots-Irish diaspora in the US in particular, and this will be further explored by the Irish Abroad Unit and US Missions in the context of the 2018 ESP grant round.

### **Communication**

Significant work has been undertaken since the publication of the Diaspora Policy to improve communications and connectivity between Ireland and its diaspora. In terms of face to face contacts, Irish community and diaspora elements have been emphasised in visits abroad by the Taoiseach and Cabinet Ministers, and in particular those of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Minister of State for the Diaspora and International Development. The Global Irish Newsletter and the @GlobalIrish twitter handle reach tens of thousands of our citizens abroad. Including location or sector specific communications, and through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s wider communications through social media, some 400,000 people are reached on a regular basis. Communication was a key theme for the Global Irish Civic Forum which took place in May 2017, for which the Irish Abroad Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade specifically developed a Global Irish Communications Handbook to assist Irish organisations abroad in communicating with their communities, with potential funders and with each other. This is available on-line as an ongoing resource to assist Irish organisations abroad<sup>5</sup>. The Global Irish Hub website continues to be developed to ensure availability of useful information for citizens abroad and those contemplating returning home.

5. Available at <https://www.dfa.ie/media/globalirish/supportoverseas/Global-Irish-Communication-Handbook.pdf>

### Global Irish Media Fund

As envisaged in the Diaspora Policy, a Global Media Fund was trialled in 2016 to ‘*further good quality coverage of all aspects of the Irish emigrant experience*’. A total of 21 applications were assessed by the judging panel and 17 applications were awarded either full or partial funding. The total amount of funding awarded was €65,003. A number of projects did not proceed or not spend the full amount of funding awarded, and the final amount spent was €49,165.28. The themes explored included issues such as the popularity of GAA in Europe; Irish Americans’ sense of Irish identity; the social and professional networks of Irish women in Canada; the successes and challenges of the Irish in Australia; the experience of an Irish-Polish couple in Poland; Irish musicians abroad and building Irish communities in non-traditional destinations, such as Beijing and Macau.

Given the pilot nature of the programme, a review of the programme has been completed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Nine of the final projects featured in the Irish Times (65%). Two were broadcast on RTE, one on Newstalk and one in the Irish County Living supplement of the Irish Farmers’ Journal. Overall the review concluded that it may have been difficult for the public to distinguish between the general coverage of the Irish abroad by media organisations and those projects funded by the Global Irish Media Fund, and that it is not clear that running the Global Irish Media Fund in the same manner in the future would add additional value or result in fresh or new coverage of the diaspora story, given the extensive coverage of emigration issues by Irish media over the last number of years.

### Fréamhacha

As committed to in the Diaspora Policy, a competitive tendering process took place in 2015 through which a private sector partner organisation was chosen to pilot a ‘Global Irish Summer School’ aimed at deepening the ties of younger members of the diaspora in the US to Ireland. Eight tender applications were received, and a Donegal-based course provider was awarded the contract for the Global Irish Summer Camp. A total of 142 applications were received from applicants based in 30 US States. A Summer Camp programme for 20 participants ran over two and a half weeks and included classes and workshops on Irish history, language and culture followed by relevant field trips to important sites across the island and outdoor adventure pursuits.

The full cost of the pilot project for the 20 participants was just over €97,000 (an average cost of €4,850 per student). It is clear from the feedback received from the participants and their parents that the overall objectives of the pilot programme were achieved; namely that the students left having had a positive experience in Ireland and with a greater awareness of their Irish heritage and a wish to remain engaged.

Much thought and consideration has been given to this question of how best to increase engagement with younger generations in our diaspora, including by Embassy Washington in the US-specific context and at the Global Irish Civic Forum in May.

While it is clear that the pilot Global Irish Summer School was successful for the 20 individual participants, given the vastness of the younger diaspora communities with whom we are trying to engage, it is clear that scalability and reach are priority considerations, that could not be met economically by increasing the pilot programme format, where additional costs would be incurred for every additional participant, and where participation could be limited to those whose families had the means to afford travel to Ireland. In order to inform consideration, Embassy Washington undertook research to ascertain the prevalence and types of exchange and travel programmes to Ireland currently being undertaken by young Americans, including summer camp programmes, high school exchanges and university/semester abroad connections. That exercise has identified ten different summer camps/cultural exchanges being provided by the private sector without direct government support.

As such, it has been decided that the priority for official engagement and available Government resources should be to focus on projects aimed at deepening the ties with younger non-Irish born members of the diaspora which have a wider potential reach. As part of the 2017 ESP grant round, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade funded a number of projects specifically targeted at younger members of the diaspora run by Irish community organisations abroad for locally based children.

In addition, consultations have been initiated with key cultural partners such as the GAA, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and Conradh na Gaeilge which are already funded through the ESP, to identify new and innovative ways of connecting young non-Irish born members of the diaspora with their cultural heritage. Specific funding has also been approved for children-specific cultural elements of key Irish Festivals in the US, and it is hoped that this can be scaled up over the coming years to provide cost-effective, scalable engagement.

In terms of actual visits to Ireland by young representatives of the diaspora, consideration should be given by Government Departments to including, where appropriate, representatives of the Irish diaspora in projects or initiatives aimed at engaging young people – in the first instance the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will explore the feasibility of including representatives of the Irish abroad to join in the Iveagh Scholars programme run by the Department for secondary school students, which already includes representatives from Northern Ireland.

### **Commemorations**

At home and abroad, events have been held to mark the key historical events that took place a century ago on the island of Ireland. In 2016, this included events commemorating both the Easter Rising and the Battle of the Somme. The Global and Diaspora Programme was one of the seven strands of the overall Ireland 2016 programme. Through our network of Embassies and Consulates, this historic anniversary was marked by organising an extensive range of events all around the world. More than 600 events took place in over 156 locations around the world. The Programme included flagship events that showcased the best of traditional and contemporary Ireland across the full range of the arts, including theatre,

literature, music and dance. As the centenary activities continue in the period up to 2022, the Government will continue to include the Irish abroad and to support projects and events which facilitate a deeper understanding among Irish communities abroad of these important historic milestones for the island of Ireland and its diaspora.

It is worth highlighting the important ‘legacy’ effect of the 2016 Global and Diaspora Programme. As a result of the Commemoration Programme abroad in 2016, the Irish Abroad Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade saw a number of new organisations applying for ESP funding in 2017. It is expected that some of these organisations could become key future strategic partners for supporting and celebrating Irish heritage abroad.

## PART II

### 3. Facilitating Diaspora Engagement

In the Diaspora Policy we undertook to:

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

## Actions taken

### Partnerships

As reflected in the Diaspora Policy itself, Ireland is enormously fortunate to have a global network of civil society organisations working in welfare, community, sporting, cultural and business arenas. Some of these avail of assistance from the Government, but many others work entirely independently, drawing on the goodwill of individuals and communities. The volunteer spirit is vital to keep hundreds of diverse community organisations going in all parts of the world, and is a key strength of the active global Irish community.

The Government remains deeply committed to working in partnership with organisations of varying sizes. The Global Irish Civic Forums which were organised by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 2015 and 2017 were key events for advancing this two-way relationship, and hearing the advice and guidance of representatives of global Irish organisations to the Government on our approach to implementing and developing diaspora policy, and what we should do better or differently.

In terms of our ongoing commitment to working with our partners to build their capacity, specific workshops on Governance were arranged as part of the 2017 Global Irish Civic Forum to assist organisations in addressing issues around governance and board responsibilities. Across many discussions, participants highlighted the challenges they are facing in recruiting board/committee/executive members and ensuring best practice governance procedures.

Using expertise across Government Departments, guidance documents have been developed on good governance to assist diaspora organisations in checking themselves against best practice in the management of their affairs. In addition, we will work through Ireland's network of Missions abroad to facilitate connections between different types of projects and organisations and different parts of the global Irish community, including connecting welfare organisations with business networks, and looking at innovative ways to increase involvement of younger members of the diaspora with established organisations to facilitate board replenishment and sustainability.

In line with the commitment to develop resources to ensure greater awareness of Irish community organisations worldwide, and to promote greater collaboration and cooperation between them, the Department of Foreign Affairs has developed an on-line Diaspora Directory, which is intended to be a useful resource for community organisations in maintaining contact with each other, and for other individuals seeking information about organisations with Irish-links in a particular geographic area.

It should also be noted that increasing numbers of Irish community organisations are implementing independently validated quality assurance standards, such as meeting the standards required by the Charities Commission in the UK. For some years, Embassy London has highlighted the importance of Irish community welfare organisations achieving independent quality standards.

A number of Irish organisations in Britain have now achieved quality assurance standards including PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance Standards for Social Organisations) levels 1 or 2 - a quality management system developed by the Charities Evaluation Services (CES) in the UK for the community and voluntary sector. In its Service Level Agreement with the Department, the Irish in Britain have as one of their activities a specific emphasis on helping to improve quality assurance in its member organisations. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will continue to work with these organisations and through our mission network, particularly with Embassy London, to assist and encourage organisations to achieve independently validated quality assurance standards.

### **Global Irish Civic Forum**

The second Global Irish Civic Forum took place on 4-5 May 2017 in Dublin Castle, with the theme “Communities, Connections, Conversations”. As was the case with the first Global Irish Civic Forum, held in 2015, Irish community leaders from around the world, drawn from emigrant and diaspora communities, came together in Dublin to discuss the challenges facing the Irish abroad. Over 220 attendees from 16 countries, representing more than 150 organisations dedicated to supporting Irish communities around the world participated in the Forum. The event provided a means for face-to-face connections between those facing similar challenges in their own communities and was also an opportunity for shared learning and dialogue between these groups and the Government.

The atmosphere at the Forum was energetic, with lively debates taking place over the course of the two days. Participants were deeply engaged in the topics for discussion and this positivity was reflected in the responses to the feedback survey which issued to all attendees. The Forum received very high satisfaction ratings and 65% of attendees reported that they had made lasting connections with new organisations and individuals. Seven key themes emerged across the discussions in plenary sessions and workshops across the two days, and these are detailed in the full report of the event published by DFAT. In relation to many of these key issues, the in-person contacts made and networks developed by attendance at the Civic Forum will assist organisations in positively engaging on these issues<sup>6</sup>.

### **Global Irish Economic Forum**

In line with the commitment in the Diaspora Policy, the fourth Global Irish Economic Forum was held on 19 – 21 November 2015. It was preceded by regional meetings of the Forum which took place in Derry, Galway, Limerick and Laois. Forum discussions focussed on three pillars: Economic Development- advancing sustainable growth over the medium and longer term; Re-imagining Ireland – building a legacy for our future generations; and Ireland’s place in the world – how our global island responds to international challenges. Breakout session discussions centred on a number of sectors with high growth and job creation potential. Following on from the successful sessions with the Irish SME sector at the 2013 Forum, the fourth Forum also included mentoring and networking sessions with Irish companies<sup>7</sup>.

6. The full Report of the Global Irish Civic Forum is available at <https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa-2017/globalirish/Civic-Forum-Report.pdf>

7. The full Report of the 2015 Global Irish Economic Forum is available at <https://global.irish/2015ForumReports.aspx>

### Global Irish Network

Ministers, trade delegations, Embassies and state agencies continue to engage with members of the Global Irish Network across a wide range of locations and issues. At the same time, the international context for Ireland has changed hugely since the Global Irish Network was originally established in 2010. The original ‘call to action’ of restoring Ireland’s economy and global reputation has passed, with the Global Irish Network playing an important role in that international success. The current international challenges are different in nature and scale, with Brexit uppermost. Ongoing engagement with the global Irish business community remains an important priority, in particular as we work to address these challenges and implement Government international trade and investment strategies such as *Ireland Connected – Trading and Investing in a Dynamic World*. It is envisaged that this will require a different kind of engagement with the global Irish business community, with members of the Global Irish Network and other key business contacts being engaged as a key part of the work of the Local Market Teams at country level. It is not intended to hold another Global Irish Economic Forum in the same large scale format, but rather building on the work of the Global Irish Network and the achievements of successive Global Irish Economic Forums, issue, sector and regionally focussed meetings may be convened by the Taoiseach or relevant Ministers to address specific issues, challenges or opportunities that will arise over the uncertain international period ahead.

### Business Networks

Local Irish business networks continue to play an important role across the world in helping Irish business people and professionals to connect with each other, and to identify opportunities for collaboration and promotion of Ireland as a place to do business and to facilitate the success of Irish people and Irish business at home and abroad. We continue to fund Business Networks through the Emigrant Support Programme. Since 2015 we have supported 30 different business organisations in 17 different countries/regions. We will continue to engage with these important business networks and to encourage collaboration and connectivity between them.

### Returning Home

When “*Global Irish – Ireland’s Diaspora Policy*” was published in March 2015, the then Taoiseach Enda Kenny T.D. noted the devastating impact of emigration on our society as we had lost the input of people with talent and energy in increasing numbers at that time. He emphasised the importance of our diaspora and stressed that we wanted people to be able to come home and to play their part in the rebuilding of our economy and our society. Some of the issues faced by returning emigrants are not exclusive to them. Issues relating to the availability of jobs, the availability and cost of housing and access to childcare, for example, are relevant to the whole population.

The Government’s economic policy has been to create the economic conditions necessary to make returning to Ireland an option for those who have emigrated and wish to return. Monthly unemployment figures are now at 6.1% and there are now over 2,206,800 people at work, the highest number since 2008<sup>8</sup>.

8. Figures from February 2018.

The Irish Government is taking urgent action to deal with the challenges which currently exist in relation to the housing sector in Ireland. The publication of *Rebuilding Ireland: an Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness* in July 2016, clearly demonstrates the national commitment to end the current housing shortage and to tackle homelessness. This Plan sets out a clear roadmap to achieve the Government’s goals to significantly increase and expedite the delivery of social housing units, boost private housing construction, improve the rental market, and deliver on the commitment to significantly ramping up the housing supply. The Government’s mission is to ensure that everyone can access a home, either on their own or with State support. There is a clear determination at the highest level nationally to deal with the under-supply of housing and the problems it generates for families and communities. This commitment is backed up by significant multi-annual funding (more than €6 billion to 2021). Already good progress was made in 2017 on meeting the ambitious targets set and it is expected that by 2021, the housing needs of almost 140,000 households will be met through the various housing initiatives provided for in *Rebuilding Ireland*.

With regard to access to childcare, Budget 2017 provided an additional €19 million towards the development of a new *Single Affordable Childcare Scheme* which will provide financial support for parents towards the cost of childcare. The scheme aims to improve access to quality childcare and outcomes for children. It will provide a robust platform for further sustained investment in childcare in future years so that affordability can be further strengthened, while also supporting quality. Parents will qualify for a subsidy based on their net income and the level of subsidy will vary based on income, helping families to overcome disadvantage and contributing to a reduction in child poverty. The scheme will also include a universal subsidy (non means-tested) of up to €1,040 per year for children between the ages of 6 months and 3 years. This benefit has been fast-tracked and is already in place for parents using registered childcare providers. In addition to the existing free pre-school year, other recent developments such as the introduction of a second free pre-school year and the changes to parental leave are welcome and will also assist returning emigrants.

Through the Emigrant Support Programme, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade already provides significant funding and support to organisations, including Crosscare Migrant Project and Safe Home Ireland, which work with citizens who wish to return to Ireland. Over the last decade over €4 million has been allocated to Irish based organisations working with returning emigrants. Importantly, funding of such organisations in 2016 saw an increase of €60,000 on the 2015 figure, and this funding was maintained in 2017.

In parallel to the general domestic policies that will continue to have a positive impact for returning emigrants, the Interdepartmental Committee on the Irish Abroad, with input from diaspora organisations and citizens, has also focussed its work on Government procedures or administrative requirements reported to be negatively affecting returning Irish emigrants. It has become clear that better communication about accessing entitlements is required, and Departments have worked to improve information available through the ‘Returning to Ireland’ section of the Global Irish Hub website<sup>9</sup>.

9. See <https://www.dfa.ie/global-irish/returning-to-ireland/>

A number of the issues raised as potential barriers, such as access to insurance and credit are commercial issues, but Departments continue to work actively with the relevant industries to make progress. The issue of emigrants returning home being faced with high motor insurance premiums and insurance companies having varying policies on the recognition of driving experience gained while living abroad, were considered as part of the work of the Cost of Insurance Working Group, established by the Minister of Finance as part of a Departmental review of policy in the insurance sector. The resulting *Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance* published on 10 January 2017 includes *Recommendation 6* which aims to “put in place a standard protocol for insurance companies in order to ensure a greater consistency of treatment for returning emigrants”. The Protocol was adopted and has been in place since the end of 2017.

Given the importance of this issue across Government, to complement the work of the Inter-departmental Committee, in June 2017 the Government decided to commission an independent expert report on barriers affecting Irish emigrants who wish to return to Ireland to live. The report was published in March 2018 and will provide a further focus for the work of the Inter-departmental Committee and Departments in relation to returning emigrants in 2018<sup>10</sup>.

In addition to addressing potential administrative difficulties, the Government is also committed to progressing innovative ways of engaging and supporting those citizens who move back to Ireland having lived abroad. In Autumn 2017, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade launched a new pilot mentoring scheme specifically aimed at Returning Emigrant Entrepreneurs. A key element in the design of the ‘Back for Business’ programme was the inclusion of a regional element, with a view to providing assistance and support to returning emigrant entrepreneurs who can make a valuable contribution to communities across the country. 45 returned emigrant entrepreneurs, 26 women and 19 men from all over the country, are now enrolled in the Back for Business programme. In terms of the types of business involved, at present eight of those selected report that they already have some exports- thirty five (78%) state that they expect to be exporters in five years’ time; 13 participants (29%) report having more than one person employed in the new business - all expect to be employers and half (51%) expect to employ ten or more in five years’ time. The Programme will be reviewed following the completion of the first cycle in May 2018.

Back for Business Participants Time Spent Out of Ireland		
No of Years	Participants	% of Total
1 or 2	8	18%
3 or 4	5	11%
5 or 6	12	27%
7 to 9	6	13%
10 to 14	6	13%
15 to 19	6	13%
20+	1	2%
No response	1	2%

10. Full Report available at <https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa-2017/globalirish/Report-on-Returning-Emigrants-2018.pdf>

### **Diaspora Studies**

On an ongoing basis the Irish Abroad Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs has met with, and shares experience and expertise with, delegations from other countries and international organisations. Officers at Ireland's Missions abroad have also briefed Governments and Parliaments on Ireland's experience, policy and past and current initiatives in order to share with them our perspective on diaspora engagement. This important outreach work will continue.

## PART II

### 4. Recognising the Diaspora

In the Diaspora Policy we undertook to:

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

### Actions taken

#### Voting Rights

As noted in the original Diaspora Policy the issue of voting rights in Irish elections is an issue of enormous importance to many Irish citizens abroad.

The Government decided on 7 March 2017 to accept in principle the main recommendation in the Fifth Report of the Convention on the Constitution<sup>11</sup> that Irish citizens resident outside the State, including citizens resident in Northern Ireland, should have the right to vote at presidential elections and that a referendum would be held to amend the Constitution to give effect to this. This decision was announced by the then Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD, in Philadelphia on 12 March 2017.

Following the Taoiseach’s announcement, an Options Paper<sup>12</sup>, jointly prepared by the Departments of Housing, Planning and Local Government and Foreign Affairs and Trade, was published on 22 March 2017 to inform public debate on this significant policy change. The Options Paper provided a focus for discussions at a dedicated session on voting rights held at the second Global Irish Civic Forum on 5 May 2017<sup>13</sup>.

More recently, An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar TD has indicated the Government’s intention to hold this referendum in 2019, on the same day as the local and European Parliament elections. The two Departments are currently in the process of examining a number of issues further and more deeply with a view to bringing a report to Government that will assist in identifying a preferred option to be put to the people in a referendum. It is now broadly accepted that even if a referendum was held immediately and passed, it would not be feasible to have comprehensive arrangements in place for an extension of the franchise to have effect for the next presidential election which is scheduled to be held before 11 November 2018 as this will require, among other things, modernisation of the voter registration process and the introduction of arrangements to facilitate those eligible to vote to exercise their franchise from outside the State.

11. Report available at <https://www.constitution.ie/AttachmentDownload.ashx?mid=bf489ec7-9556-e311-8571-005056a32ee4>

12. Full Options Paper available at <https://www.dfa.ie/global-irish/staying-in-touch/latest-news/newsarchive/options-paper-on-voting-rights-for-citizens-outside-the-state.html>

13. The session is available to view at <https://www.dfa.ie/global-irish/support-overseas/global-irish-civic-forum/>.

In this regard, the Government has agreed that the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government should commence work to effect improvements in the process for the registration of voters. Preliminary work has already commenced on the modernisation of the voter registration process which will examine all aspects of voter registration, including the provision of registration information and practical experience from other countries which already provide voting arrangements for their non-resident citizens.

### **Presidential Distinguished Service Award for the Irish Abroad**

The Presidential Distinguished Service Award remains an important symbol of the importance placed by Ireland on the global Irish, their contributions and their achievements. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has undertaken renewed efforts to promote engagement with the Presidential Distinguished Service Award. This includes increased promotion of the Awards through Ireland’s network of Missions abroad. The scheme was also reviewed by the High Level Panel Advisory Panel on the PDSA in the course of 2017.

While the PDSA scheme was originally designed to recognise ‘Irish citizens, those entitled to Irish citizenship and persons of Irish descent who have made a sustained and distinguished service to Ireland or Irish communities abroad’, the Government decided in October 2017 that this emphasis should be widened to include recognition of those individuals with Irish connections who have given sustained or distinguished contribution on global issues, which may not have a specific Irish or Irish community connection. It is hoped that this change will widen the reach and impact of these important awards and demonstrate the importance of broader global values in our recognition of the work and achievements of Irish individuals and communities worldwide.

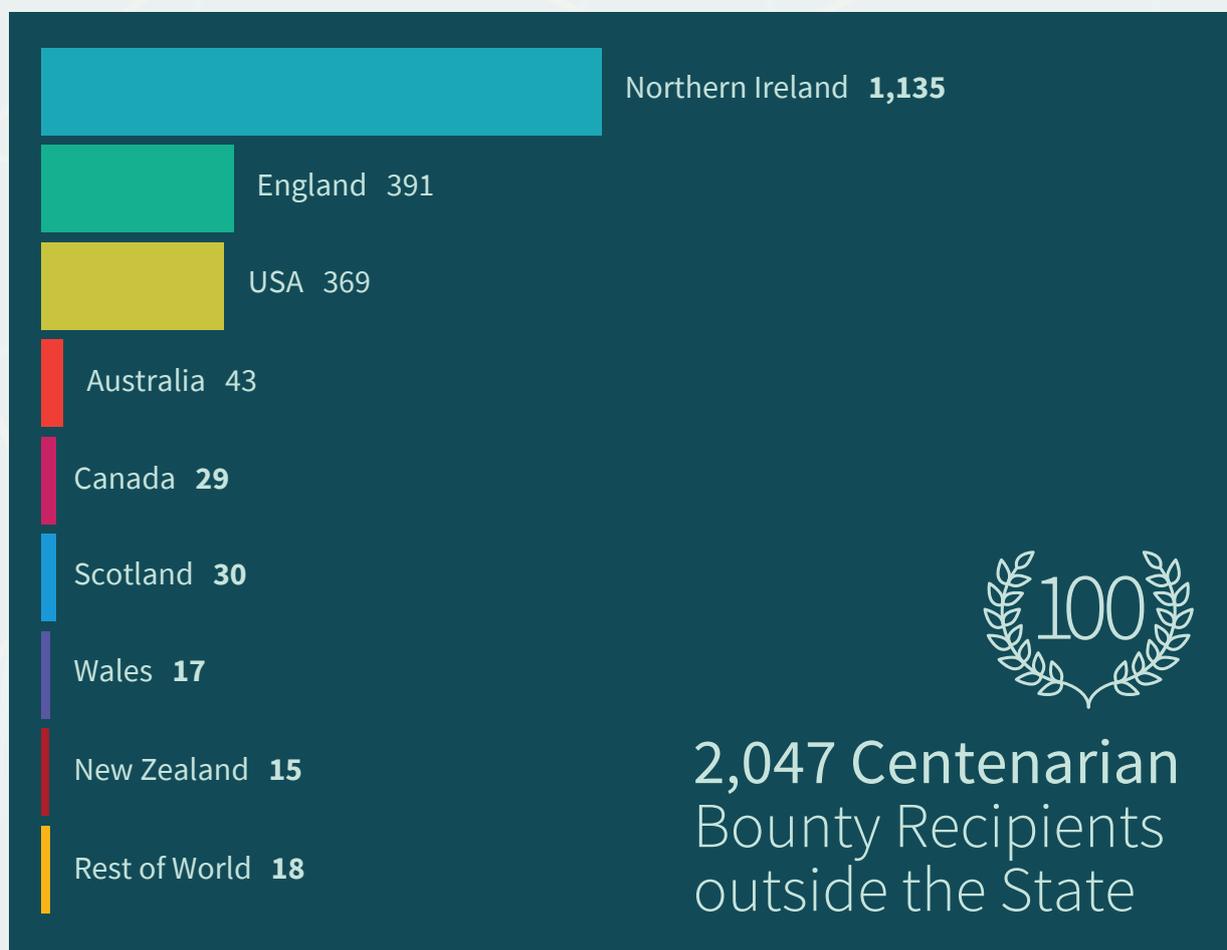
### **The Certificate of Irish Heritage**

The Diaspora Policy noted the disappointing take up the Certificate of Heritage scheme, which was introduced in 2011, and committed to reviewing its operation. The contract creating the Concession Agreement envisaged that the scheme would be self-financing, but as a result of the low level of applications, the commercial partner indicated in September 2015 that the service was no longer commercially viable.

It is worth noting that private sector providers are now active in this area, and as such it could be difficult to differentiate such an ‘official’ offering from other certificates available on line. Consultations on the continuing appetite for such a scheme among members of the diaspora themselves have taken place at the 2017 Global Irish Civic Forum and with Ireland’s Missions abroad. These contacts have indicated that re-establishing this scheme is unlikely to attract broad interest or to meaningfully promote engagement with the diaspora to a discernible level. In light of the foregoing, it is considered that the resources that would be required to maintain even a modified or scaled-down version of this scheme could be better deployed on other projects and initiatives which would have greater potential for more positive and lasting impact in terms of recognising and engaging the diaspora.

### Centenarian Bounty

The Centenarian Bounty continues to be awarded to people born on the island of Ireland who have reached the age of 100 years but who are now living outside of the State, as well as to those who are living in Ireland. Since 2015 the Centenarian Bounty has been awarded to an additional 547 people living outside the State. This brings the total number of Centenarian Bounty awards made to individuals resident outside the State since the establishment of the award in 2006 to 2,047 people. Of those living outside the island of Ireland, most recipients were resident in England (42.87%), closely followed by the US (40.46%). The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will continue to administer this scheme for the Irish abroad on behalf of Áras an Úachtaráin, as an important recognition of elderly members of the Irish diaspora.



## PART II

### 5. Evolving Diaspora Policy

In the Diaspora Policy we undertook to:

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

### Actions taken

#### Research to Better Understand the Diaspora and their Needs

Through the Emigrant Support Programme, the Government has funded a number of projects focussed on better understanding the needs of the diaspora. These include funding an on-line survey on the attitudes of younger members of the Irish diaspora in the US in conjunction with Irish Central.com; research by the Clinton Institute, UCD on ‘Irish Chicago: Challenges, Opportunities and the Future of Irish America’ and by Crosscare Migrant Project on returning emigrants which resulted in its Home for Good Report<sup>14</sup>. Research projects will continue to be funded through the ESP, along with other initiatives aimed at having better data and identifying current and future trends in respect of where our diaspora are located and specifying their evolving needs.

The Global Irish Civic Forum in May 2017 also included specific working groups aimed at identifying and responding to the evolving needs of Irish communities abroad. One of the key challenges which was highlighted was the evolving needs of an aging Irish community and a changing demographic in Britain. The expertise and experience of the Emigrant Services Advisory Committee (ESAC) in Britain will be a key resource to Government as we look to the future of our diaspora policy in Britain in particular. As part of that work, a new strategic project is underway to review the needs of the older Irish community in Britain.

14. Full report available at <https://www.migrantproject.ie/images/Home-for-Good---a-report-by-Crosscare-Migrant-Project---May-2017.pdf>

### New Diaspora Communities

While the primary focal points for diaspora engagement remain those places like Britain, US, Australia and Canada which have seen long-standing patterns of emigration and Irish community development, the Government is acutely aware of the growing diaspora communities in non-traditional locations. We continue to work actively to engage and support these communities, and new diaspora communities being reached by Emigrant Support Programme funding since 2015 include: Estonia, the Holy See, Hong Kong, Jamaica, Kenya, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Uganda, Hungary and Chile. Through our partnership with the GAA, and the establishment of the jointly-funded Global Games Development Fund, our reach into new diaspora communities has also increased, including to countries as diverse as Bahrain, Kuwait, Malawi, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Saudi Arabia and Sweden.

In addition, the Government is committed to reflecting the diversity of today's modern Ireland in its engagement with our communities abroad. Like the richness of the current population reflected in the Census, the 17% of Irish residents who were born abroad and their Irish-born families will also contribute to increasingly diverse Irish communities abroad in the future.

It will be important that Ireland's future diaspora policy and engagement reflects this diversity, not only of ethnic background but also by supporting projects and initiatives aimed at engaging and including other groups who may not have been considered in any traditional view of an 'Irish community'. This includes for example members of the LGBTQI community abroad. Through the ESP and other funding streams, Ireland has already sought to promote diversity, and has been able to lead by example in this regard, such as the funding for an Irish community float in Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, which has led to a number of other countries following suit.

Projects which include promotion of diversity within Irish communities abroad, and particularly those that seek to build engagement within traditional Irish community organisations will be prioritised for funding under the Emigrant Support Programme in 2018. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will work with other Government Departments to ensure that any best practice guidelines relating to reflecting and encouraging diversity in access to government grant schemes here in Ireland are applied to future Emigrant Support Programme funding.

### Alumni Engagement

The Diaspora Policy envisaged the creation of an Alumni Challenge Fund to encourage collaboration by Irish Higher Education Institutes to increase engagement with graduates of Irish Universities abroad. While initial discussions took place with relevant institutions, no specific collaborative projects were forthcoming. Further consideration has taken place at official level in relation to best methods of engaging with graduates of Irish Higher Education Institutions, and in particular members of the affinity diaspora. This work will continue with the Department of Education and Skills and the State Agencies, and with representatives of the Higher Education Authorities as part of wider efforts to implement Government policies and strategies in relation to international education, trade and investment, including *Irish Educated, Globally Connected: an international education strategy for Ireland, 2016-2020*.

## Conclusion

It is clear that significant action has taken place to implement and take forward the commitments made in the 2015 Diaspora Policy document, across a broad range of issues, benefitting our communities in a broad range of locations abroad, and those seeking to return home. In the context of the Global Footprint, these achievements in delivering for our citizens globally and the Government's continued commitment to Supporting the Diaspora; Connecting with the Diaspora; Facilitating Diaspora Engagement; Recognising the Diaspora; and Evolving our Diaspora Policy, will become more and more important given future migration patterns that will see Irish people moving more frequently to a greater number of places in a globalised world.

The Government's continued commitment to the Emigrant Support Programme will provide a key central pillar to this work to support, engage and encourage a vibrant, diverse global Irish community, connected to Ireland and to each other.

### **Irish Abroad Unit**

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

June 2018



# Irish Abroad Unit



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