

Press Section

The Press Office works to provide timely, relevant and accurate information on the Department's work and priorities to the public via the media.

We are primarily focused on the domestic media, but also work with Missions to facilitate coverage of the Department's work in foreign media.

Key tasks include:

- Responding to media queries in a timely and effective way.
- Organising media interviews for Ministers, DFA staff and partners and providing press points to support media appearances. We work closely with Ministerial advisers and relevant DFA sections.
- Supporting incoming and outgoing State and official visits and Ministerial travel, including on trade missions, where warranted, and for regular EU and other multilateral meetings.
- Organising press conferences and media coverage of DFAT-organised events such as the GIEF, the John Major lecture etc.
- Proactively pitching stories to media that illustrate the work of the Department.
- Drafting and coordinating press releases and op-eds.
- Managing three media funds/ grants programmes which are focused on building understanding of international development issues through the media: Simon Cumbers Media Fund; One World series on RTE Radio 1 and KMF What in the World TV series which airs annually on RTE1.
- Operating and over-seeing the Department's social media network.
- Contributing to the Department's websites to ensure they are a dynamic and informative source of news and information.
- Circulating press clippings daily and keeping colleagues informed about coverage relevant to the Department.
- Operating a 24/7 duty service.

1. The Press Office is headed up by the Head of Press Section, supported by four Press Officers. The Irish Aid press office, which was previously a stand-alone unit, has been integrated into the Department's main press unit, making the Department's communications more cohesive and coordinated.
2. Ireland's Embassies engage directly with local media, and some of the larger Missions (London, Washington, Brussels, Berlin and Paris) have dedicated Press Officers.
3. Like all Government Departments, this Department is dealing with an increasingly active and demanding media, with short reaction times. There are consistently high levels of interest in consular issues, official and State visits, Diaspora, Anglo-Irish

issues, EU matters, our role in development cooperation and the Passport Service, as well as scrutiny of expenditure at all levels.

4. In addition to doing the traditional media outreach work, DFAT press officers are now also preparing features and news stories for the website homepage and communicating via social media. The recently-launched website has proven to be a vital platform, and is particularly useful for updating the public on the Department's work and providing thorough information on travel and passports. The Department operates over forty Twitter accounts and a range of other social media accounts, including community networks. This has allowed a high level of direct interaction with the public and an ability to make information available quickly. Missions have also stressed the importance of e-newsletters for Irish communities abroad.
5. The press office also holds regular briefings and meetings with journalists, particularly around the Simon Cumbers Media Fund and ahead of major Departmental events, such as the Global Irish Economic Forum.
6. Press Officers at HQ now lead on targeted aspects of the Department's work – such as trade and promotion; consular and passport; Anglo-Irish and international development. This enables the press office to build knowledge and contacts and to ensure the office is better able to anticipate, plan for and communicate the work of these sections and their role in the Department's overall work.
7. The overriding priority for the Press Office is to demonstrate the relevance of the Department's work to the public via the domestic media. We also work to promote Ireland abroad, particularly via State and official visits; trade missions and the St Patrick's Day programme of Ministerial visits. The office cooperates closely in this with Trade and Promotion Division and the Department's network of Press Officers in Embassies. The importance of a co-ordinated approach to promotion is central to the new Foreign Policy Review.

Current issues

- Continuing media focus on costs.
- Highlighting our political and/or humanitarian work in high-profile crises such as Syria, Iraq, Ukraine and conflict-afflicted parts of Africa.
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Short to medium term priorities

- Our high-level goal is to increase public understanding of the value of the Department's work and to effectively manage our reputation.
- Our priorities include: enhanced public understanding of our role in contributing to Ireland's economic recovery by promoting trade, tourism and

investment in Ireland and of the efficacy of the public services which the Department provides.

- Enhanced public understanding and continued support for the Irish Aid programme.
- Increased outreach on social media and through our website to engage with new audiences.

Calendar

- The work of Press Section necessarily reflects the work of the broader Department at any one time. In the months ahead, we will be communicating and highlighting the work which the Department has prioritised, with a particular focus on trade, public services and international development. We will also have a role in highlighting the decade of commemorations over the coming years.

