

## Corporate Services Division

1. Corporate Services Division supports the Secretary General in the day to day management of the Department. It is currently headed-up by Director General Fergal Mythen. The Division discharges a range of functions including:
  - human resources and training;
  - accommodation services;
  - information and communications technology - the global ICT network spans missions and HQ sites, providing a secure platform for the transmission of data and acts as a basis for private voice and videoconferencing facilities as well as supporting the automated passport system among other projects;
  - security – including servicing the EU Council Security Committee (CSC), the National Security Authority (NSA) and the Office of Emergency Planning (OEP)/ Emergency Task Force; and
  - Departmental archives and registry.
2. The Division also provides the general coordination function for the Department and is responsible for cross-cutting issues such as Freedom of Information and Data Protection. In 2013, the Department received 88 Freedom of Information requests of which 78% were for non-personal information and 61% came from the media. A significant majority of these requests are for access to financial and/or administrative information. Requests for personal information are predominantly linked to passport or consular cases.

### **Structure of Department**

3. The Department consists of 18 divisions and units at home, as well as the British Irish Inter-Governmental Secretariat in Belfast and the North-South Ministerial Council Joint Secretariat in Armagh. Departmental locations in Ireland include headquarters in Dublin (at Iveagh House and six other offices in the city), Cork (passport office) and Limerick (Development Cooperation Division), plus a total of 73 diplomatic and consular offices abroad, called 'missions'.
4. The network is being further expanded as the new missions - five Embassies and three Consulates-General - approved by the Government in January this year are established. With the opening of the new missions and other changes to the network in 2014, the Department will manage a total of 80 overseas missions (plus Armagh and Belfast). Many Heads of Mission are also accredited to additional countries on a concurrent basis which enhances the cost-effectiveness of external representation. In addition, 28 Honorary Consuls General and 71 Honorary Consuls provide assistance to Irish citizens in 61 countries.

### **Accommodation**

5. The Department currently manages a total of 137 properties abroad on behalf of the State - 34 owned and 103 rented. These are used primarily as Embassy offices (Chanceries) and official residences of Heads of Mission, which are used for promotional and outreach activities. There are currently 18 locations abroad where our Embassies are co-located with State Agencies in *Ireland House* arrangements. New York, Tokyo and Madrid are among the larger *Ireland House* arrangements with a number of State agencies operating under one roof.
6. The accommodation priorities for 2014 are to continue to ensure a high level of suitable and secure accommodation in all locations in the current context of sharp budgetary constraints, with a particular focus on setting up the 8 new Missions. Where possible, co-location with our State Agencies will be pursued in these new locations.

### **Staffing**

7. There is currently 1,368 'core' staff employed in the Department, 780 of whom are based at HQ (including about 274 in the Passport Offices). The remaining 589 are made up of HQ staff serving abroad (290) and locally-recruited employees in missions. This core number excludes temporary specialist and administrative staff employed on contract by Irish Aid at our development missions. It also excludes approximately 155 Temporary Clerical Officers (TCOs) employed annually to assist the Passport Offices in Molesworth Street, Balbriggan and Cork in coping with the heavy seasonal increase in demand for passports.

### **Key Current Divisional Issues**

#### Reduction in Staff Numbers

8. The Government's Employment Control Framework established a staffing ceiling for the Department of 1,345 posts by end 2014. This ceiling represents a significant reduction in staff numbers compared with an equivalent figure of 1,572 from March 2009 - a loss of a total of 227 or approximately one in every seven posts since the introduction of the moratorium on recruitment.
9. In common with all others, this Department has already sustained heavy losses under the moratorium. Permanent Departmental staff numbers have fallen by 204, or about 13%, since 2009. The senior grades of Assistant Secretary and Counsellor have been particularly affected due to retirements.
10. In order to try to ameliorate the impact of the ongoing reductions in staffing, a major re-structuring of the Department's Headquarters operations was completed in early 2012. Other functions and staff are routinely reorganised or reallocated to maximise continuity of work output and minimize disruption to service delivery to the citizen. This, of course, places additional pressure on individual officers.

11. The staffing restrictions and resulting challenges apply equally to Irish Missions abroad. A number of missions have been downsized. By way of example, following the opening of the new missions this year, a total of 13 Missions will have only one Diplomatic Officer assigned from Headquarters.

Establishment of new missions

12. In January, 2014, the Government announced an expansion of Ireland's diplomatic network with the opening of eight new missions - five embassies in: Jakarta, Bangkok, Nairobi, Zagreb and the Holy See, and three Consulates-General: in Hong Kong, Austin (Texas) and Sao Paulo. In addition, the Irish Aid office in Freetown, Sierra Leone, is being upgraded to Embassy status. In this context also, the Embassy in Maseru is being closed with the Embassy in South Africa assuming responsibility for relations with Lesotho.
13. HQ based staff have been assigned to the new missions and work is underway on a variety of logistical issues including local staffing, ICT provision and securing suitable accommodation. It is expected that all new missions will be operational by the end of 2014. The new missions are being established on a cost-neutral basis.

