

## Germany – Ireland

### Joint Plan of Action for Enhanced Bilateral and EU Cooperation

#### I. Principles

The overriding principle of the joint plan of action is that Ireland and Germany share many common values and goals, and that increased cooperation is in both our national interests and our common European interest.

While our relationship is positive, we also recognise that there is much unused potential. As strongly like-minded EU-partners, our level of engagement and routine liaison activities can be further improved. We want to seize new opportunities, i.e. to promote fields in which we are like-minded and better understand our respective positions where we are not.

Germany is located in the centre of Europe, and Ireland at its western periphery – but neither geography nor size should limit our relationship.

#### **1. Shaping the future of the EU**

Every day and on almost every subject, Germany and Ireland work well together within the shared European Union that we have both helped to build. It is vital to us both that we improve and strengthen the functioning of the institutional framework. We are committed to driving EU policies towards the best outcome for the citizens of the Union and to shaping a prosperous and secure Europe. Our common goal under the treaties is to continue building a strong and sovereign Europe as a stronghold of the rules-based international order, as a security provider for its citizens and as an economic power which upholds a just international economic order. To that end cohesion of the EU Member States is of paramount importance. We acknowledge the challenges posed by the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union and reiterate the importance of EU27 unity and acting in our common European interest.

#### **2. Acting like-minded in the world**

Ireland and Germany are both committed to a rules-based international system and effective multilateralism. We support and promote united EU action and policies abroad. We consider the United Nations to be the key body for legitimate global action. Together, we believe in upholding human rights, open societies, the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the protection of the vulnerable. We share a responsibility to combat climate change and to protect the environment, both locally and globally.

#### **3. Strengthening economic ties**

We understand and value the central importance of both the Single Market and rules-based free trade to our economic wellbeing. Our bilateral economic relationship is currently valued at approximately €34 billion per year, with around €21 billion in exports from Ireland to Germany and about €13 billion from Germany to Ireland. We will promote the further deepening of our economic ties, the implementation of an ambitious EU trade agenda, and the strengthening of a global rules-based trading system.

#### **4. Fostering people to people links**

The future of the European Union is most powerfully shaped by involving citizens throughout the continent – both near and more distant neighbours. Our citizens already travel between Germany and Ireland in both directions to holiday, study, and work, invest, live and learn from one another. We want to see these people-to-people contacts further intensified. We will promote opportunities for exchange at all levels in our societies, with a particular focus on young people as well as on young politicians.

## **5. Seizing opportunities**

Germany and Ireland are exceptionally strong research partners. Under the Horizon 2020 Programme, Germany was Ireland's number one partner and almost 10% of German funding obtained under the programme was in collaboration with Irish partners. We want to highlight and celebrate this future-focussed, dynamic area of cooperation. We are committed to maintaining the highest level of ambition and wish to extend it where possible.

### **II. Platforms**

Germany and Ireland recognize that increased dialogue at various levels is an essential ingredient for tangibly increasing Irish-German cooperation. We are committed to continuing the intense bilateral political engagement that we have achieved to date.

This will be supplemented by the following formats:

- Building on the inaugural session in Berlin on 15 November 2018, consultations should take place approximately every eighteen months between State Secretaries and Secretaries General of the German Federal Foreign Office and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland. Other Ministries will also be invited, based on the current agenda and their competences.
- The Ireland Germany Joint Vision Forum set up in Berlin in January 2018 will be developed further and should take place annually alternating between Dublin and Berlin. The stakeholders are the German Federal Foreign Office, the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Berlin based Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) and the Dublin based Institute for International and European Affairs (IIEA).
- Consultations between Political Directors, EU Directors General and Policy Planning Units in the Federal Foreign Office and at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will also be maintained at regular intervals.
- Cross-departmental consultations at senior official level (Heads and Deputy Heads of Units) on current EU agenda issues as well as on international affairs will also take place on an annual basis.

### **III. Projects**

Increased bilateral cooperation should translate into concrete projects in specific fields. To this end the following action points have been agreed. This work will be kept under active review and further projects will be added over time. A report on the implementation of projects will be prepared in advance of consultations at State-Secretary / Secretary-General level.

#### **1. Increase foreign policy cooperation and highlight shared values**

##### *Shaping EU policy on Africa*

- The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Ireland and Germany share a strong belief in the importance of EU engagement with Africa and have agreed on a joint visit to the region. This will also be an opportunity to further explore the potential for Irish-German cooperation in Africa including within the framework of Sustainable Development Goals.
- Ireland and Germany will collaborate with other like-minded partners to shape EU-Africa policy to ensure a balanced approach and actively support the African Union's role in promoting peace and security in both regions. Possible joint initiatives might also be considered via existing institutional mechanisms and partners.

### *Strengthening effective multilateralism and the United Nations*

- We will use our partnership to strengthen effective multilateralism, and we aim to fully use the potential of smaller and medium-sized countries to stand together for the preservation and further development of the rules-based multilateral order. We will hold consultations to identify issues that should be tackled, both jointly and with multilateral partners. We are convinced that effective multilateralism needs a resilient international system with a strong United Nations at its core, as well as concrete and effective implementation of joint decisions.
- The UN and the EU are natural partners, and we attach great importance to this partnership. We will continue to support the EU's cooperation with the UN, including in the field of peace and security.
- In view of Germany's upcoming membership of the UN Security Council from 2019 to 2020 and Ireland's candidature for the Security Council from 2021 to 2022, we will identify ways for EU Member States taking up Council membership to continue to bring to the Council's work, values, norms and principles of EU Member States leaving the Council.

### *Cooperating on civilian crisis management*

- A workshop on best practices in recruitment, deployment and post deployment strategies for experts in civilian crisis management will be conducted. It is hoped that this workshop will produce ideas and recommendations which can be helpful at national level while also feeding into current EU work in this crucial area.

## **2. Create a step change on joint engagement regarding EU policy issues of common interest**

### *Exchange on the future of payments*

- Payment services play a crucial role in a modern economy, and the way in which payments are made in Europe is changing rapidly. European legislation and related technological developments are expected to bring innovation and changes to payments and banking within the EU. Germany and Ireland will monitor developments in the market, and share experiences and research findings, with a view to ensuring that payment service users maintain access to safe and secure payment services in a well-functioning payment services market.

### *Interaction of Financial Stability Committees*

- The Irish and German authorities will examine the scope for co-operation in the area of financial stability, particularly between the Irish Financial Stability Group and the German Financial Stability Committee. Possible areas for discussion include: (i) identification of risks and vulnerabilities in the financial system; (ii) a comparison of how both countries' institutions engage, in terms of their respective powers and functions; (iii) exchange of national experiences on macro prudential instruments and tools to address systemic risks.

### *Cooperation on agricultural policy*

- Germany and Ireland intend to build on efforts by key Irish stakeholders and the German Center for Research and Innovation (Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft) to establish links in the area of agri-digitalisation and for engagement regarding EU funding opportunities under Horizon 2020. We want to further align policy, funders, research centres and industry in this area.
- We want to intensify research and innovation on agriculture, climate change and land use management by identifying leading researchers in these areas to assist in developing a carbon neutral and circular agri-food system.

- The Ministries of Agriculture of Ireland and Germany envisage a dialogue on current issues in agricultural policy, with a focus on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (i.e. an exchange on proposals by the European Commission on CAP 2020) and the challenges for Ireland and Germany with regard to rural areas as well as the contribution of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) to rural development.
- To promote links between the professional agriculture communities in Ireland and Germany we intend to organise further expert visits.

#### *Partnership on small and medium enterprises*

- A partnership in the area of pre-competitive Collective Research within CORNET will be explored. CORNET is a network of ministries and funding agencies that combine their existing funding schemes to increase the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In this way, CORNET supports new funding organisations worldwide to introduce pilot actions and schemes for pre-competitive Collective Research.
- Similarly, cooperation within the Central Innovation Programme for SMEs will be explored. The aim of the programme is to foster market-driven technology-based R&D work within SMEs. The programme is designed to enhance companies' capacity to innovate and to strengthen their long-term competitiveness. Both countries could organise common bilateral calls for bids or Ireland could join the IraSME<sup>1</sup> network.

#### *Enhanced cooperation on energy and climate action*

- The Department for Communications, Climate Action and Environment of Ireland and the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy of Germany will foster an exchange on best practices in the area of energy modelling, including between the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and the German Environment Agency (Umweltbundesamt – UBA) and an exchange of experience on grid renewables integration and best practices for information, dialogue and participation in order to raise public awareness and social acceptance for the importance of and need for infrastructure projects including between Eirgrid and German TSOs (Transmission System Operators). They will continue their exchange in the North Seas Energy Cooperation on facilitating the cost-effective deployment of offshore wind and promoting interconnection between the countries in the region. Furthermore they will strengthen their cooperation in research and innovation in different fields of energy technology under the umbrella of various European instruments, such as the Strategic Energy Technology Plan.
- While climate adaptation can be considered in context and country-specific terms, particularly when it comes to climate risk and governance, it is also an area where Member States are facing a number of common challenges and that offers good potential for cooperation and information exchange. In the future, Germany and Ireland intend to intensify their knowledge transfer on the implementation of Climate Change Adaptation.

### **3. Highlight and strengthen research links**

- We will continue to promote the strong and increasing cooperation between Irish and German research institutions. Recent notable examples of this include a pending MOU between the University of Limerick and the Fraunhofer's Institute for Factory Operation and Automation to underpin collaborative research work with CONFIRM, Science Foundation Ireland's Research Centre for Smart Manufacturing, as well as a Letter of Intent for a strategic research partnership signed

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<sup>1</sup> IraSME is a network of ministries and funding agencies which are owners or managers of national and regional funding programmes for cooperative research projects between small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and in participation of research and technology organisations (RTOs).

earlier this month between the Irish Marine Institute and GEOMAR, Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel.

- We have requested our respective Embassies in Berlin and Dublin to place a particular emphasis in their public diplomacy in the coming period on highlighting and celebrating our scientific and research links and cooperation in order to make it better known and appreciated.

#### **4. Deepen German – Irish political and parliamentary links**

- We consider the exchange of views between citizens' elected representatives to be a crucial part of our intensified bilateral relations. Work will be undertaken to facilitate reciprocal visits of the German-Irish Parliamentary Friendship Group in the Bundestag to Dublin and of Irish counterparts to Berlin.
- Furthermore, cross-party visits by young Irish politicians to Berlin will be organised and should take place in 2018 and 2020. Opportunities for increased cooperation between the youth wings of political parties will be explored during both visits.
- Visits by political Bundestag advisers to Dublin will be organised in the spring of 2019 and in the summer of 2020. The possibility of an exchange involving parliamentary officials of the Oireachtas and the Bundestag will be explored.

#### **5. Deepen people-to-people and educational exchanges between Ireland and Germany**

- "21st Century" PenPals – a new project will be jointly initiated by the German Embassy in Dublin and the Irish Embassy in Berlin. The project will involve the respective Embassies "adopting schools" in Ireland and Germany. In addition to engagement with the Embassies students in the schools will be paired with email pen pals in Germany. Six schools are expected to be involved in the initial project.
- The Irish Embassy in Berlin and the German Embassy in Dublin will undertake a joint mapping project on current second and third level educational links between Ireland and Germany and will develop proposals to revitalise these links.

#### **6. Promote the German language in Ireland**

- In order to underpin the efforts to further promote and develop the German language in Ireland, the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) supports six German as Foreign Language Lectureships ("Lektorat") at Irish Universities (Dublin City University, University College Dublin, Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork, University College in Galway, University of Limerick). To support this positive development DAAD will open an additional lectureship at the University of Maynooth in autumn 2019.
- DAAD considers establishing a new specialised lectureship ("Fachlektorat") at Trinity College Dublin (TCD) from autumn 2020 onwards. The principal aim is to further strengthen teaching and research on Germany's political system and its role within Europe at TCD's "Centre for European Studies".
- A German language network within the Irish civil service will be established on a pilot basis under the co-sponsorship of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the German Embassy in Dublin.
- Both sides will work together to enhance the implementation of Languages Connect – Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026 with respect to the German language in particular, as outlined in the review on German-Irish relations prepared by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.