

# connect

Welcome to the Embassy's summer 2018 Newsletter. It has been as busy as ever, with yet another wonderful St Patrick's Day, several Ministerial-level visits as well as numerous meetings between Norwegian and Irish officials.

It's not just the political contacts that are growing. Economic, academic, cultural and people to people contacts continue to strengthen. Norway – Ireland trade is now valued at €3.2 billion while Irish companies now employ 1,600 people in Norway.

The Embassy is delighted to see a continued rise in interest from Irish companies in the Norwegian marketplace. In May, one of Ireland's leading businessmen, [Martin Naughton's](#) was awarded the Oslo Business for Peace Award at Oslo City Hall in recognition of his entrepreneurial and peacebuilding work. In late June, I met with an almost 40 strong delegation from the [Irish Farmers Association](#) who were visiting Norway and Sweden to see first-hand the impact a hard border has on the agricultural community.

Along with many diplomatic colleagues, we again took part in the annual Oslo Pride highlighting our continued support for human rights, equality and diversity. We also celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement and supported an exciting range of cultural events.

I remain amazed at the depth of people to people contacts that exist particularly in the education field. There are some 400 graduates of the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland (RCSI) in Norway and I had the pleasure to speak at the RCSI's annual alumni event in Oslo last March. In April, I met with three Irish secondary teachers in Oslo for a week of exchanges with a local school under the EU's Erasmus+ programme.

And it's not just Oslo. If you travel as far west as you can in Norway, you will come to a beach on the island of Kinn where you will find an old stone church from the 1100s. Reputedly, one of the oldest churches in Norway, no one knows exactly who built it but local legend speaks of holy men from Ireland settling there at some point in the 900s. Whatever the truth, every year the people of Florø and surrounding communities come together to celebrate [Kinnaspelet](#), the "song by the great depths," an outdoor play performed by the locals of all ages about love and betrayal, doubt and faith, when the reformation came to Norway in 1537. Central to the story is the "play within the play" celebrating their Irish links and the story of St. Sunniva.

I was honoured to open this year's celebration and there is something special about knowing the Irish flag flies there every year. However, while it is a remote spot, it's not unfamiliar because standing in Western Norway, you could easily be standing on the west coast of Ireland. The features and geography are so similar, it's not surprising a group of Irish monks decided to set up home there. I would encourage anyone with an interest in Irish Norwegian links to visit the festival.

On behalf of the Embassy team, I want to thank you all for your cooperation and engagement so far this year and I look forward to seeing you all soon. Please share this newsletter as widely as you can.

Go raibh míle maith acu!

**Karl Gardner,**

**Ambassador,**

**July 2018**



1. Irish businessman Martin Naughton, 2018 Oslo Business for Peace Honoree



4. Lovely to see the Irish flag flying on an ancient Norwegian Church on Kinn, June 2018



2. Trevor Clancy, PhD, CSO of Oncolmmunity, one of the great speakers at the 2018 RCSI Alumni event



5. An honour to open the 2018 Kinnaspelet play which celebrates historical Irish Norwegian links



3. Delighted to meet teachers from Oaklands Community College, Edenderry who travelled to Oslo under the EU's Erasmus+ project to exchange ideas with Norwegian counterparts.



6. Some of the 40 person delegation from the Irish farmers Association who visited Norway and Sweden to see a hard border in action. Delighted to brief them on Irish/Norway/EU relations

## News from Home

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure & Reform, Paschal Donohoe T.D., published his Summer Economic Statement on 19 June. The underlying message of the Statement is generally positive, noting that (i) the recovery is ongoing and broad-based with all sectors (critically both domestic demand and export sectors) contributing to growth and (ii) unemployment has fallen to 5.8% with the level of employment now close to its highest level ever. GDP growth is forecast to be 5.6% in 2018 and 4% in 2019. However, with a challenging external environment, Ireland also faces a number of risks including in International trade and a rowing-back from the multi-lateral, rules-based global trading system and, Brexit.

In New York yesterday, the Taoiseach and Tánaiste formally **launched Ireland's bid to become a member of the UN Security Council for the 2021-22 period**. The UN has been a cornerstone of our global engagement since 1955. Ireland has been one of the strongest and most consistent supporters of the UN's work on peace and security, development and human rights. We have previously served as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 1962, 1981-82 and 2001-02. During those times, we provided strong and principled leadership on issues such as disarmament, human rights, development and the search for peace in the Middle East.

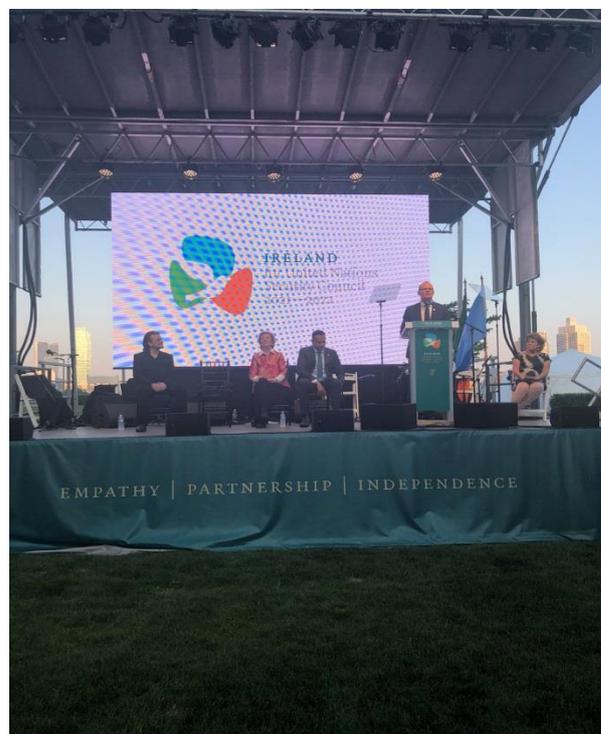


*The Taoiseach lays a wreath to the 88 Irish personnel who died on UN peacekeeping duty*

Ireland's support for the UN is perhaps best known to many people through the dedication and professionalism of Irish peacekeepers. For over five decades, Irish men and women have participated continuously and with great distinction in **UN peacekeeping missions** in Europe, Asia, Africa, Central America and the Middle East. Since our first deployment in 1958, eighty-seven members of the Defence Forces and one member of An Garda Síochana have made the ultimate sacrifice while serving on peacekeeping missions.

Today's crises do not carry passports. Ireland believes that multilateralism is the key to solving the global challenges that we face. Seeking election to the Security Council again for the period 2021-22 underpins our commitment to being an active, constructive and independent-minded member of the UN.

There are two seats available for then 2021-22 period and we are running against Norway and Canada to earn the right to sit on the Council. Check out [this video](#) for more on this story.



*Bono, former president Mary Robinson, Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar and Tánaiste Simon Coveney at the launch of Ireland's bid for a seat on the UN Security Council.*

## Ministerial Visits



**Ireland's Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Josepha Madigan T.D.** visited Oslo for St Patrick's Day. During the course of her visit, the Minister met with her Norwegian Culture Minister, Trine Skei Grande (*pictured*) and with the Irish community at the Embassy's St Patrick's Day Reception. She also had a chance to see first-hand the work being done by Irish people in the local cultural arena, meeting with, among others, companies such as [Expology](#), Annilese Miskimmon, Director of Opera at the [Norwegian National Opera and Ballet](#), and [Irrgrønn Productions](#).



**Ireland's Minister for European Affairs, Helen McEntee T.D.** visited Oslo in May at the invitation of the Norwegian Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Sjøreide (*pictured*). Minister McEntee also met with representatives of the Storting committee on Foreign Affairs, and gave a keynote address at the NHO on the impact of Brexit and the Future of Europe.

Ireland and Norway will continue to engage at the highest levels on these critically important issues. Sign up [here](#) if you are interested in regular Government of Ireland updates on Brexit.

## St Patrick's Day

Very well done to the volunteers of the [Norwegian Irish Society](#) for putting together another wonderful St Patrick's Day in Oslo. The 18<sup>th</sup> Oslo St. Patrick's Day Parade thrilled a huge crowd in central Oslo on a bright but bitterly cold day. Despite the conditions, we were kept warm by the talents of Parade Grand Marshals and Musicians [Anders Lillebo](#) & Olav Christer Rossebø, the dancers



from [Sound Irish Dance Factory](#), the Mná na hÉireann Choir and, later on the magic of officially the most talented Irishman in Norway – *Norway's Got Talent* star [Denis Stone](#).

[Bergen Irish](#) saw the biggest ever turnout for their St. Patrick's Day events with several hundred attending the [three events hosted on St Patrick's day](#). The day started in Sandviken, where Marianne Barron and Karyn Reynolds organised a family event in the kommune hall. Some 200 people turned out and the children learned about St Patrick, and made up Irish flags with William Wilson explaining the meaning behind the colours. The Bergen Parade takes place around Sandviken Park with the crowd led by Roger Fulton and his bagpipes. Afterwards, the amazing volunteers managed to get the big crowd fed and watered before the rugby match was shown on the big screen. In the evening, Irish and locals listened to Irish music and taking part in the Irish dancing. It is great to see such an active society over on the West coast - a big shout out to The Bergen Irish committee, the Bergen Rugby Klubb and all those who made the day such a success.



Further north, inside the Arctic Circle, there was a wonderful St. Patrick's Day celebration in Sortland with Irish music, food and drink at Kleiva Community House. Journalist Sverre Idar Lakså from [Bladet Vesterålen](#) tells us the guests enjoyed Irish stew, cured meats and Irish beer while listening to the tunes of the local band TooRaLoo and the Holand mixed choir. The artists performed both traditional and new songs with roots from Ireland, with both Norwegian and English texts. Thanks to Sverre for the pictures of the night and we hope that the local community continue to enjoy St Patrick's Day for many a year to come.



## **Mná na hÉireann Choir**



Bualadh bus mór to the Mná Choir who continue to go from strength to strength putting in great performances at St Patrick's Day events and elsewhere.

It may take something to top their on-stage performance with The Chieftains at the Cosmopolite Scene in Oslo in May but we're sure they have some big plans for the future.

## **Irrgrønn - Day of Ideas**

In early March, Irrgrønn Productions curated a 'Day of Ideas from Ireland', which opened with a screening of the Irish made documentary [The Farthest](#).

This was followed by a discussion with Irish writers Angela Nagle speaking about her book [Kill All Normies](#) on the origins and political manifestation of the alt-right, and Mark O'Connell discussing his recent book [To Be a Machine](#) which explores transhumanism – a movement pushing the limits of our biology through technology.



Angela also featured in a podcast with *Morgenbladet* which can be listened to [here](#).

## **Bloomsday**

Congratulations to John Fitzgerald and the [Oslo Bloomsday Society](#) for putting together the 9<sup>th</sup> Bloomsday showpiece on 16 June.

This year's event featured a captivating lecture from Dr Bartholomew Ryan of the University of Lisbon on Ulysses as 'The Epic of the Human Body' This was followed by a dramatic performance piece written and performed by Declan Gorman 'Epiphany' – based on Joyce's short story *The Dead*.



### **In the Name of Peace: John Hume in America**

Marking the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, and of the award of the 1998 Nobel Peace Prize to David Trimble and John Hume, the Embassy organised a screening of the film [In the Name of Peace: John Hume in America](#) in June. The documentary focusses on the contribution of John Hume to the Peace Process, in particular through his influence on senior American political figures including Presidents Carter and Clinton.

Following the screening Liv Tørres, Executive Director of the Nobel Peace Centre, moderated a very lively panel discussion with the film's director, Maurice Fitzpatrick; Annette Groth, journalist & NRK correspondent in UK & Ireland in the 1980s and 90s; Dr. Henrik Syse, member of the Norwegian Nobel Committee; and Sarah McGrath, Northern Ireland Director at the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Thanks to our friends in the Nobel Peace Centre, the 40-minute panel discussion is now available as a podcast and can be listened to [here](#).



### **Events Coming Up**

Sun, 26 August: The [Bergen Irish Society](#) will be hosting their [annual Summer BBQ](#).

Thurs, 30 August: The Norwegian Irish Business Association [annual Boat Trip](#).

Thurs, 13 Sept: Irish Night at [Øvrevoll Racecourse](#), Oslo

October: [Norwegian Irish Society](#) – Annual Hallowe'en Kids Party

You can find details of a range of Irish community groups in Norway and how to contact them on our [website](#). All these groups are voluntary and their success and growth depends on support from the community. I would encourage everyone to support them and their events.

### **Citizen Services**

Summer coincides with a very busy time for our **Passport Office**. If your passport is due to expire in the coming months, please apply in [good time](#). Adults can now [renew](#) their passport entirely online - no need to request a physical form, source passport photos or visit a witness! If you travelling this summer, check out [TravelWise](#), our free smartphone app designed to help Irish citizens stay safe and informed while travelling or living overseas.

At the request of many within the community, we have also been following the debate in Norway on dual citizenship. Minister McEntee raised the issue with her counterpart in Dublin in November. The Norwegian Government has promised to put a legislative proposal before the Storting "and it is anticipated that this is likely to occur during the autumn.

If you want more information on events the Embassy is supporting or event invites, follow us on [Facebook](#). Also please follow the Embassy ([@irlemboslo](#)) and the Ambassador ([@karlgardnerirl](#)) on Twitter where we post details of events and other interesting matters. We will also use Twitter as a communications tool in case of an emergency so it's worth a follow!

If you'd like to let us know of any events, activities, or if you have any ideas for future editions, please feel free to get in touch with us through email, social media, phone or post. Should you no longer wish to receive any such communications from the Embassy – please do let us know by return email.

Go raibh míle maith acu!