



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Global Ireland

Ireland's Diaspora Strategy 2020–2025

‘Our diaspora is one of Ireland’s greatest resources: through the contribution our people make to the nations they migrate to; through the bonds they forge with the peoples of those countries, our migrants have allowed Ireland to have global connections far beyond our size.’

PRESIDENT MICHAEL D. HIGGINS

Front cover image:

The lamp at Áras an Uachtaráin, a symbolic beacon, lighting the way for Irish emigrants and their descendants, welcoming them to their homeland.
Photo: Áras an Uachtaráin

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Global Ireland: Ireland's Diaspora Strategy 2020–2025

Today, the Irish diaspora is a diverse and dynamic global community connected to Ireland through ties of citizenship, heritage and affinity, retaining a strong sense of Irish identity that has remained vibrant over the ages.

Ireland takes a broad and inclusive definition of the Irish diaspora, one that reflects the rich diversity of our global community. The contemporary diaspora is composed of individuals of every background from communities in every part of the world. It includes Irish citizens living overseas, both those born in Ireland and those born abroad to Irish families, as well as the heritage diaspora, those many millions of people of Irish descent around the world.

It also embraces the reverse diaspora of people who have lived, studied or worked in Ireland before returning to their home countries as well as the affinity diaspora who hold a deep appreciation for our people, places and culture. Together, these groups form the Global Irish.

Recognising the need to sustain and renew a meaningful connection with our diaspora, the Government is adopting a new strategic approach to supporting our citizens overseas and diaspora networks internationally. In 2019, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade undertook wide-ranging public consultations on the future of Ireland's diaspora policy. This strategy has been shaped by contributions from hundreds of individuals and organisations both in Ireland and in Irish communities around the world.

This strategy reflects the evolving circumstances and needs of the Global Irish and sets out a number of guiding principles and initiatives to strengthen the relationship between Ireland and our diaspora.



Diaspora strategy public consultation
Photo: Fearghal Ó Maolagháin/DFA

Vision Statement & Strategic Objectives



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. **Our People:** Ireland will ensure that the welfare of the Irish abroad remains at the heart of our diaspora support.
2. **Our Values:** Ireland will work with our diaspora to promote our values abroad and celebrate the diversity of our diaspora.
3. **Our Prosperity:** Ireland will build mutually beneficial economic ties with the diaspora.
4. **Our Culture:** Ireland will support cultural expression among our diaspora.
5. **Our Influence:** Ireland will extend our global reach by connecting with the next generation.

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Our People

Ireland will ensure that the welfare of the Irish abroad remains at the heart of our diaspora support.



Luton Irish Forum
Photo: Luton Irish Forum

WELFARE

Care for the most vulnerable and marginalised Irish emigrants will remain the primary focus of the Government's Emigrant Support Programme. Irish welfare and community-based organisations play a vital role in providing support to Irish emigrants. We shall ensure that their needs will be monitored and assessed by our network of overseas missions so that welfare measures provided under the Emigrant Support Programme best assist them. We shall support steps to strengthen their resilience and build their sustainability as they face the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

We will:

- » Support measures and organisations that protect the dignity and wellbeing of Irish emigrants
- » Recognise the need to heal the relationship with our emigrants who left Ireland in crisis as a result of discrimination or as victims of institutional abuse
- » Assist business groups that can deliver mentoring support to community welfare organisations

PARTICIPATION OF OVERSEAS CITIZENS IN OUR DEMOCRACY

Greater engagement of our citizens outside the State in our democracy will strengthen the connection between the diaspora and Ireland. Diaspora participation in presidential elections will strengthen the connection between the Presidency, the highest office in the State, and the diaspora.

We will:

- » Hold a referendum on extending the franchise in presidential elections to citizens resident outside the State

PATHWAYS TO LEGAL MIGRATION

Underpinning our strong historical connections and recognising the deep personal and family connections we share, Ireland's aim is to be a voice for Irish citizens who wish to find pathways to legal migration.

We will:

- » Work to establish pathways to legal migration by Irish citizens to the US, continuing to support the E3 Visa Bill
- » Seek solutions for undocumented Irish citizens in the US to regularise their status

SUPPORTING THE IRISH LIVING ABROAD

Irish people have long travelled the globe and are now travelling more frequently than ever before. Our missions abroad provide an important safety net for our citizens resident overseas and are often a focal point for diaspora engagement. Consular services are available for Irish emigrants, even for those citizens who have decided to settle in another country. The diaspora strategy aims to complement Ireland's consular strategy, *TravelWise*, which provides the Government's framework for supporting Irish citizens travelling abroad.

We will:

- » Expand the honorary consul network in regions with significant diaspora communities and provide guidance to all honorary consuls on ways to engage the diaspora community
- » Support increased engagement between Ireland's network of overseas missions and the Irish abroad
- » Work with organisations that provide vital assistance to Irish citizens in distress abroad, in line with Ireland's consular strategy

DIGITAL CONNECTIONS

Our goal is to empower vibrant communities that are connected to each other and to Ireland. The Department of Foreign Affairs and our missions abroad have been active in developing diaspora engagement through the greater use of new communications technologies and social media channels. We aim to enhance our communications with the diaspora and support ways for the diaspora to connect with one another in the digital space.

We will:

- » Expand Ireland's digital outreach to connect with previously unengaged members of the diaspora
- » Develop a single digital platform providing content and resources for all diaspora groups
- » Update the online diaspora directory to raise visibility of organisations and activities and provide a communications resource for Irish community groups



"Arrival" by John Behan, UN Plaza, New York
Photo: Kim Haughton/DFA

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Our Values

Ireland will work with our diaspora to promote our values abroad and celebrate the diversity of our diaspora.



Sydney Queer Irish, Australia
Photo: Kate Rawlins



CELEBRATING OUR DIVERSE DIASPORA

Our diaspora is increasingly multicultural, in which Irish identity can be one element of an individual's broader cultural background. Our engagement with the diaspora must be responsive to their evolving needs and continue to promote an open and inclusive approach to diaspora engagement.

We will:

- » Recognise work done for Ireland, or for Irish emigrants, by people living abroad, through the Presidential Distinguished Service Awards for the Irish Abroad, and through the development of awards for recognising the achievements of our diaspora communities worldwide
- » Increase outreach to traditionally under-represented groups such as Irish Travellers and Irish of mixed heritage among the diaspora
- » Support our LGBTQI diaspora through initiatives designed to promote inclusiveness, tolerance and respect for diversity
- » Promote inclusive events for Irish diaspora communities that are welcoming of and respectful towards non-Irish family members or members of local communities that may wish to participate

WOMEN IN THE DIASPORA

Women and girls are powerful agents of change in their communities and help promote gender equality and women's empowerment across our diaspora.

We will:

- » Promote Brigid's Day (1 February) as an annual day of celebration of the talent and creativity of Irish women across many spheres of life
- » Support research to improve understanding of the role and contribution of women in the diaspora
- » Support the creation of women in business diaspora networks, aimed at fostering peer mentoring

IRELAND'S FOREIGN BIRTHS CITIZENS

Article 2 of the Constitution recognises Ireland's special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living throughout the world. We will make concerted efforts to connect with people born outside the island of Ireland who are entitled to Irish citizenship.

We will:

- » Support events aimed at connecting with Irish citizens born outside the island of Ireland to welcome them as part of Ireland's diaspora
- » Provide, as part of Foreign Births Registration, information on how to connect to Ireland and engage with diaspora communities across the world
- » Introduce ceremonies to welcome our new citizens receiving Foreign Birth Registration certificates in locations abroad



St Brigid's Day, London
Photo: Malcolm McNally/DFA



Under 12 participants at the All Britain Fleadh Cheoil, Kirkby Lonsdale, Cumbria

Photo: CCÉ / Ena Doocey



St Patrick's Day River Parade, San Antonio, Texas

Photo: DFA



SA Gaels GAA
Photo: SA Gaels

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Our Prosperity

Ireland will build mutually beneficial economic ties with the diaspora.



BUSINESS NETWORKS

Our diaspora holds invaluable expertise and insights into trade, industry and innovation across the globe and has long played a pivotal role in creating and deepening economic connections with Ireland. Our diaspora can provide strategic mentoring and guidance to Irish companies in pursuing trade and investment opportunities in overseas markets. Overseas linkages in the field of innovation can also contribute to Ireland's research and development sector.

We will:

- » Support the establishment of regional business forums in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the United States and Canada
- » Provide support designed to advance Ireland's trade and investment priorities
- » Support sector-specific Irish diaspora networks among research, development and innovation-related communities and Irish scientists and innovators abroad



Back for Business mentorship programme for returning entrepreneurs
Photo: Orla Murray/Coalesce



'Finnegans Wake' reading group, Austin, Texas
Photo: DFA

RETURNING TO IRELAND

Returning emigrants bring with them skills and knowledge gained abroad that can help develop both the national and local economies. The Government recognises the need to minimise the challenges faced by individuals and families returning to Ireland.

We will:

- » Monitor barriers to return and adopt measures to remove them where possible
- » Negotiate reciprocal agreements with countries that are home to significant Irish diaspora communities, such as double taxation and social security agreements
- » Improve the provision of information on returning to Ireland and provide information for Irish citizens living overseas, including disseminating information on skills needs
- » Expand mutual recognition and portability of academic or professional qualifications earned overseas

ALUMNI NETWORKS

Alumni connections to Irish higher education institutes can form a bond for diaspora members and international students who have studied here may seek to remain connected to Ireland. Ireland's international education strategy supports the creation of international alumni networks.

We will:

- » Support the development of global alumni associations and deepen engagement with existing associations
- » Appoint volunteer 'alumni ambassadors' to be advocates for Education in Ireland through sharing their own experiences in Ireland
- » Develop ties between alumni networks and Irish cultural, community and business networks

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Our Culture

Ireland will support cultural expression among our diaspora.



Pop-up Gaeltacht London
Photo: Conradh na Gaeilge London

ARTS

Irish culture is a fundamental component of our identity and the common thread that binds together Ireland's diaspora. The Government recognises that supporting Irish culture internationally plays a key role in connecting Ireland with our diaspora.

We will:

- » Support Irish cultural organisations, associations and festivals around the world that celebrate our shared culture and heritage
- » Work with our diaspora to share Irish culture more widely around the world
- » Embrace a diverse range of contemporary and traditional cultural and artistic expression

IRISH LANGUAGE

The Government is committed to the promotion and teaching of Irish abroad. Particular emphasis has been placed on supporting the teaching of Irish in third-level colleges around the world. Furthermore, diaspora communities are increasingly availing of digital learning resources.

We will:

- » Promote resources for learning Irish and raise awareness of groups that support Irish language learning overseas
- » Promote digital platforms from which the Irish language can be accessed from overseas
- » Seek opportunities to expand Irish-language learning in third-level institutions overseas

SPORT

Our rich and unique sporting heritage, coupled with the values of community participation, provides our diaspora with a connection to Ireland.

We will:

- » Promote awareness of Gaelic games abroad and support their development internationally through the Global Games Development Fund
- » Promote sporting events hosted in Ireland from diaspora-based teams
- » Support the engagement and status of women and girls in sport in the diaspora, in line with the National Strategy for Women and Girls
- » Highlight the participation of Irish teams and athletes in international sporting events to diaspora communities

IRISH HERITAGE AND LOCAL ENGAGEMENT

Article 2 of the Constitution recognises that the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage.

We will:

- » Work with local authorities to develop their own diaspora policies and support regional diaspora-focused initiatives building on the Global Irish Festival Series
- » Build ties to the Ulster-Scots diaspora, working with partners from Northern Ireland and around the world
- » Deepen our connection to people for whom Irish heritage is more distant, including the African-American and Hispanic communities in the US, and people of Irish ancestry in Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and other parts of the world
- » Increase awareness of publicly available genealogical resources as a gateway to individuals who are tracing their Irish ancestry through family ties



Edinburgh Irish Festival
Photo: Edinburgh Irish Festival

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Our Influence

Ireland will extend our global reach by connecting with the next generation.

REACHING THE NEXT GENERATION

Reaching out to the next generation of the Irish diaspora will be an ongoing commitment in order to build new diaspora connections.

We will:

- » Allocate resources for youth engagement initiatives
- » Promote study abroad programmes and working holiday agreements to provide educational and work opportunities in Ireland for members of the third- and fourth-generation Irish diaspora
- » Increase awareness of existing programmes designed to bring people of Irish heritage for short-term stays in Ireland for work or study
- » Convene a youth forum of young adults among the diaspora to discuss how to help them develop long-lasting ties to Ireland
- » Engage with philanthropic groups in establishing meaningful initiatives aimed at connecting the next generation of the diaspora to Ireland



GAA youth tournament, The Hague

Photo: Den Haag GAA

IRISH STUDIES

Irish studies programmes can play a vital role in developing an enhanced awareness of Irish life and culture among the next generation of the diaspora and in the development of the affinity diaspora. Irish studies can also provide new insights into the Irish emigrant experience in different parts of the world as well as improving awareness of unique identities among the diaspora.

Our priorities:

- » Promote teaching and research in the field of Irish studies worldwide
- » Support for the activities of third-level Irish studies centres abroad
- » Support associations and networks of Irish Studies and projects

INTER-DIASPORA RELATIONS

Building on Ireland's experience in engaging with its diaspora, Ireland will seek to deepen its understanding of diasporic community engagement and seek to share our experiences with other countries with large diaspora communities.

Our priorities:

- » Promote Ireland as a hub of expertise for diaspora engagement
- » Increase our outreach and engagement with other diaspora communities
- » Develop and renew ties with the affinity diaspora in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Caribbean and Latin America
- » Build upon Ireland's observer status at the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie to reach out to French-speaking diaspora communities in Africa, the Caribbean and North America



Promoting diaspora engagement
Photo: Fearghal Ó Maolagháin/DFA



Hong Kong Irish Festival
Photo: DFA

Strategy Implementation

Interdepartmental Committee on the Irish Abroad

The effective coordination of the implementation of this strategy across Government will be carried out through the Interdepartmental Committee on the Irish Abroad, chaired by the Minister for the Diaspora. The committee will monitor the implementation of this Strategy and address emerging issues which affect our diaspora.

Emigrant Support Programme

The Emigrant Support Programme, managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs, supports global Irish communities.

The Programme's primary purpose is to support the most vulnerable and marginalised Irish emigrants across the world. In addition, the Emigrant Support Programme supports the establishment of networks across the diaspora, such as groups and initiatives aimed at promoting ties to Ireland based on culture, sport, heritage, education and business.



Raised on Songs and Stories, Tyneside, Britain
Photo: Simone Rudolphi/Raised on Songs and Stories



GAA World Games
Photo: Sportsfile/GAA

We will:

- » Allocate resources for initiatives that aim to support women's empowerment and youth engagement among the diaspora
- » Introduce multiannual funding initiatives based on pilot projects
- » Apply a gender, youth and diversity lens to ESP applications
- » Encourage joint applications from organisations to foster greater cooperation and engagement across diaspora groups, including projects that are all-island in approach
- » Streamline ESP application and reporting procedures
- » Promote activities designed to strengthen governance and improved organisational effectiveness among groups receiving assistance under the ESP
- » Encourage the sharing of best practice in effective engagement by organisations working with diaspora communities



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