

# Review of Ireland's Foreign Policy and External Relations Public Consultation Document



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

## **Introduction**

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is undertaking a review of Ireland's foreign policy and external relations. The purpose of the review is to provide an updated statement of Ireland's foreign policy and to identify a series of recommendations for its conduct, with a view to ensuring that the Government is equipped with the right mix of policies and instruments to promote our values and interests in a complex and changing international environment. Ireland's current foreign policy goals and objectives are outlined in the Statement of Strategy for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (available at [www.dfat.ie](http://www.dfat.ie)).

The purpose of this consultation paper is to seek the views of interested stakeholders and members of the public. It provides some context for the review and sets out a number of issues for consideration. Individuals making a submission can address any issue related to Ireland's foreign policy which they consider to be of relevance, including any not explicitly raised in this document.

## **When and how should submissions be made?**

Submissions should be made in writing. They should be sent to the review team at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade by email to [ForeignPolicyReview@dfat.ie](mailto:ForeignPolicyReview@dfat.ie), or by post marked 'Foreign Policy Review' to the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade, 79-80 St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2, by 04 February 2014. If you have any queries concerning the review, please contact Gerard Keown at the same email address or, for telephone queries, at 01 408 2687.

The review team may release all or part of a submission, subject to data protection requirements. Please indicate if you are willing to authorise this release (indicate YES / NO) when making a submission. Please also indicate (YES/NO) if you are willing for your submission to be published on the website of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The provisions of the Freedom of Information Acts will apply to submissions received, which may therefore be released in total or in part. When making a submission, please indicate if there are aspects of your submission that you seek to have withheld, and the reasons for same (more information here: [www.foi.gov.ie](http://www.foi.gov.ie)).

## **Issues for Consultation**

Ireland's foreign policy and external relations are fundamental aspects of Government, providing the means to ensure our stability and security and contribute to our economic prosperity and well-being. The interests we pursue and the values we promote abroad are a statement of who we are as a people.

We have a long tradition of support for effective multilateralism, based on the UN; the promotion of human rights, including through our current membership of the UN Human Rights Council; advocacy for disarmament and arms control; the fight against hunger and poverty and our support for international development; our contribution to UN-mandated peace support operations and commitment to global conflict resolution efforts. These are core elements of our foreign policy.

Given the importance of the global economy to our economic growth and prosperity, the promotion of trade, tourism and investment are essential functions of our foreign relations.

The international system is experiencing considerable change, with both economic and political power and influence shifting from the west to the east and to the south. The increasing influence of Asian, Latin American and African countries is reshaping the way the world works. The structures of international governance such as the UN, WTO and other universal or rules-based membership bodies are being increasingly complemented by groups of countries cooperating to shape the global agenda, in formats such as the G8 and G20, or on an informal and ad hoc basis. The global financial crisis has accelerated these trends.

Following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, which had significant implications for the way in which EU foreign policy is conducted, the European Union is an increasingly important global actor in its own right.

In addition to these changes, a global economy driven by the accelerating pace of technological advances; security threats posed by non-state actors operating across borders; and the emergence of individuals and networks of citizens as global actors are also factors driving change.

While many of today's challenges, including hunger, population growth, climate change, emerging diseases and migration, have particular negative impacts in impoverished societies, they also impact more developed countries, including Ireland. The international community has a responsibility to respond effectively to these global threats.

These changes will have significant and lasting implications for the international context in which Ireland operates. They represent both challenges and opportunities. We must ensure that we have the right mix of policies and instruments to enable us to meet the challenges and benefit from the opportunities of our international engagement.

## **Promoting our Values and Interests**

- How should Ireland's values and interests be promoted through its foreign policy?
- As a small state with limited resources and influence, on which international issues should Ireland focus?
- How should Ireland respond to changes in the international system associated with the emergence of new global powers?
- Our foreign policy promotes a clear image of Ireland abroad. How can we build on this to pursue a broad range of political, economic and cultural objectives?

## **The European Union**

### **A 'Whole of Government' approach**

Membership of the European Union is fundamental to our national interests, both in foreign policy and domestic terms. Ireland's most recent EU Presidency in the first half of 2013 brought this to the fore, and was widely acknowledged as very successful, with a list of tangible achievements designed to foster stability, jobs and growth in the EU. The Government is now taking steps to consolidate and capitalise on the goodwill and policy expertise generated by this success to strengthen and deepen the effectiveness of our operation at EU level.

Crucially, Ireland's economic interests are advanced through our EU and euro area membership. This is essential to our economic recovery objectives and allows us to contribute to, and benefit from, efforts to support budgetary and economic stability, and to promote economic growth, both in Ireland and in the EU overall.

For the purpose of this review, it is not proposed to examine Ireland's EU Policy in detail, given that our engagement with the European Union is wider than the foreign policy sphere and is at the core of the day-to-day business of all Government Departments. Instead, the focus will be on the contribution of our foreign policy and external relations, and the work of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade across Government, to the promotion of Ireland's interests within the European Union, on the one hand, and to ensuring that Europe's voice is stronger at a global level, on the other.

Ireland's foreign policy has been hugely influenced by our engagement in the EU since joining in 1973. Our EU membership influences our relations with third countries, for example in shaping trade policies with the US, Canada and other partners. In turn, our relations with those countries also strengthen our voice at the EU table.

Ireland's largest diplomatic mission abroad, the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU in Brussels, brings together officials from almost every Government Department with the objective of representing and advancing Ireland's interests through the EU's Council of

Ministers, and in relations with the EU Institutions. Our Embassies in EU capitals are an essential part of this process, working to further bilateral relations with EU Member States, build alliances, inform our policy decisions and communicate Ireland's positions.

## **EU External Relations**

With 28 countries speaking as one, Europe's voice is stronger in the world and this allows the European Union to speak with authority at a global level. A specific aspect of our EU engagement that falls within the scope of this review relates to the EU's external relations. Ireland will retain a strong voice in the development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), consistent with our foreign policy traditions and interests. We will also remain engaged in shaping the EU's response to global issues such as climate change, energy issues and international development policy, which draw on a mixture of internal and external policy areas.

The extent that we are able to promote a strong image of ourselves through our foreign policy outside the EU will contribute to our ability to pursue our objectives within it. The creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) has brought improvements to the effectiveness of the EU's external action. Ireland, with our fellow EU Member States, will continue to support the development of the EEAS. Key issues, such as working with Irish businesses, securing foreign investment in Ireland, providing assistance to Irish citizens, protecting Irish values and interests and promoting a positive image of Ireland abroad to all intents and purposes remain a matter of national competence.

- How can we contribute to ensuring that the European Union successfully defends and promotes our global interests?
- How do we make best use of Ireland's mission network to promote our interests in the EU?
- How do we ensure a distinctive Irish voice is reflected in the EU's foreign policy?

## The Global Context and the UN

As a small state and an internationally trading economy, Ireland's interests can be best ensured by a stable and secure global environment, based on the rule of law governing cooperation between states in pursuit of common challenges. While this has always been a cornerstone of Irish foreign policy, it is also essential to our economic growth and development.

Building on our policy of military neutrality and our support for the central role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security, Ireland continues to make an active contribution to international crisis management operations authorised by the UN. The Defence Forces have gained international recognition for the important role that they have played in peacekeeping operations for over fifty years.

The Department of Defence is currently leading a consultation process which will lead to the publication of a White Paper on Defence in 2014, which will aim, inter alia, to ensure that the Defence Forces maintain these high standards over the next ten years. In addition, Ireland is increasingly contributing to civilian crisis management missions, which seek to build the capacity of local institutions to provide security for their citizens in the areas of policing, justice, and the rule of law.

- How can Ireland contribute to a strong and resilient, rules-based global system, based on the UN?
- The international community is confronted with a growing range of complex and inter-linked global issues which require concerted international action. How can Ireland contribute to international efforts to address such challenges?

## **Economic Diplomacy and Building Bilateral Relationships**

A key aspect of our foreign policy is the promotion and development of our trade, tourism and investment, in keeping with the Government's Trade, Tourism and Investment Strategy, *Trading and Investing in a Smart Economy*. Ireland's Embassies, working with the State Agencies, are strongly focussed on implementing this strategy.

The Embassy network is active on a daily basis identifying export and inward investment opportunities, helping companies build contact networks, and organising trade-focused visits in coordination with the State Agencies. They are also engaged in lobbying for market access and addressing regulatory obstacles, helping to negotiate international agreements which support economic and trade relations, and promoting Ireland as a destination for tourism and for study. Our Embassies are uniquely placed to influence decisions that affect Ireland by presenting clear information to key opinion-formers on Ireland's strategy for economic recovery.

Economic messaging is a core activity of the Embassy network, as are public and cultural diplomacy events to raise the positive profile of Ireland, including during the St Patrick's Day period, which offers an unparalleled opportunity to promote Ireland to audiences worldwide.

While we will continue to maintain a strong and active multilateral diplomacy, based around the UN, we will supplement this with an equally active approach to strengthening existing bilateral relationships and to building new ones.

Strong relationships with key partners are essential to the achievement of Government objectives and to the growth of our trade, tourism and investment. The value of investing in key relationships has been evident in the Government's policy within the EU and in maintaining external support for the peace process in Northern Ireland. Building and sustaining broad-based relationships is particularly important in the case of countries where commercial decisions may be taken at a political level.



- How can our foreign policy and economic diplomacy support economic development and growth?
- How can our Embassy network continue to respond to the needs of business?
- How can we ensure key bilateral relationships are strong and resilient so that we can secure the best advantages for Ireland abroad?
- Where should we focus our efforts and resources in the period ahead?

## International Development

The fight against poverty and hunger is a central priority of our foreign policy. Ireland has maintained its solidarity with developing countries, even in these difficult times. Our new Policy for International Development – *One World, One Future* – adopted in May 2013 renews that commitment and sets out the vision, goals and priorities for our engagement on international development.

- How best might Ireland deliver on the commitments in *One World, One Future* through a Whole of Government approach?
- How can a commitment to international development be better reflected across Ireland's foreign policy?
- How can Ireland contribute effectively to the negotiations for a new integrated framework for global development post-2015?

## Northern Ireland

The promotion of further reconciliation on the island of Ireland and the maintenance of peace and stability in Northern Ireland are essential to the wellbeing of our people, to the development of our economy and to the projection of our international image.

- How can we continue to contribute to the promotion of further reconciliation and the maintenance of peace on the island of Ireland?
- We have a unique experience of building and sustaining peace on this island. How can this experience be drawn upon in our foreign policy?

## Diaspora Engagement

Our people abroad have made a remarkable contribution to this country's development. Through the Emigrant Support Programme, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade provides funding to not-for-profit organisations and projects that support Irish communities overseas, particularly those that address the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable of our emigrants.

Our engagement with the Irish Diaspora offers a strategic advantage in multiple areas, from the trade and job creation, to political engagement, to promotion of culture and the arts. The Global Irish Network offers a framework for the most senior Irish and Irish-connected individuals overseas to engage in these and other areas. At the third Global Irish Economic Forum, on 4-5 October 2013, the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade announced that the Department will undertake an overall review of its strategy for engaging with the Irish Diaspora. This review will be complementary to the Foreign Policy Review.

- How should Ireland's engagement with the Diaspora be arranged? In which areas is there greatest potential to work in partnership with members of the Diaspora?

## Services for Irish Citizens

Ireland's Embassies and Consulates are engaged on a daily basis in providing assistance to citizens, sometimes in difficult or tragic circumstances. In 2012, the Department assisted nearly 1,500 Irish citizens abroad following serious consular emergencies, including deaths, arrests, accidents, child abductions and hospitalisations. Consular assistance was provided to Irish citizens in virtually every country in the world, including many countries in which there is no Irish Embassy.

In the same period, the Department issued 631,939 passports, provided more than 2,500 civil letters of freedom to Irish citizens getting married abroad, processed over 8,000 applications for Irish citizenship through Foreign Births Registration, and authenticated more than 50,000 Irish documents, such as company documents, educational certificates, and legal documents.

- What is the optimum level of services that should be provided to citizens by Irish embassies and consulates abroad?

## Promoting a Positive Image of Ireland

In today's crowded global communications market, how we differentiate ourselves from our competitors is a key strategic objective. Our foreign policy should be greater than the sum of its parts, to project a strong, coherent and identifiable image of Ireland, based on our values, interests and culture, which can be used to pursue multiple objectives.

- How can our foreign policy contribute to a clear and identifiable image of Ireland abroad?



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