



Irish Abroad Unit Department of Foreign Affairs

27 January 2009

The Irish Constitution

Article 2 of the Constitution states:

“...the Irish Nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage.”

Size of the Diaspora

- Global spread of Diaspora is very considerable, for a small nation practically unparalleled
- Precise number of Irish citizens resident around the world is not known, and is difficult to estimate
- Maximally interpreted, the Diaspora may contain as many as 80 million people, over fourteen times the population of the island of Ireland itself (6.1 million in 2007)

Diaspora's Contribution to Ireland

- Remittances
- Peace Process
- Promoting Ireland and Irish interests overseas

Programme for Prosperity and Fairness 2000

The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness 2000 reached out to our Diaspora.

It included a commitment to “address the special needs of those Irish emigrants abroad who are particularly marginalised or at greatest risk of exclusion.”

Irish Abroad Unit Background

- Task Force Report on Emigrants, August 2002
- Establishment of the Irish Abroad Unit, July 2004
- Value for Money and Policy Review, July 2007

Irish Abroad Unit Mandate

The Irish Abroad Unit manages Government relations with the Irish Diaspora and Irish Community organisations abroad.

Working closely with our Embassies and Consulates, IAU provides funding and support to Irish Community organisations in a range of countries.

Welfare

Addressing the welfare needs of our overseas communities, in particular the elderly and vulnerable, is a key priority of the programme:

- Outreach services – elderly and isolated
- Information services – helping people access their statutory welfare entitlements
- Counselling services - tackling alcoholism, mental illness and domestic violence
- Services for the homeless
- Services for returning emigrants

Case Study

The London Irish Centre

- Largest and oldest Irish Centre in London
- Frontline welfare services include: an elderly outreach programme; advisory and information services; and targeted support for those experiencing serious problems, such as alcoholism, mental illness and domestic violence
- Hosts offices of ICPO, the Irish Elders Advice Network and the London Irish Survivors Outreach Workers
- Government funding totalling over €2.5 million since 2004 enabling the centre to develop its services

Community and Heritage

Task Force Report:

‘The provision of financial assistance towards the cost of Irish community, cultural and sporting activities abroad where these help people to express the Irish dimension of their identity.’

- Irish Cultural Centres and Community Organisations
- GAA Development Programmes in Britain and the US
- Irish Music and Dance
- Oral History Projects
- Irish Language

Case Study

San Francisco GAA Community Centre

- GAA - focal point for Irish people abroad, particularly in the US
- San Francisco GAA Community Centre - a flagship community project
- A modern, multipurpose centre, providing a range of heritage and community programmes to the Bay Area's Irish population
- Matched funding redevelopment - \$800,000 sourced through local community fundraising and \$500,000 Government grant

2008 Grants

Geographic Range

• 134 in Britain	€10,222,665
• 28 in US	€3,524,690
• 9 in Ireland	€1,038,541
• 7 in Canada	€145,625
• 5 in Australia	€162,882
• 4 in Southern Africa	€56,425
• 2 in Argentina	€26,800
• 1 in China	€3,000

The Programme in Britain

As noted in Task Force Report:

- Largest Irish born population outside of Ireland
- Socio-economically disadvantaged
- Poor health profile
- Significant elderly population

Government funding for emigrant services in Britain since 1984 targeted at addressing key welfare needs

Britain – 2008

Total: €10.22 Million

• Elderly	€3,895,355	[38.10%]
• Welfare	€3,437,171	[33.62%]
• Capital	€1,308,534	[12.80%]
• Heritage	€800,468	[7.83%]
• Second Line	€781,268	[7.64%]

The Programme in the US

- Largest number of Irish emigrants outside of Britain
- Irish American community has huge political influence- JFK, Reagan, Clinton, and now O'bama!
- Undocumented Irish
- Very considerable second and third generation Irish community
- Funding focused on Irish Immigration Centres and on community development projects

USA - 2008

Total: €3.5 Million

Future of the Emigrant Support Programme

- Welfare to remain at the core of the programme as long as need persists
- Expansion of heritage and community aspects of programme
- Strategic capital projects
- Extended geographic range
- Exploring ways of improving our audit, evaluation and monitoring structures
- Development of comprehensive Diaspora Strategy-Networks, use of internet, genealogy, etc.