



Crosscare Migrant Project

Submission for the new
Diaspora Policy 2020-2025

July 2019

Contents

[Part I](#)

Introduction 3

Accessible support 4

Targeted support 4

More joined up/comprehensive support 5

More strategic support/next generation 6

[Part II](#)

Supporting the Diaspora 6

Connecting with the Diaspora 7

Facilitating Diaspora Engagement 9

Recognising the Diaspora 12

Evolving Diaspora Policy 13

Conclusion & Recommendations summary 15

Introduction

Crosscare Migrant Project is the only Irish based non-government organisation with the specific remit of working with both intending and returning Irish emigrants, as well as immigrants in Ireland. We are funded by the Emigrant Support Programme under the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and have been working with Irish emigrants since the 1950s as a part of social support actions by the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on the new Irish Diaspora Strategy.

The main focus of our direct information and advocacy work supports returning Irish emigrants who are marginalised or at risk. We also provide information and support to intending emigrants both directly and as part of our online resources. We aim to provide a quality information and advocacy service to enable people involved in a migration experience, especially those in vulnerable circumstances, to make informed choices and access their rights. We also aim, through our engagement with the people who use our service and in collaboration with others, to effect positive change in migration related policy.

As part of this work, we supported the introduction of the Government's first Diaspora Policy with a number of our recommendations included in the policy. We are encouraged by the developments since the introduction of the policy and the positive impact it has already had on the Irish Diaspora around the world, and in supporting emigrants to return to Ireland. We welcome in particular the development of the Global Irish section in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the appointment and sustainment of the role of the Minister for the Diaspora and International Development, the formation of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Irish Abroad, and the implementation of the recommendations from the Indecon Report.

We believe that for the next Diaspora Policy to progress this achievement to date, there is a need for the policy to be responsive to emerging needs throughout its lifetime and beyond. This submission addresses key areas identified in the Review of the Diaspora Policy that are relevant to the work of Crosscare Migrant Project for inclusion in the new Diaspora Policy.

Accessible support

The Emigrant Support Programme (ESP) is a significant cornerstone of the Irish government's commitment to Ireland's Diaspora. Faster decision making procedures for smaller ESP grants and investment in local projects via embassies and consulates are welcome changes that have been introduced. The continued engagement and consultation with groups interested in the ESP grants is important in establishing need and demand for services, projects and supports. Multiannual funding remains an important matter for ESP groups which can enhance their capacity for long term planning and quality of service delivery.

Recommendations

- Deliver on the plan to introduce multiannual funding
- Facilitate collaboration between organisations
- Promote applications to the Emigrant Support Programme by smaller groups, by
 - developing a secondary shorter application form
 - reducing reporting requirements for smaller groups/ first time applicants
 - developing a peer-mentor programme by larger ESP organisations

Targeted support

Crosscare Migrant Project is one of the few ESP funded organisations based in Ireland providing and prioritising welfare based support to emigrants leaving and returning to Ireland. With a strong track record in quality service provision and achieving positive outcomes for our target group, our service will continue to align with the objectives of the Diaspora Policy and the national context. Through our support service, networking role and policy work, we raise awareness of emerging needs for emigrants and generate recommendations to address barriers. Based on this work, we recognise the importance of the prioritisation of welfare and its inclusion within the Diaspora Policy.

Recommendations

- Continue prioritisation of welfare needs and inclusion of the most vulnerable Irish individuals and communities abroad
- Retain the Interdepartmental Committee on the Irish Abroad to identify emerging needs and trends, whilst maintaining departmental responsibilities to address barriers as they arise

- Extend opportunities for organisations to engage with the Interdepartmental Committee and increase the transparency of the work of the Committee through published reports (*see section on 'Connecting with the Diaspora' regarding our proposals for the further development of the IDC*)
- Expand mental health supports for returned emigrants
- Formally recognise and develop awareness and support of diverse Irish communities including naturalised Irish citizens, Black, Asian and Traveller Irish, as under-represented Diaspora groups both emigrating from and returning to Ireland

More joined up/comprehensive support

Connections and communications between Diaspora organisations have developed significantly throughout the course of the first policy - through the Global Irish Civic Forum and initiatives such as our Irish Abroad Networking Project. Connections between government departments have been achieved through the Interdepartmental Committee. Better awareness has been achieved across governmental departments on Diaspora engagement, resulting in a collective drive to support the Diaspora policy.

The Diaspora Affairs budget focus to support strategic Diaspora projects is an important development which will serve to inform further funding and development on strategic investment for projects that support other Government Strategies.

Recommendations

- Promote awareness and ownership of the new Diaspora Policy within Irish Diaspora communities
- Align the Diaspora Policy with existing and planned national Government strategies that are relevant to both Irish abroad and returning emigrants in order to continue broader reach and of awareness of Diaspora engagement. The key strategy is Global Ireland 2020-2025 and other relevant strategies such as the HSE strategy to reduce suicide, 'Connecting for Life' 2015-2020

More strategic support/next generation

Recognition of changing patterns of migration and the demographics of Ireland's traditional emigration and Diaspora locations has progressed rapidly since the first strategy. Development of the global cultural infrastructure has inspired much wider projects and supports that reach a more diverse range of Irish communities. It is essential that Ireland's Diaspora engagement is inclusive and responsive to changing needs.

Recommendations

- Promote funding opportunities for new and emerging initiatives developed by diverse communities, inclusive of Irish Travellers, Naturalised Irish citizens, Afro and Asian-Irish, LGBTQI, people with disabilities, women, younger people, dual citizens, second and subsequent generations, and other under represented groups
- Foster targeted engagement and expand support available to diverse Diaspora groups
- Promote an inclusive approach to diverse Diaspora groups by established ESP funded organisations

Supporting the Diaspora

Multiannual funding

The Emigrant Support Programme supports over 170 organisations, and their sustained services indicate the strong continued need within the Diaspora communities abroad. These organisations are vital to the development, implementation and evolution of the new Diaspora Strategy and will need continued support from the government to maintain quality services. The non-governmental sector dependency on annual funding sources can be restrictive and resource-heavy. The benefits of the introduction of multiannual funding would reduce time and resource expenditure on annual applications, and facilitate long-term planning.

Recommendation

- Deliver on the plan to introduce further multiannual funding arrangements for organisations. This will ensure quality and stability for organisations and reduce the resources and time required for annual applications

Pre-departure information

Crosscare Migrant Project researches, collects and provides up-to-date information on travelling abroad. We maintain a global directory of organisations and services that can provide further assistance or advice to intending emigrants before and after their departure. We will continue to provide this information and monitor trends in terms of countries of destinations and requested information. We will continue to work in partnership with emigrant support groups to disseminate information, research and policy developments with emigrants abroad. Progress made by the Department on the development of supports such 'Travel Wise' and the 'Global Directory' have proved very helpful for intending emigrants and we continue to refer clients to these resources. It is envisaged that emigration, although currently at a lower rate than previous years, will continue to be a path chosen by Irish citizens, such as our emigration history, and may increase with the upturn of economies around the world.

Recommendation

- Continue supporting and developing pre-departure information resources and monitor through research in the area to identify trends and predict future needs

[Connecting with the Diaspora](#)

Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC) on the Irish Abroad

Work achieved to date by the Committee has been evident in the outcomes announced by the Chair of the Committee; the Minister for Diaspora Affairs and International Development. Crosscare Migrant Project had the opportunity to make a submission and present to the Committee in 2016. We have seen the benefit of this work, resulting in policy actions to address and raise awareness of barriers faced by returning emigrants.

The success of the IDC as a structure to implement the recommendations of the Indecon Report suggests it has a continuing role to play. As the needs of the Diaspora evolve, the needs of returning emigrants too will develop and change.

While many of the barriers identified in the Indecon Report have been addressed, at different levels, new ones will emerge. This is a natural change reflective of both the ever-evolving nature of the Diaspora and our own understanding and appreciation of the needs of members of the Diaspora hoping to return home.

The IDC has the potential to become a dynamic part of the next Diaspora strategy - as both a vehicle to address new and future barriers, especially those impacting on emigrants returning home in crisis or need, and as a structure to support and foster progressive developments in Diaspora support, such as business and cultural entrepreneurship.

Recommendations

- We propose that the IDC is retained and developed along 3 thematic lines – welfare (including families’ needs), business (including entrepreneur schemes) and culture & heritage (including sport)
 - Each thematic area would have representatives from relevant government departments and State bodies
 - Consideration should be given to including relevant non-State actors as either members or consultants
 - The IDC sub-committees should have annual reviews and public reports on progress
 - The sub-committees should have a remit to continuously re-evaluate the most relevant and necessary areas of work to concentrate on so they continue to address live issues and be relevant to the needs of the Diaspora

All-Ireland Engagement

With Brexit pending and an expected long-term transition period for Northern Ireland, engagement with emigrants, emigrant support groups and relevant stakeholders in Northern Ireland is significantly important for the Irish government and the Diaspora Strategy. Ireland must recognise the needs of Irish emigrants returning North and South of the border, and the constant cross-border migration of Irish and Northern Irish emigrants. Ireland must work collaboratively with services and governmental bodies north and south of the border to prepare for and respond to the needs of emigrants.

Recommendation

- Develop links with established non-governmental and governmental support services in Northern Ireland, and formalise supports available to Irish emigrants returning to Northern Ireland or border regions

Communication and Information

Building on the promotion and success of the first Diaspora policy, it is important to continue connecting with Ireland's diaspora and promote the goals of the new Diaspora Policy. Under the remit of the previous policy, we established a specific networking role to harness and enhance interorganisational communication and learning across ESP funded groups globally. This Irish Abroad Networking project is now in its fourth year of operation and continues to develop strong links with Irish emigrant groups worldwide, generating shared knowledge and learning, providing capacity building support, and initiating collaborative projects. It is a model that could be expanded upon to foster greater engagement between Ireland and our Diaspora, acting as point of connection and a two-way communication channel for a broad range of Diaspora communities.

Recommendation

- Explore and develop appropriate communication modes to connect and engage with diverse Irish emigrant groups, from younger to older age groups, as part of the response to changing demographics of Irish emigrants and Diaspora

Facilitating Diaspora Engagement

Partnerships

Ireland is unique in providing welfare and community based support to its citizens abroad through the Emigrant Support Programme (ESP). The development of an on-line Global Irish Diaspora Directory is a positive first step in raising awareness of the range of these Irish support organisations around the world, both amongst individuals and the organisations themselves.

Promoting partnerships among Irish emigrant support organisations is another key part of ensuring Irish people are supported throughout their Diaspora journey. Sharing best practices and learning is essential to building the capacity of these groups to respond to emerging and complex needs. To this end (as referenced above), since 2015 we have had a dedicated 'Irish Abroad Networking Officer' supporting our ESP funded partners by providing capacity building training in our areas of expertise, developing collaborative initiatives, facilitating mutually beneficial introductions, and information sharing. Initially a one-year pilot project, this role has now become an integral part of how we develop relationships with

Irish emigrant organisations abroad and has the potential to act as a model to facilitate further engagement between groups working to support Ireland's Diaspora across the world.

Recommendations

- Promote the Global Irish Diaspora Directory, especially amongst welfare, community, sporting, cultural and business groups as a way to initiate inter-agency contact
- Explore how existing initiatives such as the Irish Abroad Networking Project can be developed to facilitate broader Diaspora engagement, including the sharing of best practices and increase collaboration amongst groups working to support our Diaspora
- Promote cross-sector collaboration between welfare, sport, culture and business focused Irish emigrant groups

Global Irish Civic Forum

The two Global Irish Civic forums provided a platform for representatives of Irish emigrant groups to connect and learn from one another. These events offered the chance to identify areas of overlap and the opportunity to establish mutually beneficial partnerships.

Recommendations

- Commit to hosting a Global Irish Civic Forum every 2 to 3 years
- Establish smaller regular 'Regional Forums' to allow for engagement of a broader range of groups modelled on local initiatives, such as 'Le Cheile' by the Irish Consulate in Sydney

Returning Home

The cumulative work over the past few years in the area of supporting emigrants to return and settle in Ireland by addressing the barriers identified during the recent wave of return migration has been significant and encouraging. The work of emigrant support groups, Irish citizens and emigrants, NGOs, political representatives, governmental departments and investment from the Department of Foreign Affairs have been instrumental in the successful development and implementation of numerous policies to remove barriers to returning emigrants. Some of these are areas that Crosscare Migrant Project has

advocated for over a number of years in the areas of access to homeless services; social protection; school placements; fee free third level education; and mental health supports.

While many steps have been taken to address the identified barriers, and work is in progress to implement the recommendations of the Indecon report (2017), it is important that the new Diaspora Policy has the capacity and remit to recognise and respond to future needs of Irish emigrants returning to Ireland. With political developments such as the UK's exit from the EU, and reported increase in deportations from Australia and the USA, implications may be anticipated for future returning emigrants that will require responses and support from the Irish government.

A major part of our service concentrates on supporting people returning to Ireland in unplanned or crisis circumstances. One of the main problems that people are increasingly experiencing difficulties with is access to housing and homeless service supports, in the midst of a national housing and homeless crisis. Learning from our research since the first diaspora policy identifies at-risk groups of Irish emigrants who require supportive policy responses and service provision including: deportees, former prisoners, people fleeing conflict zones, victims of domestic violence, lone parents, people who are homeless, people with mental health needs, people who are isolated, and naturalised Irish citizens.

Recommendations

- Formalise recognition of marginalised returning emigrants in cross-departmental policy and procedures engaging with them on return to Ireland
- Continue commitment to involving emigrants in the Diaspora policy development and implementation through public consultations and engagement with organisations representing returning and returned emigrants
- Continue commitment to addressing the needs of returning emigrants to ease their return and resettlement in Ireland

Diaspora Studies

Crosscare Migrant Project has welcomed delegations of interested parties from abroad who were interested in the services funded by the Emigrant Support Programme. These meetings offered opportunities to share experiences of service provision and knowledge exchange on the shared objectives of supporting emigrants.

Recommendations

- Continue inclusion of organisations in receiving delegations and sharing their experience on Diaspora engagement
- Introduce funding opportunities for organisations to engage in research with Diaspora communities and expand the knowledge on contemporary Irish Diaspora

Recognising the Diaspora

Voting rights

We acknowledge and welcome the government's plan to hold the referendum to offer voting rights to emigrants abroad for Presidential votes. It is an important development in the recognition of Irish emigrants keeping a strong tie and interest in their home country. It recognises the call from many Irish emigrants and campaign groups of the importance of the Diaspora to Ireland, and it formalises this connection by including them in the presidential vote from abroad.

This however is only part of a broader call. There are a number of factors driving the interest and movement for parliamentary voting rights for Irish emigrants. The recognition of growing disenfranchisement of citizens in the European Union who exercise their right to free movement (European Commission, 2014); the broader global spread of Irish emigrants who wish to return to Ireland eventually, having been economically forced to emigrate during the recession; the anomalous loss of the right to vote in parliamentary elections for Irish citizens living abroad for more than 18 months and the absence of the option to vote from abroad. Ireland is surprisingly only one in three EU countries that does not afford citizens the right to parliamentary voting whilst living abroad over 18 months.

Concerns arise from Irish citizens abroad who feel they have important contributions to make in Ireland and Irish politics, but are excluded from having a right to vote, despite being recognised as important citizens to the country and being encouraged to return to help develop our economy. People are more connected than ever with technological advances in communication which allows greater interconnectedness between citizens and their home countries. More and more people are becoming 'global citizens', moving between countries in an ever-expanding global labour and trade market, for whom maintaining a centreground in their home country is important throughout their lifetime.

Parliamentary voting rights are therefore becoming a more important focus among emigrants who seek

to maintain their connection and continued citizen rights pending their return to Ireland and throughout their lifetime.

Recommendations

- Commit to the alignment of citizen rights with broader European Union members' citizen rights to vote in Irish parliamentary elections by retaining this right for a longer period after leaving Ireland
- Initiate a national discussion on the introduction of long-term parliamentary voting rights for Irish citizens living and voting from abroad, and to develop ways to introduce next steps

Evolving Diaspora Policy

Research to Better Understand the Diaspora and their Needs

Academically funded research in the area of contemporary Irish migration has been limited to date. Academic institutions have produced important research in the areas of emigration during the recession (Emigre Report, UCC), rural return and return experiences of children (Ni Laoire, 2007, 2013), emigration from Northern Ireland (Devlin, 2015), and changing Irish migration patterns (Gilmartin, 2012, 2015).

Diaspora engagement, responses to emerging needs and policy development are all reliant on available national statistical data to inform, predict and strategise. Business and trade are highly dependent on this data for forecasting and investment. Irish migrational data is still very limited in what is recorded and how reliable statistics can be extracted on citizens emigrating or returning on a long-term basis as opposed to holidaying. The absence of reliable data and reliable alternative approaches are inhibiting research on contemporary Irish migration.

Academics are reliant on conducting in-depth qualitative research such as oral histories, interviews, random sampling surveys based on electoral datasets, and a host of alternative datasets such as public service card registration and CSO data on inward and outward migration of Irish nationals. Most notably, the revision of the CSO's migration statistics for the 2012-2016 period following the 2016 Census, indicates a governmental need for new and more accurate measures for monitoring and reporting of Irish migrational statistics. Whilst steps forward have been taken to encourage Diaspora engagement on platforms such as the Global Irish hub and newsletter, it will not be possible to operate efficiently and

effectively across all sectors engaged with the Diaspora without access to more accurate data on contemporary Irish migration.

A successful model on recording national migration is operating in Australia. The system is actively recording its citizens' mobility, enabling significant and important research from this data which is informing Diaspora research and Diaspora policy (Gamlen, 2012; Hugo 2016).

Recommendations

- Introduce an annual research funding stream for research on contemporary Irish migration and the practical application of such research
- Invest in the development of national recording of Irish migration, identifying long term emigration and long term return in coordination with national border control such as the Australian model.

New Diaspora Communities

It is imperative that Ireland's new Diaspora Strategy is reflective of diverse Irish communities among Irish emigrants and emigrants returning to Ireland. This will require recognition and responses cross-departmentally in welfare policy and in a broader awareness among support services in the areas of social protection, housing and medical cards. The strategy should also recognise non-traditional Irish communities such as dual nationality Irish citizens.

Recommendation

- Ensure all relevant departments responsible for providing services and supports to citizens, such as housing, social protection, medical and educational supports identify and formally acknowledge the rights, entitlements and needs of returning emigrants within their policies, procedures and strategies.

Conclusion

The development and implementation of the new Diaspora Policy 2020-2025 offers opportunities for all stakeholders, experts, the Irish public and the Irish Diaspora to contribute to Ireland's global reputation. It also conveys that Ireland values its Diaspora and that their engagement is important to the future of Ireland.

The objective of our submission is to advocate for all Irish emigrants to be represented within and across all government policy. The Irish community and Irish Diaspora globally stand to mutually benefit from cooperative engagement, leadership and commitment to the success of the next Diaspora Strategy.

Summary of Recommendations

PART I	
Accessible support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-annual funding • Facilitate collaboration between organisations • Promote applications to the Emigrant Support Programme with smaller groups
Targeted support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue prioritisation of welfare needs of the most vulnerable Irish emigrants • Retain and diversify the Interdepartmental Committee on the Irish Abroad, open opportunities for engagement from organisations and more transparency • Expand mental health supports for returned emigrants • Formally recognise and develop awareness and support of non-traditional Irish communities
More joined up/ comprehensive support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote awareness and ownership of the new Diaspora Policy within Irish Diaspora • Alignment of the Diaspora Policy with existing and planned national Government strategies
More strategic support/next generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote funding opportunities for new and emerging initiatives developed by diverse communities • Foster targeted engagement and expand support available to diverse Diaspora groups • Promote an inclusive approach to diverse Diaspora groups by established ESP funded organisations
PART II	
Supporting the Diaspora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further multi-annual funding arrangements for organisations • Continue supporting pre-departure information resources and monitor through research in the area to identify trends and predict future needs
Connecting with the Diaspora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain and develop the Interdepartmental Committee along 3 thematic lines – welfare, business, and culture & heritage • Develop links with established non-governmental and governmental support services in Northern Ireland, and formalise supports available to Irish emigrants returning to Northern Ireland or border regionsExplore and develop appropriate communication

	<p>modes to connect and engage with diverse Irish emigrant groups as part of the response to changing demographics of Irish Diaspora</p>
<p>Facilitating Diaspora engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the Global Irish Diaspora Directory • Explore how existing initiatives can be developed to facilitate broader Diaspora engagement • Promote cross-sector collaboration between welfare, sport, culture and business focused Irish emigrant groups • Commit to hosting a Global Irish Civic Forum every 2 to 3 years • Establish smaller regular ‘Regional Forums’ • Formalise recognition of marginalised returning emigrants in cross departmental policy • Continue commitment to involving emigrants in the Diaspora policy development • Continue commitment to addressing the needs of returning emigrants • Continue inclusion of organisations in receiving delegations • Introduce funding opportunities for organisations to engage in research with Diaspora
<p>Recognising the Diaspora</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to retaining Irish parliamentary voting rights for a longer period after leaving Ireland • Initiate a national discussion on introducing parliamentary voting from abroad
<p>Evolving Diaspora policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce an annual research funding stream for research on contemporary Irish migration • Invest in the development of national recording of Irish migration • Ensure formal acknowledgement of rights, entitlements and needs of returning emigrants within all relevant and responsible state departments