

Public Service (Croke Park) Agreement
Department of Foreign Affairs Action Plan
Second Iteration- January 2011

Introduction

The aim of this Action Plan is to further enhance the efficiency of the operations of the Department of Foreign Affairs and equip it to continue to deliver its policy, administrative and public service obligations cost-effectively in the context of the reduced staff numbers and budgetary resources available under the Four-Year Plan for National Recovery.

The proposed changes build on the significant ongoing reforms in the Department's business processes which are kept under continuous review.

The main instruments envisaged are

- additional improvements in the organisation of service provision to the public, including expansion of on-line facilities;
- further streamlining of internal administrative processes;
- a new training and development programme designed to enhance staff effectiveness and efficiency;
- ongoing internal redeployment as necessary to core tasks and key priority areas; and
- Further consolidation of functions as necessary and flattening of reporting structures.

Role of Department

The Department of Foreign Affairs fulfils a diverse range of policy, administrative, programme management and public service functions through its Headquarters staff and network of 76 diplomatic and consular missions abroad.

In particular, the Department provides advice and support to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the Government on

- the formulation and coordination of all aspects of foreign policy including Ireland's **EU policies** and its approach to **international issues**;

- all issues relating to **Northern Ireland, North-South cooperation** on the island of Ireland and enhancing Ireland's **relationship with Britain**. The Department plays a coordinating role in ongoing discussions on areas of North-South cooperation where closer cooperation might produce savings or deliver improvements to services without additional cost.

The Department also

- contributes to **economic growth** by working closely with other Departments and Agencies to enhance Ireland's international reputation and promote our economic and trading interests abroad.
- administers a number of programmes, including a **Development Cooperation programme** of over €500m per annum.
- provides **passport services** to some 600,000 customers a year and **consular assistance** to Irish citizens travelling, living and working overseas.
- represents and advances Ireland's interests and values abroad, multilaterally through international organisations (including the EU and the UN) and bilaterally with other States.

Context

The environment in which the Department operates is by its nature complex and ever-changing, liable to sudden transformation by unexpected events and constantly shaped by factors beyond the control of national governments.

The Department retains a flexibility which enables it to reconfigure its organisation to meet new challenges. These include short-term adjustments, such as the Crisis Response Centre where staff from all across the Department can be mobilised within a few hours to reinforce the consular service in providing support to Irish citizens affected by significant events or incidents abroad. The core Passport Office Staff is augmented annually by temporary staff to meet the seasonal peak in demand for services.

Ninety-one posts have been lost since the introduction of the moratorium on recruitment and promotions in March 2009. Staffing levels are to be reduced by a further 60 posts this year under the Department's Employment Control Framework. Some extra posts will be temporarily

allocated to the Department to assist it in discharging certain exceptional international responsibilities which will arise within the timespan of the Public Service Agreement. These include the **Chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe** which Ireland will assume for the first time in 2012 and the **EU Presidency** which Ireland will hold for the seventh time in the first semester of 2013. The rotating Presidency retains major policy and organisational responsibilities despite the changes introduced by the Lisbon Treaty.

However, the Department's authorised staff numbers will fall to 1410 by the end of 2014. This represents a total reduction of 177 posts, or 11 %, on March 2009 pre-moratorium levels (1587). It poses a major challenge for the Department in its efforts to continue to deliver on the full spectrum of its policy and administrative functions and protect the frontline services it provides to Irish citizens and businesses overseas.

As well as the staffing reductions, significant non-payroll efficiency gains have also been made, including through the development of the Department's global communications network and expanding the use of ICT facilities to streamline internal business processes. The Department's non-pay administrative budget for 2011 is almost 24% below 2008 levels.

Ongoing Reform

The Department's major programmes and services to the public have been the subject of independent reviews over the past three years. The assessments have been generally positive. Recommendations for improvements are being implemented.

These surveys include the latest OECD evaluation and Farrell Grant Sparks external management review of the Department's development cooperation programme which involves planning, managing, implementing and evaluating a programme directly or indirectly in approximately 90 of the poorest and most fragile countries in the world. At any one time the Department is evaluating, managing or planning projects and programmes to the value of up to €2 billion. This requires the deployment of a diverse and complex range of diplomatic and technical skill sets. The programme is one of the best in the world according to the latest OECD evaluation. However, the same evaluation, as well as the FGS Review of structures and organisation, have pointed to key staff resource shortages which the Department is seeking to remedy through the Croke Park redeployment arrangements.

An overall survey of the Department is underway in the context of the Public Service Organisational Review Programme (ORP). The findings of the study will be taken into account in the development and implementation of this Action Plan.

An external mediator is conducting a review of staffing and grading levels in the Passport Offices. Anticipated staff efficiency gains from the changes proposed in this Action Plan will be factored into the Department's submission to the Mediator.

Further Action Proposed

The changes proposed by the Department in the context of the Public Service Agreement are set out in tabular form below. The aim is to further enhance the cost-effectiveness of the administrative delivery of its functions and to contribute to the effort to maintain a high quality of service. The Department's policy priorities and programmes are a matter for separate decision by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Government.

Reconfiguring Service Design and Delivery

The proposed actions are primarily focused on service provision to the public, mainly through the Passport Service, where the greatest scope exists for increasing on-line facilities and where the largest single group of Departmental staff are assigned at Headquarters. The aim is to improve the customer service experience, utilise staff time more efficiently and enhance the security of the passport-issuing process. The costs and benefits to the Department of participation in the proposed human resources and payroll shared services projects will be evaluated in the context of the overall development of the proposals at central level. The Department will need, however, to retain in-house the necessary capacity to administer the complex and varied HR and financial management requirements of its overseas Missions.

Performance and Skills

The Department fully appreciates the major asset represented by the quality and commitment of its personnel. It plans to enhance the effectiveness of its investment in staff development through new training and mentoring programmes. It has launched an internal consultation process on gender balance in the Department with a view to developing an action plan to address any issues identified in relation to career development and progression.

Staff Consultation

Departmental management has consulted staff representatives on the Action Plan and will continue to engage with them on the more detailed proposals as they are developed.

Public Service Agreement 2010 -2014 (Croke Park Agreement)

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ACTION PLAN

Second Iteration - January 2011

<p>1. Better human resource management <i>Actions to include under this heading include reductions in numbers, redeployment, reconfiguration of service delivery, revisions in attendance arrangements, better attendance and absence management, etc.</i></p>			
<p>Terms of the Public Service Agreement 2010 – 2014 <i>(refer to all relevant paragraphs)</i></p>	<p>Action</p>	<p>Timeframe</p>	<p>Estimated Savings/Benefits Arising 2010 – 2014</p>
<p>Resources</p> <p>1.5</p>	<p>Meet Employment Control Framework staffing targets.</p>	<p>March 2009: 1587 End-2010 : 1496 End-2011: 1436 End-2012: 1515 End-2013 : 1468 End-2014: 1410</p>	<p>End-2014 target,1410 staff, represents a reduction of 177 posts or 11% on March 2009 levels; 86 posts or 6% on end-2010 numbers.</p> <p>Payroll cost savings and consequent realignment of remaining resources.</p>
<p>Redeployment</p> <p>1.7</p>	<p>Continue internal redeployment of staff in accordance with priority needs and changing demands on Department.</p> <p>Further consolidation of functions as necessary and flattening of reporting structures.</p>	<p>Ongoing as required.</p>	<p>Optimal internal resource allocation and use of available talent.</p>

Redeployment 6.3.11	Continue to seek to avail of PSA Mechanisms to fill identified specialist ICT, Finance, Auditor and Evaluator vacancies.	Ongoing	Adequate ICT skilled personnel needed to facilitate development and implementation of new business process improvement initiatives. Strengthening of internal professional accountancy, audit and evaluation capacity.
Resource management 4.3 4.4	Early and adequate intake of temporary staff needed to meet seasonal and other temporary peaks in service demand and business requirements	Seasonal and annually recurrent	Will provide necessary flexibility to ensure that staffing provision is aligned with business needs and that service is delivered cost-effectively.
Attendance Patterns & Management 4.7	Continue to facilitate work life balance consistent with overriding business needs of the Department in accordance with provisions of Department of Finance Circular 11/2010.	Ongoing	Optimal utilisation of skills pool available to Department.
Attendance Pattern & Management 1.4 1.8 4.9	More effective management of sick leave in accordance with Department of Finance Circular 9/2010	10% reduction in days lost by end-2011	More effective management of sick leave provision will result in greater productivity.
Performance & Skills 1.13	Finalise and implement new Departmental training programme.	Review of existing programme completed November 2010;	Enhanced staff skills profile.

		formulation of new training strategy to be completed by Summer 2011.	
Performance & Skills			
1.13	Implement pilot mentoring scheme in Department.	Pilot scheme launched Autumn 2010. Review with a view to establishing a permanent scheme end-2011.	Optimisation of performance and professional fulfilment of staff.
Performance & Skills			
4.12	Further enhance staff skills and strengthen performance management by continuing to leverage the PMDS process and training supports.	Targeted measures taken with a view to improving PMDS compliance in annual end-2010 assessment round.	Improved staff professional development and performance
Performance & Skills			
4.11	Hold professional quality, merit-based promotion competitions to fill all relevant vacancies.	Ongoing	Strengthen organisational capacity by ensuring career progression of the best-performing and qualified staff.

2. Better Business Processes *Actions under this heading would include efficiency measures including procurement, revisions to business process, reconfigurations and other changes to service delivery options, including sharing of service, revisions to regulatory/inspection actions, and so on.*

Terms of the Public Service Agreement 2010 – 2014	Action	Timeframe	Estimated Savings/Benefits Arising 2010 - 2014
<p>Business Process</p> <p>1.10 4.13</p>	<p>Complete merger of Finance Units for Foreign Affairs (Vote 28) and International Cooperation (Vote 29).</p>	<p>January 2012</p>	<p>Integration and updating of financial systems.</p> <p>Development of more automated financial processes, greater financial control and better management information.</p> <p>Possible release of a small number of staff for redeployment to other priority duties within the Department.</p>
<p>Business Process</p> <p>1.10</p>	<p>Extend roll-out of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) to more diplomatic and consular Missions abroad.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Further reductions in day to day communications charges.</p> <p>Some continuing upfront investment costs.</p>
<p>Business Process</p> <p>1.10</p>	<p>Extend the use of video conferencing facilities, including for the purposes of business interaction with Missions abroad and conducting interviews in promotion competitions.</p>	<p>Underway</p>	<p>Savings on travel and subsistence</p>

<p>Business Process</p> <p>4.4</p>	<p>Improved business planning system</p>	<p>Introduced in 2010.</p>	<p>Mid-year review of the new system conducted with very satisfactory results. The revised arrangements have resulted in a more effective focus on core tasks.</p>
<p>Business Process</p> <p>4.14</p>	<p>The Department will continue to strengthen its Risk Management process taking account of best practice and expertise.</p> <p>Risk Management is formally integrated with the Department's business planning process. Internal and external risks are monitored by a Departmental Risk Management Committee and reviewed by the Management Advisory Committee on a quarterly basis.</p>	<p>External consultancy engaged to advise on developing more auditable risk registers. Report submitted October 2010 and recommendations being implemented.</p>	<p>Enhanced procedures for management of risk across the Department.</p>
<p>Business Process</p> <p>1.7</p>	<p>Trial of lighter model of Diplomatic and Consular representation in certain locations where this may be viable.</p>	<p>Introduced Autumn 2010. Seven Diplomatic and Consular Missions now staffed by one diplomat.</p>	<p>Some financial savings on the modest running costs of these Missions.</p> <p>Release of a small number of diplomatic staff for other priority duties within the Department.</p>
<p>Shared Services</p> <p>1.11</p>			

4.15	Participation in proposed civil service shared services initiatives where appropriate.	Dependent on central developments in context of Transforming Public Services initiative and cost-benefit analysis.	To be evaluated in light of overall central evolution of project; possible freeing up of a small number of posts.
Attendance Patterns			
4.4	Appropriate application of centrally agreed flexibility arrangements beneficial to the Department's business needs.	In accordance with relevant Department of Finance circulars	Facilitate optimal use of staff resources Some savings on overtime payments

3. Delivering for the Citizen *Actions under this heading would include efficiency measures and improvements to the processes by which your Department/body delivers its services to the public, including changes to the technology used, better data management, including around identity, and so on.*

Terms of the Public Service Agreement 2010 – 2014	Action	Timeframe	Estimated Savings/Benefits Arising 2010 - 2014
<p>New Technology</p> <p>1.10 4.13</p>	<p>Proposed new simplified adult renewal application with a view to an online passport renewal service.</p>	<p>Implementation by end-2011 subject to technical feasibility. Also contingent on availability of adequate ICT skills capacity and capital budget.</p>	<p>More efficient use of staff time. Potential for cost reductions following initial investment.</p>
<p>Customer Centred Delivery</p> <p>1.10 4.4</p>	<p>Proposal for consideration of extension of Passport Office opening hours coupled with an appointments system for customers.</p>	<p>Mid – 2011.</p>	<p>Improvement in customer service experience.</p>
<p>New Business Process</p> <p>1.10</p>	<p>Proposed incentive scheme to encourage passport applicants to switch from the public counter to the Passport Express Service.</p>	<p>2011</p>	<p>Enhanced staff and cost efficiencies in passport processing.</p>

<p>Customer Centred Delivery</p> <p>1.10</p>	<p>Improvement of physical facilities for passport office customers including availability of PCs with access to relevant web-sites which would help speed up service delivery.</p>	<p>Mid - 2011</p>	<p>Improvement in customer service experience.</p>
<p>Improved Business Process</p> <p>1.10</p>	<p>Continue with partial repatriation of certain passport processing and production functions from London to HQ.</p>	<p>Mid - 2011</p>	<p>Improved cost effectiveness in passport processing while maintaining existing level of service to citizens.</p> <p>Reduced office premises rental costs.</p>
<p>Customer Centred Delivery</p> <p>1.10</p>	<p>Establishment of dedicated Crisis Response Unit to coordinate all services necessary to respond to external accidents, emergencies and major catastrophes.</p>	<p>Established October 2010.</p>	<p>Align all necessary preparations with best international practice.</p> <p>Ensure that services to the public can immediately and effectively be mobilised.</p>
<p>Customer Centred Delivery</p> <p>1.10</p>	<p>Development of computerised system to improve Foreign Births Registration (Citizenship through ancestry) process.</p>	<p>January 2012</p>	<p>Improvement in customer service experience.</p>

4.13			Improved effectiveness in processing applications.
Customer Centred Delivery			
1.10	Development of computerised system to support authentication of Irish documents for use abroad (including Irish marriages abroad).	January 2012	Improvement in customer service experience.
4.13			Provide more effective service to the public in terms of retrieval of information.