

Integrated Progress Report on Action Plan for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (No agencies involved)

TO BE RETURNED NO LATER THAN 2nd May 2012

1. Summary of Main Progress Achieved in the 12 Month Period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012

- In mid-May, 2011, following months of careful planning and preparation, the Department successfully managed a 4-day state visit to Ireland by HM Queen Elizabeth II
- This was followed almost immediately by a visit to Ireland by US President Barack Obama on 23 May, 2011, which also required meticulous planning and preparation; the Taoiseach subsequently presented the staff of the Department with a *Public Service Excellence Award* in connection with the two visits
- On 1 June, 2011, the Taoiseach, the Tánaiste, Heads of relevant semi-States and others addressed Heads of Irish Missions at a conference in Dublin on the promotion of Ireland abroad which was held pursuant to a commitment in the Programme for Government
- On 1 June, 2011, responsibility for the promotion of foreign trade was transferred to the Department and on 2 June its name was changed to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- In early October, 2011 the Department assisted in the establishment of an integrated EU coordination function within the Department of the Taoiseach, involving secondment or transfer of 20 of the Department's expert EU staff
- On 7-8 October, 2011 a highly successful second meeting of the Global Irish Economic Forum, organised and hosted by the Department, was held in Dublin Castle following months of detailed planning and preparation; importantly, costs were significantly lower than in 2009 despite an almost doubling of the number of delegates on this occasion; media coverage was highly positive
- The dedicated Crisis Response Unit established in October 2010 facilitated the provision of consular services to a large number of Irish citizens caught up in crises in Middle-Eastern countries including Libya most recently.
- The Department coordinated the successful visit of Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping during 18 – 20 February, 2012
- Ireland assumed the chair of the OSCE, on 1 January 2012.
- The Department hosted international negotiations of the OSCE 5+2 group on Transdniestria (Moldova, Transdniestria, the OSCE, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the US and the EU) in Farmleigh House in February 2012
- Extensive restructuring of Department's HQ operations was completed in late 2011. This also involved a consolidation of functions and a flattening of reporting lines across the Department.
- A decision was taken to close three Irish Missions abroad (The Holy See, Tehran and Timor Leste)
- The Department initiated its use of Social Media - a Departmental Twitter account has been set up and is used extensively.

Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 (Croke Park Agreement) Integrated Progress Report

2. Detailed Progress Update for the 12-months – 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012

1. Better human resource management: *To include, for example, actions around the reduction of staff numbers; the redeployment of staff to areas of greatest need; the restructuring/reconfiguration of service delivery; changes to work practices; revisions in attendance arrangements; absence management; performance management etc.*

Terms of the Public Service Agreement 2010 – 2014	Action	Target Date as per Current Action Plan	Current Position
Resources 1.5	Meet Employment Control Framework Staffing Targets	March 2009: 1587 End-2010 : 1496 End-2011: 1438 End-2012: 1517 End-2013 : 1470 End-2014: 1412	End 2011 target figure of 1,438 met and exceeded by 29 February, 2012 By the ending of the grace period on 29 February, Departmental staff numbers had dropped by approximately 180, or almost 11%, since the introduction of the moratorium in March 2009.
Redeployment 1.7	Continue internal redeployment of staff in accordance with priority needs and changing demands on Department. Further consolidation of functions as necessary and flattening of reporting structures.	Ongoing as required	Extra staffing was temporarily provided in Protocol and Press Sections for visits by Queen Elizabeth II and President Obama in May 2011 and for the second meeting of the Global Irish Forum in October, 2011. The Department has implemented the most far-reaching reorganisation of our Headquarters structures in more than a generation, following a root and branch reappraisal of the Department's operations at home and abroad by the Management Advisory Committee [led by the Secretary General]. This also involved a consolidation of functions and a flattening of reporting lines across the system. Abroad three missions have or are being closed in

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			<p>2012 and over half the reduced number of 73 Missions have two, or fewer diplomats; seven operate with only one and only nine have more than three.</p> <p>Nineteen Head of Mission level posts, more than a quarter of the total, have been downgraded, including fourteen formerly filled by Assistant Secretaries or higher grades; overall, almost two-thirds of Head of Mission posts are now filled by officers below the rank of Assistant Secretary and thirteen offices abroad are led at First Secretary/AP level.</p>
<p>Redeployment</p> <p>6.3.11</p>	<p>Continue to seek to avail of PSA Mechanisms to fill identified specialist ICT, Finance, Auditor and Evaluator vacancies.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Total recruitment to date using PSA mechanisms: two Accountants, two Principal Officers (Limerick) and an Assistant Principal ICT specialist.</p>
<p>Resource management</p> <p>4.3</p> <p>4.4</p>	<p>Early and adequate intake of temporary staff needed to meet seasonal and other temporary peaks in service demand and Business requirements.</p>	<p>Seasonal and annually recurrent</p>	<p>125 temporary clerical staff on 6-month contracts were recruited in January, 2012 to meet the additional demands of the peak applications season in the Passport Offices in Molesworth Street, Balbriggan and Cork. This is expected to give rise to a substantial reduction this year in expenditure on premium overtime payments in the Passport Service.</p>
<p>Attendance Patterns & Management</p> <p>4.7</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>In excess of 30 outstanding applications from staff in the Passport Service were approved in April 2011 under the Work-sharing or Shorter Working Year Schemes</p> <p>All work sharing arrangements were reviewed in Autumn 2011 so as to ensure that the needs of staff are</p>

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			<p>being met in a manner which is consistent with the need to ensure that Department remains able to fulfil its functions and meet its service delivery targets</p> <p>A total of 159 staff are now work-sharing in the Department.</p>
<p>Attendance Patterns & Management</p> <p>1.4 1.8 4.9</p>	<p>More effective management of sick leave in accordance with Department of Finance Circular 9/2010</p>	<p>10% reduction in days lost by end-2011</p>	<p>Circular being actively implemented. Sick leave being more carefully monitored.</p> <p>Sick leave review meetings being held and resumption of work forms being used in all cases.</p> <p>New “Wellness at Work” programme being piloted to support Attendance Management and Sick Leave policies.</p>
<p>Performance & Skills</p> <p>1.13</p>	<p>Finalise and implement new Departmental training programme</p>	<p><i>Ongoing.</i></p>	<p>Special MAC Advisory sub-committee overseeing implementation of prioritised training programme since 2011.</p>
<p>Performance & Skills</p> <p>1.13</p>	<p>Implement pilot mentoring scheme in Department</p>	<p><i>Autumn 2012</i></p>	<p>Pilot Mentoring Scheme operating successfully. Mid-term review completed and final review to be completed in Autumn 2012, with a view to expansion</p>
<p>Performance & Skills</p> <p>4.12</p>		<p>Targeted measures taken with a view to improving PMDS</p>	<p>Arising from enhanced compliance measures introduced in 2010, the Department’s PMDS compliance rate increased to 78% for 2010 and 84% for 2011.</p>

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	Further enhance staff skills and strengthen performance management by continuing to leverage the PMDS process and training supports.	compliance in annual end-2010 Assessment round	PMDS and Managing under - performance training delivered throughout the Department in Jan/Feb 2012 and being kept under review.
Performance & Skills 4.11	Hold professional quality, merit-based promotion competitions to fill all relevant vacancies.	Ongoing	<p>In January and February 2012 a large internal promotion competition was held to form a panel for the grade of Counsellor. 114 candidates, of whom 62 were stationed abroad, were interviewed by 5 interview boards in the preliminary round and 25, of whom 17 were abroad, were interviewed by a single board in the final round.</p> <p>(See section below regarding the use of video conferencing for this competition. Substantial savings were also made - see savings report)</p> <p>Interview training made available online for all candidates.</p>

2. Better Business Processes: *To include, for example actions to increase efficiency and productivity; rationalise core structures, business processes, accommodation requirements etc; establish shared service approaches, establish cross-functional teams/ new work structures, optimise the potential of new technology to streamline operations and generate efficiencies etc.*

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<p>Business Process</p> <p>1. 10</p> <p>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 has been completed. Attention is now turning towards using the new technical platform to support changes in business processes that will deliver the benefits of more automated financial processes, greater financial control and better management information.</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>System now in place in 28 Missions inc Pretoria, Budapest and Paris - Q1 2012</p> <p>Plan is to implement at a further 7 Missions by the end of 2012.</p> <p>Requires some capital investment, with savings delivered in the longer term.</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>Video conference facilities now in place and routinely used by the management and staff of all of our Missions and offices in Ireland and overseas, including the four Passport Offices in Dublin, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin, Cork and London.</p> <p>Video conferencing was used to conduct all interviews in the 2012 Counsellor competition; in total 114 candidates, of whom 62 were stationed abroad, were interviewed by 5 interview boards in the preliminary round and 25, of whom 17 were abroad, were interviewed by a single board in the final round. Video Conferencing was found to be</p>

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			<p>fully satisfactory by boards and candidates alike and disruption to Missions was dramatically reduced; savings on candidate travel and subsistence have been estimated at €80,000; a second very large competition is due to be held in May/June 2012 and again all interviews will be conducted using Video Conferencing</p> <p>DFAT system also now routinely made available to EI staff in relevant Missions for interaction with their colleagues at HQ and elsewhere and for other contacts</p>
<p>Business Process 4.4</p>	<p>Improved business planning system</p>	<p>2010</p>	<p>Revised system introduced in 2010 with systematic annual review of performance by the Management Advisory Committee which has led to a better focus on priority objectives and tasks</p>
<p>Business Process 4.14</p>	<p>The Department will continue to strengthen its Risk Management process taking account of best practice and expertise. 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>Spring 2011</p>	<p>Following an external report (Oct 2010) which recommended moving towards a more auditable risk register, a revised format register has been put in place that is more explicit in assigning ownership of identified risks and in specifying actions in response. The Management Advisory Committee now reviews risk at each of its monthly meetings and assessment of risk-factors permeates consideration of other substantive MAC agenda items where relevant. This engagement is complemented by twice weekly Departmental Coordination meetings which focus on upcoming contingencies.</p>

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<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>Autumn 2010</p>	<p>Introduced Autumn 2010. Seven Diplomatic and Consular Missions now staffed by one diplomat. An eighth, Embassy Bratislava, is in the process of being reduced from two to one member of diplomatic staff</p>
<p>Shared services</p> <p>1.11</p>	<p>Participation in proposed civil service shared services initiatives where appropriate.</p>	<p>Being set centrally</p>	<p>Dependent on central developments in context of the Public Service Reform Plan and cost-benefit analysis</p> <p>This process is moving ahead for HR and Payroll with DPER hosting Base-lining exercises intended to form a common understanding of definitions, processes, activities, transactions, responsibilities etc</p>
<p>Attendance Patterns</p> <p>4.4</p>	<p>Appropriate application of centrally agreed flexibility arrangements beneficial to the Department's business needs.</p>	<p>In accordance With relevant Department of Finance circulars</p>	<p>Ongoing compliance</p> <p>Changes to the operation of the Department's Communications Centre have led to staffing efficiencies and financial savings</p>

3. Delivering for the Citizen: *To include, for example, actions to enhance service delivery to the public, including changes to the technology used, more online services, service integration, efforts to reduce information burdens on citizens through better data management/sharing of data, including around identity etc*

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<p>New Technology 1.10 4.13</p>	<p>Proposed new simplified adult renewal application with a view to an online passport renewal service.</p>	<p>End 2011</p>	<p><u>New Technology</u> Development of the service is subject to compatibility with international legal obligations. It will require a redesign of the passport technology system for which additional investment will be required. This proposal will be discussed with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in the light of the outcome of a feasibility study which is underway. If viable, the new application could yield staff economies which would help the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to maintain the quality of the passport service within the reduced ECF staff numbers available to it.</p>
<p>Customer Centred Delivery 1.10 4.4</p>	<p>Proposal for consideration of extension of Passport Office opening hours coupled with an appointments system</p>	<p>Mid 2011</p>	<p>Anticipated that this will be piloted at the end of the 2012 peak season i.e. by end Q3 2012</p>
<p>New Business Process 1.10</p>	<p>Proposed incentive scheme to encourage passport applicants to switch from the public counter to the Passport Express Service</p>	<p>April 2011</p>	<p>A newly balanced fee regime was introduced on 11 April 2011 making it more cost-effective to use the Passport Express (postal) Service</p>

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Customer Centred Delivery 1.10	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	Mid 2011	The matter is being examined further with a view to providing new facilities by Q3 2012
Improved Business Process 1.10	Continue with partial repatriation of certain passport processing and production functions from London	Mid 2011	All but most urgent counter applications are now repatriated to HQ. <i>London customer phone service also delivered out of HQ</i>
Customer Centred Delivery 1.10	Establishment of dedicated Crisis Response Unit to coordinate all services necessary to respond to external accidents, emergencies and major catastrophes.	2010	<p>Established in October 2010. Major crisis simulation exercise was conducted with Embassy London at end Oct/early Nov.2011.</p> <p>Responded to the situations in Egypt, Bahrain and Libya and the earthquakes in New Zealand and Japan.</p> <p>New improved system of travel registration for citizens abroad was rolled out in June 2011</p>

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Customer Centred Delivery 1. 10	Development of computerised system to improve Foreign Births Registration (FBRs: Citizenship through ancestry) process	Jan, 2012	<i>Tender awarded in March, 2012; contract signed in April, 2012. Project mobilisation is underway with target go-live dates from September.</i>
Customer Centred Delivery 1. 10 4.13	Development of computerised system to support authentication of Irish documents for use abroad (including Irish marriages abroad).	Jan, 2012	<i>Tender awarded in March, 2012; contract signed in April, 2012. Project mobilisation is underway with target go-live dates from September.</i>

Integrated Progress Report for Departments and their Agencies

Guidance Notes for Reporting Template for Year Two

Reporting Period

1. The reporting period is the 12 months from end Q1 2011 to end Q1 2012. Please include text to describe ALL progress made during the 12 month period (i.e. including progress made on completed items under the last version of Action Plans.)

Completing the Report

2. Integrated Progress Reports should encompass the progress made by the Department as well as the key progress made by each of those agencies under its remit. Each Department should seek a progress report from each of their agencies and incorporate into this global integrated return. Progress reports from individual agencies should not be submitted to the Implementation Body.
3. A summary list of bullets highlighting the main developments over the 12 month period should be included at the head of the document.
4. Include text to describe the progress made on each action specified in the Action Plan for the Department and its agencies under the '**Current Position**' column on the far right.
5. The text in each row or Action should be coloured as follows:
 - In **GREEN** if the Action has already been achieved, is underway and currently on time for delivery in accordance with the Plan;
 - In **ORANGE** if the delivery of the Action is substantially underway but is not likely to meet its specific target date;
 - In **RED** if there has been no tangible progress on the Action to date.
6. A statement of reasons for delay should be given in respect of any action highlighted in **ORANGE** or **RED** in the final column.
7. Any actions for which a timeframe for delivery under the Action Plan was given as either 'ongoing' or over the period of the Agreement, or equivalent, should only be marked in green if some progress has been made on the Action in the reporting period. Details of that progress should be provided in the '**Current Position**' column.
8. Where figures/estimates of savings being achieved are available, these should be noted also in the '**Current Position**' column.

Submitting the Report

9. Reports should be emailed to Alan Plummer (alan.plummer@per.gov.ie) and Bridie Cuddy-Smyth (bridie.cuddy-smyth@per.gov.ie), Implementation Body Secretariat by close of business on 2nd May 2012. Telephone contact number is (01) 6045340.