

## Meeting of the Expert Advisory Group on Centenary Commemorations

Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at 1.15 pm  
Room 301, Department of the Taoiseach

### Minutes

#### Attendees:

Dr Maurice Manning (*Chair*)  
Dr Martin Mansergh (*Deputy Chair*)  
Dr Sandra Collins  
Professor Mary Daly  
Mr Francis Devine  
Dr Anne Dolan  
Professor Diarmaid Ferriter  
Dr Mary Harris  
Mr Jerry Kelleher  
Dr Sinéad McCoole  
Professor Eunan O'Halpin  
Ms Pauline Kiernan *D/Taoiseach*  
Mr Conor Falvey *D/TCAGSM*  
Ms Sinéad Copeland *D/TCAGSM*  
Mr Rónán Whelan *D/TCAGSM*  
Orlaith Lochrin *D/TCAGSM*  
Ms Muirne Lyons *D/TCAGSM*

#### Apologies:

Mr Gabriel Doherty  
Professor Patrick Geoghegan  
Dr Leeann Lane  
Lt. Col. Stephen MacEoin  
Dr William Murphy

#### Guest Attendees:

Ellie Farrell, *Director for Engagement, Ireland, United Kingdom and Americas Division, D/Foreign Affairs*

#### Key Points:

An update was provided to the Group on plans to mark the centenary of the Irish Free State's admission into the League of Nations, following discussions at the Group's meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2022. The Group's feedback at that meeting was very helpful in assisting the Department of Foreign Affairs to consider further their approach to the remembrance of this key centenary moment and associated themes.

Planned initiatives include a touring exhibition which is being designed, curated, delivered, and toured by the National Archives of Ireland, in partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Royal Irish Academy, featuring records from its collections relating to Ireland's membership of the League; An international dimension is envisaged, as the exhibition will tour key locations associated with the history of the League of Nations, such as Geneva, New York, and San Francisco. The National Archives intends to tour the exhibition at venues across Ireland also, including this year's National Ploughing Championships and the Dublin Festival of History. Engagement with schools, in partnership with the Department of Education, will raise awareness

among young people and inter-generationally. Options for significant academic events, hosted respectively as part of the Global Ireland Conference and by the Royal Irish Academy, are among the initiatives being explored and developed, as well as opportunities to engage the diplomatic community. Under the Community Strand of the programme, local authorities who wish to do so, may also develop community-led initiatives to explore themes associated with Ireland's admission into the League of Nations and membership of the International Labour Organisation. A commemorative stamp will be issued by An Post in September. The Expert Advisory Group were very supportive of these plans, noting the opportunities created for broad, meaningful public engagement with people of all ages, at home and internationally, which will highlight the significance of this event and its thematic relevance for today.

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed and there were no issues arising. The Group agreed to the publication of the minutes of the seven meetings held in 2022. It was noted that the minutes provide a high-level summary of the meeting discussions and outline key points made.

The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media gave an update on plans to publish the Decade of Centenaries Programme for 2023 (*subsequently launched by Minister Martin in the National Library on 23<sup>rd</sup> March*).

The Group discussed plans for the State commemoration in remembrance of all of those who died during the Civil War. This will be a formal State-led commemoration, including Defence Forces ceremonial participation and cultural elements. It is intended that direct descendants of families whose lives were most impacted by the events of the civil war, including within local communities, will be prioritised when invitations are being issued, subject to the capacity of the venue. Further updates will be provided to the Group as the arrangements are progressed.

Dr Martin Mansergh and Professor Diarmaid Ferriter gave an overview of the conference to mark the centenary of the civil war in Kerry, held from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> February. This was a very significant event, supported by Kerry County Council and the Department, under the Community Strand of the Decade of Centenaries Programme for 2023. The programme addressed some emotive and difficult themes, and the tone throughout was non-partisan, measured, respectful, and nuanced. The Group welcomed the balanced approach of the organisers in developing the conference programme, with contributions from well-established and early career historians, and a local and national emphasis on the events of the civil war. The conference was very well organised and received. The Group noted and commended the engagement from young people, who curated the *Mise, le Meas* exhibition.

An initial discussion was held to explore possible approaches to commemorations when the Decade of Centenaries Programme ends this year. It was noted that the current model and role of the Expert Advisory Group has worked extremely well in supporting the State throughout this very significant, complex, and sensitive centenary period (2012 – 2023). We are now moving into a different phase of commemoration, which may require a different approach.

Further consideration and discussions with key partners and stakeholders will be undertaken to consider what role the State could have or should have in the remembrance of centenaries and other anniversaries arising in the future. Consideration will be given, also, to the need for ongoing

impartial advice on how historical events and related themes might be marked and what sort of guidance and supportive structure could best facilitate this. It was noted that the guiding principles developed by this Expert Advisory Group may be still valid and relevant following the conclusion of the Decade of Centenaries. Careful consideration and time will be needed to explore potential approaches and determine the most fitting and feasible. Any suggestions from the Group would be very much appreciated.

Date of next meeting to be confirmed.

*Ends.*