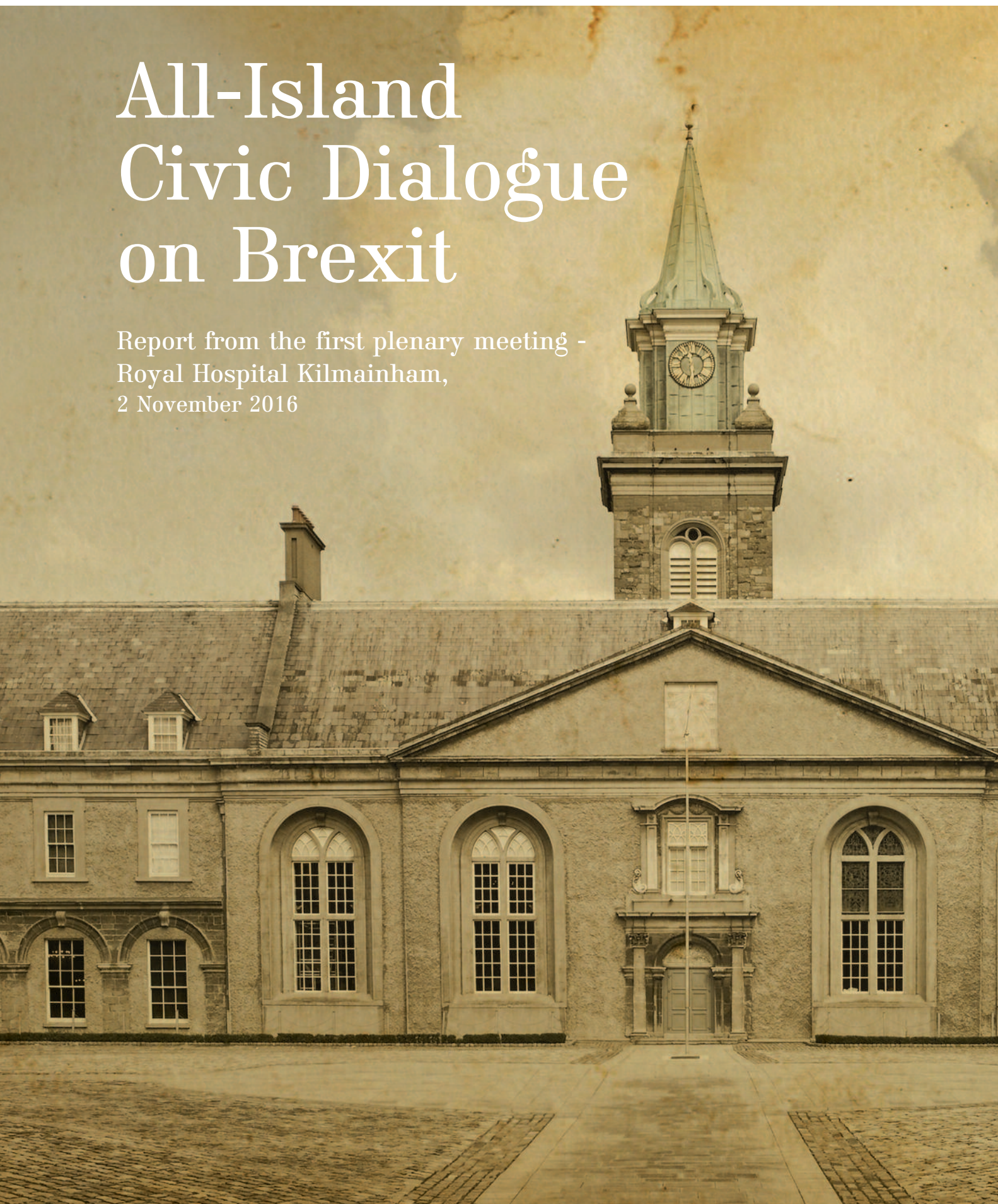


# All-Island Civic Dialogue on Brexit

Report from the first plenary meeting -  
Royal Hospital Kilmainham,  
2 November 2016







The inaugural plenary meeting of the All-Island Civic Dialogue on Brexit took place at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Dublin, on 2 November 2016. This all-day event was the opening dialogue for a series of public consultations on Brexit and was hosted by the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Charlie Flanagan TD.

Participants heard contributions from all parts of the island, representing a broad range of over 180 civil society groups, trade unions, business groups, non-governmental organisations and representatives from political parties. (See list below)

The Royal Hospital was full to capacity, with over 250 participants in attendance from all across the island of Ireland (including 75 participants from Northern Ireland and the border area), the conference was live-streamed and can be viewed in full on the government's website [www.merrionstreet.ie](http://www.merrionstreet.ie). The event was covered by journalists from over 35 media organisations at home and abroad.

Discussions were positive and solution-focussed, with all interventions carefully recorded to inform the Government's approach. A record of some of the key points made at the dialogue forms the core of this summary report.

## Plenary programme

The programme for the day was as follows:

<b>Opening address by An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny T.D.</b>	
Plenary Session 1 – <b>Representatives of political parties across the island</b>	
Plenary Session 2 - <b>Representatives from business, trade union and civil society groups</b>	
Panel Discussion 1: <b>North-South issues</b>	Panel Discussion 2: <b>East-West issues (Ireland and Great Britain)</b>
Final Plenary – <b>Feedback from panel discussions, including final contributions from the floor</b>	
Concluding remarks by Tom Arnold, Chair of the Civic Dialogue	
<b>Closing Address by Charlie Flanagan T.D., Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade</b>	

## Morning and afternoon plenary sessions: Key messages

Three full plenary sessions took place during the morning and afternoon, during which all 250 participants were present and all who wished to speak were heard. Participants heard at the outset from the Taoiseach and from leading representatives of all political parties and groupings present from across the island, as well as short remarks from representative bodies north and south. Among the key issues raised in these plenary sessions were:

<b>Challenges and Opportunities</b>
Importance of consultation and dialogue on Brexit
Continued uncertainties ahead of formal UK notification and the EU negotiations
Urgency of action to mitigate against Brexit implications, including on an all-island basis
A need for a long-term vision for Ireland's future after Brexit
Opportunities for Ireland in a changing landscape, e.g. in terms of new foreign direct investment, more diversification of trade, further deepening of relationships with other EU partners
Key all-island policy areas such as healthcare, tourism and environmental protection
<b>Economy and Trade</b>
Challenges to the agriculture and fisheries sectors, as well as SMEs
The fluctuating euro-sterling exchange rate
The transport sector, road haulage and goods transiting through the UK
Impacts on trade and employment and the need for competitiveness and innovation
<b>Northern Ireland</b>
Protecting the Good Friday Agreement
The value of citizenship rights under the Good Friday Agreement
Recognition of the majority vote in Northern Ireland to remain in the EU
Uniqueness of the Northern Ireland dimension
The position of border communities
<b>Common Travel Area</b>
Importance of the Common Travel Area and continued free movement within this island and between Ireland and Britain
Maintaining the open border
<b>The future of the European Union</b>
Ireland's firm commitment to its EU membership
Ireland's position on the EU27 side of the negotiating table for the UK exit process
The challenges facing the EU itself
Value of EU funding programmes on the island: agriculture, infrastructure, education and research
<b>Citizens</b>
Economic issues highly important, but social issues must be highlighted in parallel
Protection of rights and related EU legislation: employment, human rights, children's rights
Importance of arts, culture and heritage
Importance of a multiplicity of voices in this debate, including children, ethnic minorities, the socially excluded, rural communities
The impact on and role of the Irish community in Britain

In the early afternoon, participants chose between two panel discussions, summary reports of which follow.



## Panel Discussion 1

### North-South issues: Key messages

This panel was moderated by Sinéad McLaughlin (Chief Executive, Londonderry Chamber of Commerce) and had the following speakers:

- Micheál Briody, CEO, Silver Hill Farms
- Deirdre Heenan, Professor of Social Policy, Ulster University
- Andy Pollak, Journalist and Co-founder of the Centre for Cross Border Studies
- David Phinnemore, Professor of European Politics, Queen's University Belfast

The Northern Ireland deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness delivered concluding remarks.

Key themes emerging from the discussion:

North-south relations, including people-to-people links, are vitally important. Some form of arrangement regarding Northern Ireland and north-south links will be essential to safeguard prosperity on this island

Protection of the Good Friday Agreement remains paramount

All-island connectivity (e.g. energy) and collaboration must continue to be promoted

EU funding is very significant for Northern Ireland, in particular the CAP but also important support for research and development (Horizon 2020). There should be a concerted effort to find flexibilities in EU programmes and to make the case for favourable arrangements in recognition of Northern Ireland's unique circumstances

Brexit is not only a political and economic issue – it includes social issues and human rights

There was a clear need to build on the day's dialogue by leveraging the expertise in the room to provide costed business cases for solutions

Border businesses and local authorities are particularly vulnerable to uncertainties, but there may be some scope for them to benefit from innovative solutions

The need to bear in mind the perspective of the 44% in Northern Ireland who voted to leave the EU

The risk that Brexit could be exploited by violent elements who remain opposed to the Good Friday Agreement



## Panel discussion 2

### East-West (i.e. Ireland and Great Britain) issues: some key messages

This panel was moderated by Susan Hayes Culleton (Managing Director, Hayes Culleton and author of the "Positive Economist" blog) and had the following speakers:

- Professor Alan Barrett, Director, Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)
- Sally Mulready, member of the Council of State and leading member of the Irish community in Britain
- Cathy McGennis, Chief Financial Officer, Presidion
- David McWilliams, economist, author, journalist and broadcaster

Key themes emerging from the discussion:

The continued importance of the UK economy

The need to protect the achievements of recent decades in terms of British-Irish relations - political, economic and trade, cultural, and people-to-people

Studies by the ESRI and others showing the challenges arising from Brexit in terms of not just trade but also access to work experience and education for Irish people

Potential for the UK's debate on the EU to influence the Irish debate on its own place in the EU

The Irish community in Britain – now a diverse group in themselves with differing views (including on the EU), with evidence that some people are considering moving back to Ireland

A hope that the Irish community can organise and mobilise itself to influence the Brexit debate.

A belief that by its nature, business will respond to changes in market conditions – part of that response will be to diversify to other markets including within the EU

Possible opportunities in terms of trade and investment – for Irish companies to supply key services within the EU in replacement for (or on behalf of) UK-based companies

Some concerns the UK would reduce protections in terms of employment and social rights in an attempt to offset losses of competitiveness and attractiveness to Foreign Direct Investment

Recommendations for increased investment in education and innovation, including in the most affected sectors (e.g. food and drink)





The conference was live-streamed and can be viewed in full on the government's website [www.merrionstreet.ie](http://www.merrionstreet.ie), while the text of many of the speeches and statements delivered can be found on the relevant organisations' websites.

## Annex

### Participants at the inaugural All Island Civic Dialogue

To ensure the widest representation possible, attendance at the Dialogue was at the invitation of the Taoiseach and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade. These included:

- Business, employer and trade union organisations, farming organisations, community and voluntary NGOs
- Local Authorities in border regions
- Key Government agencies, particularly those with a north-south dimension
- Academic institutions such as Centre for Cross Border Studies and the Royal Irish Academy as well as universities and higher education institutions.

Representatives of the main political parties across the island were also invited. The full list of organisations represented at the event is as follows:

1. **Alliance Party**
2. **American Chamber of Commerce Ireland**
3. **AquaChem LTD**
4. **Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon District Council**
5. **Arts Council**
6. **Atheist Ireland**
7. **Bar Council NI**
8. **Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce**



### Outcomes and follow-up actions

As a direct follow-up to this first plenary meeting and reflecting the main issues raised at it, a series of sector-specific events got underway in December 2016 with Civic Dialogue meetings held on the themes of agriculture, education and research. More are to follow in early 2017, with already-confirmed areas for discussion as follows:

- **Transport and Logistics**
- **Tourism and Hospitality**
- **Schools**
- **Children and Young People**
- **Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation**
- **Energy**
- **Heritage, Culture and Rural Ireland**
- **Pensions, Social Welfare Rights and Social Insurance**
- **Human Rights and the Good Friday Agreement**

These events are being led by Ministers and are taking place in a variety of locations across the country. The sectoral dialogues will feed into a second plenary Civic Dialogue in mid-February. Further dialogues - sectoral and plenary - will take place as appropriate.

Overall the Civic Dialogue process is both an opportunity for valuable discussions between Government and civil society and a key resource for the Government in terms of its approach to issues in the negotiations ahead. These consultations complement the various detailed studies and analyses commissioned by the Government on the implications of Brexit as well as the work taking place across Government under the direction of the Taoiseach and the Cabinet Committee on Brexit.

Ireland's objectives in these forthcoming negotiations are to **ensure that the best possible outcomes will be achieved for our citizens, for the economy and for continued peace and prosperity across the island.**

The Government continues to outline these priority issues at all of our meetings with EU counterparts and with the UK government. The Taoiseach, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Minister for European Affairs remain actively engaged with their European counterparts, as do other Ministers and senior officials.



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|-----|---|-----|---|
| 9.  | Belfast City Council  | 54. | Enterprise Lab  |
| 10. | Belong To   | 55. | Ervia   |
| 11. | Bord Bia  | 56. | ESRI  |
| 12. | Bord Iascaigh Mhara   | 57. | European Movement Ireland                                 |
| 13. | Border Communities Against Brexit                             | 58. | European Movement Northern Ireland                        |
| 14. | BPFI  | 59. | Federation of Small Business (NI)                         |
| 15. | British and Irish Trading Alliance                            | 60. | Fermanagh and Omagh District Council                      |
| 16. | British Irish Association                                     | 61. | FEXCO   |
| 17. | British-Irish Chamber of Commerce                             | 62. | Fianna Fáil   |
| 18. | Catalyst Inc  | 63. | Financial Services Ireland/Chief Executive of Irish Funds |
| 19. | Cavan County Council  | 64. | Fine Gael   |
| 20. | CBI Northern Ireland  | 65. | Food and Drink Industry Ireland                           |
| 21. | Central Bank of Ireland                                       | 66. | Foras na Gaelige  |
| 22. | Centre for Cross Border Studies                               | 67. | GAA   |
| 23. | Centre for Democracy and Peace Building                       | 68. | Glencree Centre for Peace & Reconciliation                |
| 24. | Chairperson of the Oireachtas Good Friday Agreement Committee | 69. | Green Party   |
| 25. | Chambers Ireland  | 70. | Green Party NI  |
| 26. | Children's Ombudsman  | 71. | Griffith College  |
| 27. | Children's Rights Alliance                                    | 72. | Healing Through Remembering                               |
| 28. | Citizens Advice NI  | 73. | Heritage Council  |
| 29. | Citizens Information Board                                    | 74. | Higher Education Authority                                |
| 30. | Civil Society Network   | 75. | Housing Agency  |
| 31. | Commission for Aviation Regulation                            | 76. | Human Rights Consortium                                   |
| 32. | Commissioner for Victims and Survivors                        | 77. | Humanist Association of Northern Ireland (Humani)         |
| 33. | Committee on the Administration of Justice                    | 78. | Ibec  |
| 34. | Community Relations Council                                   | 79. | ICMSA   |
| 35. | Community Relations in Schools                                | 80. | ICTU  |
| 36. | Construction Industry Federation                              | 81. | IDA Ireland   |
| 37. | Cooperation and Working Together (CAWT)                       | 82. | IFA   |
| 38. | Cooperation Ireland   | 83. | IIEA  |
| 39. | Cork Chamber of Commerce                                      | 84. | Independent Alliance                                      |
| 40. | Corrymeela  | 85. | Immigrant Council of Ireland                              |
| 41. | County and City Management Association                        | 86. | Independents for Change                                   |
| 42. | Derry City & Strabane District Council                        | 87. | Institute of Chartered Accountants Ireland                |
| 43. | Derry/London-Derry Chamber of Commerce                        | 88. | Institute of Directors                                    |
| 44. | Disability Action   | 89. | International Centre for Local and Regional Development   |
| 45. | Donegal County Council  | 90. | International Fund for Ireland                            |
| 46. | Dublin Airport Authority                                      | 91. | InterTradeIreland   |
| 47. | Dublin Chamber of Commerce                                    | 92. | Irish 4 Europe  |
| 48. | Dublin Institute of Technology                                | 93. | Irish Aviation Authority                                  |
| 49. | Dundalk Chamber of Commerce                                   | 94. | Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers' Association               |
| 50. | Dundalk Institute of Technology                               | 95. | Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) Ltd             |
| 51. | East Border Region  | 96. | Irish Co-operative Organisation Society                   |
| 52. | Eirgrid   | 97. | Irish Council of Churches                                 |
| 53. | Enterprise Ireland  | 98. | Irish Countrywomen's Association                          |



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99. Irish Exporters Association  
 100. Irish Fish Producers Organisation  
 101. Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission  
 102. Irish in Britain  
 103. Irish Manufacturers Association  
 104. Irish Research Council  
 105. Irish Road Haulage Association  
 106. Irish Senior Citizens Parliament  
 107. Irish Sports Council  
 108. Irish Taxation Institute  
 109. Irish Tourist Industry Confederation  
 110. Irish Universities Association  
 111. Islamic Community  
 112. Islamic Community in Northern Ireland  
 113. ISME  
 114. ISPC  
 115. Jewish Representative Council of Ireland  
 116. Joint Business Council  
 117. Keelings  
 118. Labour Party  
 119. Law Society of Ireland  
 120. Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce  
 121. Letterkenny Institute of Technology  
 122. Limerick Chamber of Commerce  
 123. Loughs Agency  
 124. Louth County Council  
 125. Macra na Feirme  
 126. Manufacturing NI  
 127. Meat Industry Ireland  
 128. Methodist Church  
 129. Mid Ulster District Council  
 130. Monaghan County Council  
 131. National Competitiveness Council  
 132. National Youth Council  
 133. Nevin Economic Research Institute  
 134. Newry Chamber of Commerce  
 135. Newry City, Mourne and Down District Council  
 136. NI Centre for Economic Policy  
 137. NI Chamber of Commerce and Industry  
 138. NI Environment Link  
 139. NI Human Rights Commission  
 140. NI Meat Exporters Association  
 141. NI Women's European Platform  
 142. NIIRTA  
 143. Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People  
 144. Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities  
 145. Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action  
 146. Northern Ireland Executive, Deputy First Minister  
 147. Northern Ireland Local Government Association  
 148. Northern Ireland Water  
 149. NUI Galway  
 150. NUI Maynooth  
 151. Open University  
 152. Public Relations Institute of Ireland (PRII)  
 153. Queens University Belfast  
 154. Roman Catholic Church  
 155. Royal Irish Academy  
 156. Rural Independent Group  
 157. Safefood  
 158. SAP Ireland  
 159. Science Foundation Ireland  
 160. Scouting Ireland  
 161. SDLP  
 162. SEUPB  
 163. Sinn Féin  
 164. Sligo Chamber of Commerce  
 165. Sligo County Council  
 166. Small Firms Association  
 167. Social Democrats  
 168. Social Justice Ireland  
 169. SOLAS  
 170. South Dublin Chamber  
 171. Stronger In NI  
 172. Teagasc  
 173. The Bar of Ireland  
 174. The Wheel  
 175. Tourism Ireland  
 176. Translink  
 177. Transport Infrastructure Ireland  
 178. Trinity College Dublin  
 179. Ulster Farmers Union  
 180. University College Cork  
 181. University of Ulster  
 182. Warrenpoint Port  
 183. Women in Business NI  
 184. YMCA  
 185. Youth Action  
 186. YouthWork Ireland





Roinn an Taoisigh  
Department of the Taoiseach



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade