

# International Relations – Preliminary Review

## Background

Dublin City Council established an International Relations Unit in 2007 to lead, facilitate and promote international links and relations that benefit the city, its economy, its education and research capacity and its communities. As a capital city, Dublin has a responsibility to provide leadership and example, nationally and internationally. Increasingly the role of city government is about facilitating and enabling stakeholders in the city to succeed in their respective fields of engagement at business, education or community level. In collaboration with multiple stakeholders, the International Relations Office helps Dublin position itself globally as an international gateway city for Ireland and Europe.

The purpose of the International Relations Unit is to:

- Promote Dublin globally
- Enhance its reputation and capacity to attract investment
- Expand business opportunity
- Attract students and researchers
- Attract tourists and business conferences
- Extend its cultural ties and reach
- Ensure influence on major environmental, justice and social challenges facing the city

The following policies are adopted to ensure effective international relations:

- Focus international relations resources where DCC has a distinct role and can make a difference
- Partner with local, regional, national and international organisations
- Engage with stakeholders and work with them to deliver activities

Activities to deliver policy:

- Bi-lateral city to city relationships (twinning/friendship/co-operation agreements)
- Multi-lateral relationships with organisations of common purpose (Eurocities etc.)
- Economic partnerships (Start Up Commissioner, IDA, EI etc.)
- Networks of learning, international best practice (staff exchanges)
- Managing programmes for international delegations visiting Dublin
- Supporting business tourism (conferences etc.)
- City promotion and global marketing
- Providing advice, speech material and policy drafts on international matters

## Bi-Lateral Relationships

### Twining

This involves a formal commitment by both cities to each other. It is accompanied by a formal contract of activity which requires Council approval.

Dublin is currently twinned with:

- San José (1986)
- Liverpool (1997)
- Barcelona (1998, Addendum in 2009 for 2 years)
- Beijing (2011)

### **Friendship/Co-Operation Agreements**

A friendship agreement involves a less formal commitment between two or more cities.

Dublin currently has the following agreements:

- Tbilisi, Georgia 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014 to 10<sup>th</sup> December 2017
- Mexico City 2014 for 4 years
- Guadalajara (Mexico) 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2013 – no time limit.
- Moscow 20<sup>th</sup> March 2009 – no time limit but now proposing a new Co-Operation Agenda for 2017 to 2019
- St. Petersburg 28<sup>th</sup> September 2010 – no time limit but now proposing a new Road Map for 2017 to 2020
- Wuhan (China) 5<sup>th</sup> September 2016 for 3 years

### **Issues for Consideration**

All relationships should have clear benefits and practical actions or objectives. They should be time bound with an option for renewal. They should involve key stakeholders in the city such as Elected Representatives, business, education, national agencies (EI, IDA, Fáilte, Embassies), cultural/sporting institutions, community groups, City Council officials.

A policy is required as to how to deal with new requests for twinning/agreements.

### **Proposal**

- Not to enter into any new twinning or friendship relationships until a review is carried out
- Carry out a detailed review of existing relationships, to come up with proposals to maximise the potential of these existing relationships, to come up with proposals for evaluating future requests, to assess where Dublin wants to be in 10 years time as a capital city with international linkages and whether we should be seeking new suitable relationships

## **International Delegations**

The International Relations Unit organises and manages a large number of major delegations to Dublin. Requests come from other cities, Irish and other embassies, national governments. They provide an opportunity to promote Dublin and to learn from other cities. Systems are required to differentiate between the differing needs of visiting delegations:

- In respect of groups coming to obtain information on Dublin City Council activities, visits need to be organised in a way that minimises disruption among the sections of the City Council while maximising the learning opportunity for such sections
- In respect of groups wishing to have broader engagement with the city and the public sector, the International Relations Unit should facilitate such engagement
- Where appropriate, the international Relations Unit should collaborate with the Lord Mayor's office to provide a welcome reception service
- Where appropriate, the International Relations Unit should collaborate with the managers of historical/cultural facilities in Dublin City Council's ownership, to showcase them to visiting delegations

## **Promoting Business Tourism**

Dublin was the 18<sup>th</sup> top international destination for conferences and conventions in 2015. Bringing in international conferences helps position Dublin globally as a gateway for Ireland and Europe. It helps promote the city and the region, it helps support the tourism, hotel and hospitality sector in the city and it allows us build contacts for future project collaboration.

There is a need to create synergy and avoid duplication of financial and other State support which may be provided by the Dublin Convention Bureau (Failte Ireland) which has a statutory role in supporting Business conferences coming to Ireland and Dublin.

The main issue for consideration is the level of contribution which the International Relations Unit should make, whether financial or otherwise, and the criteria to be used, given the recent increase in requests for contributions.

Suggested criteria:

- Conference must take place in Dublin
- Proposals should demonstrate potential to generate economic, social or cultural benefits to the city
- Organisers must demonstrate competence in conference organisation
- Preference given to conferences attracting international delegates
- Organisers should demonstrate proof of potential number of delegates
- Consideration should be given to length of visit to Dublin

- Consideration should be given to whether there are Senior Political/Civic leaders/high profile speakers attending
- The type of conference proposed and the relevance of the programme to Dublin City Council Strategic objectives eg. Promote innovation/Tech Summit etc
- Could the topic of the conference be contentious e.g. political, religious etc.
- Has a similar type of conference been assisted already in current year?
- Is it likely that the conference will be held here for one or multiple years and is this the first year?
- How many years would it require support from us?
- What type of other partnership/sponsorship has been or is likely to be secured (leveraging investment public or private)
- Has state funding or assistance through Dublin Convention Bureau already been provided and at what level?
- Will the cost be fully covered through registration and sponsorship (is it a profit making event?)
- How is it publicised internationally (to provide future demand)
- What branding for the City is being offered by the Organisers?

We are fortunate that currently Dublin is well regarded internationally and is rated highly across a number of measures from city growth through to governance. However we are competing against other cities so we need to learn from and adopt international best practice and strengthen our international standing.