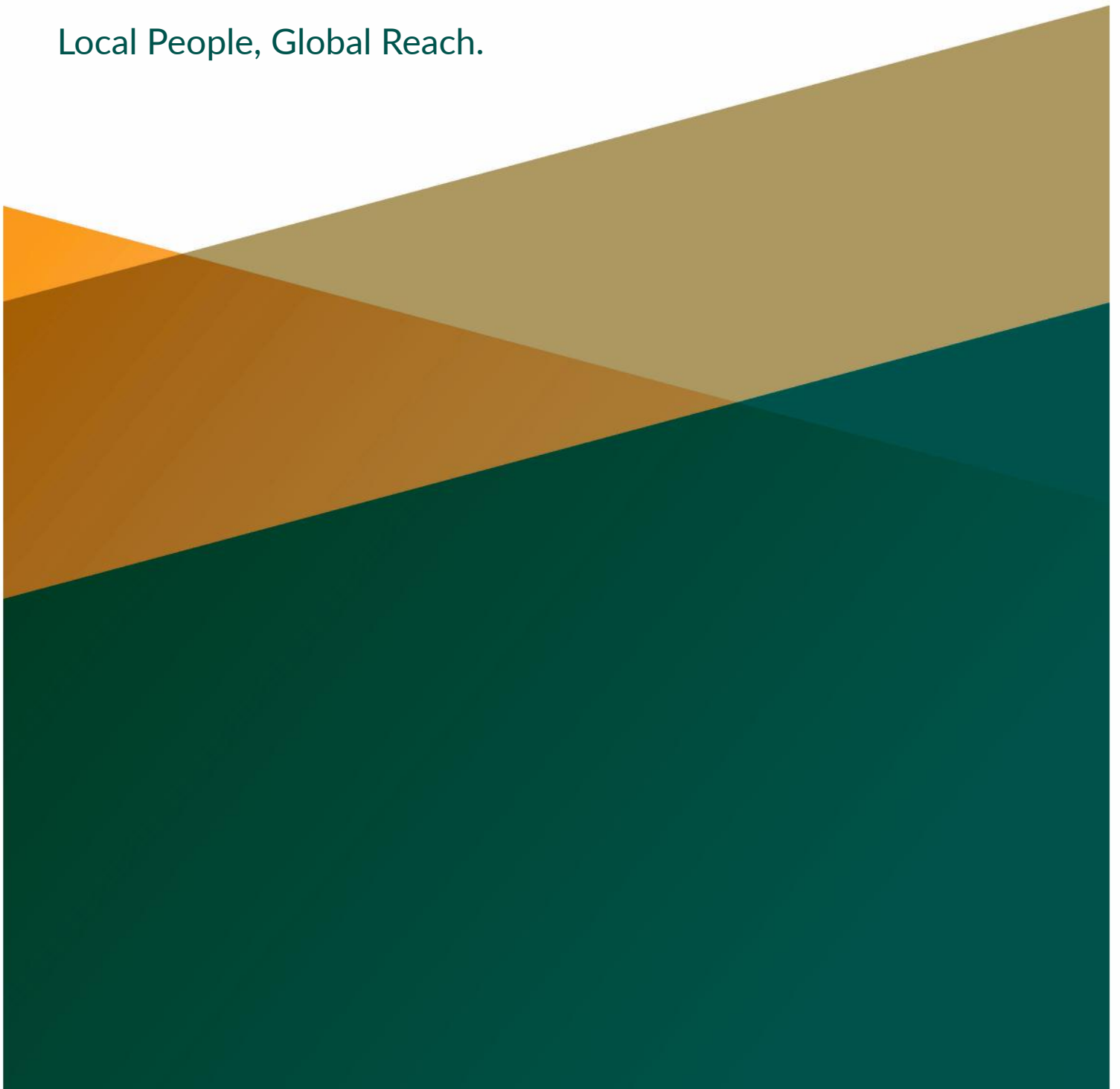




Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# International Sports Diplomacy Framework

Local People, Global Reach.





# Foreword

The Global Ireland Strategy 2025 speaks to the unique value of sport as a powerful way to represent Ireland internationally, and to express our national identity to the world. Sport has the power to bring different nations and cultures closer together, and to build connections between communities around the world. For Ireland, sport is a powerful point of connection with Irish communities overseas, an opportunity to raise awareness of and showcase modern Ireland, and increasingly an important platform to promote Ireland to international audiences as a location for investment, trade and to visit. Sport can also play an important role in Ireland's international partnerships, with large international events providing a shared focus that serves to enhance our bilateral relationships.

I firmly believe that developing this international sport diplomacy framework is timely, and will enhance the many sports diplomacy efforts already underway that would benefit from a more structured and coordinated approach. As with the Global Ireland Strategy, a Team Ireland approach will be key, including not only Government Departments and state agencies, but also our national sporting bodies, our current and previous athletes, as well as those working in the sports sector and private sector more broadly.

Investing in support for our diaspora is a critical aspect of our approach, as is strengthening our international sporting ties and bringing an international perspective to sports in local communities all across Ireland. The



framework also recognises the significant investment by the Government in sports at all levels, the Major International Sports Events Policy and Strategy Framework, and the opportunity that now exists to maximise the impact of these investments in developing partnerships, enhancing intercultural understanding, advancing our values and interests and delivering an economic benefit to the Irish economy.

We already have a record of excellence when it comes to hosting significant international sporting events. There is an exciting schedule of events coming up over the coming years, all with the support of this Government, and building a structured sports diplomacy approach onto these events is a priority. I am particularly looking forward to the Olympics and Paralympics in Los Angeles in 2028 following our incredible showing in Paris 2024. This will offer a significant platform to build from the success of Paris, both in terms of our athlete's achievements and our broader sporting diplomacy goals.

This Framework will initiate the development of a new International Sports Diplomacy Strategy and action plan over the coming year, which I and the Minister for Culture, Communications and Sport will take forward, working in close collaboration with all of our key stakeholders.

**Mr. Simon Harris T.D.**

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

## Foreword



Ireland believes in the capacity of sport to promote and achieve inclusion, equality, diversity and mutual respect. As such, these objectives will drive and motivate the Government's efforts in this area. To coordinate and support these efforts both at home and abroad we are therefore introducing, in cooperation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the International Sports Diplomacy Framework for Ireland.

We wish to promote Ireland as a sporting nation, one that is proud of its heritage. International sporting competitions and events are a premier showcase of sport. This is the case whether those competitions are held in Ireland or overseas. We all saw the magic of last year's Paris Games, where the athletes, coaches and officials of Team Ireland did their nation proud. Given state investment and the development that our sports system has undergone over the last few years, I believe that we will see that again in relation to future major events in Ireland.

We are committed to this major events programme which will see the Ryder Cup coming to Limerick in 2027 in what is likely to be the biggest global sports event that year. I am really pleased that we are supporting two major events with strong all-island and East-West components, namely the UEFA 2028 EURO championships and the 2030 T20 Cricket World Cup. In addition, Ireland is building a name for itself as the European home of American football, with the annual Aer Lingus College Classic fixture every August in the Aviva Stadium and now an inaugural competitive NFL fixture this Autumn in Croke Park where we will welcome the Rooney family and the Pittsburgh Steelers back to Ireland.

Increasing participation is the cornerstone of our National Sports Policy 2018-2027. We have ambitious targets to engage ever more people in Irish sporting life. We also want to ensure that we capitalise on major sporting events and so deliver benefits to the communities in which they occur. We will achieve this through appropriate legacy programmes, as envisioned under our Major International Sports Events Strategy.

Our National Sports Policy is one that has placed values at its heart. We believe in an Ireland where everyone can participate in sport, regardless of their background. We want to build an Ireland, and indeed a world, where everyone who wants to enjoy sport can do so, free from prejudice and discrimination. A vision, which the Government will seek to promote internationally, through the EU, the Council of Europe and bilateral relations with other countries. As Ireland looks, towards its hosting of the European Presidency in the second half of 2026, developing and supporting these international relationships will be vital to its success.

**Mr. Patrick O'Donovan T.D.**

Minister for Culture, Communications and Sport

## Foreword



I have seen at first hand the power of sport to open doors and to connect communities at home and across the globe. While sport and physical activity are good for people's mental and physical health, sport is also a valued tool for building communities and relationships, fostering integration and growth.

This is particularly demonstrated by our traditional Gaelic Games, which form a core part of our Irish culture and sporting heritage. The recent international growth of Gaelic Games, among the Irish diaspora and in communities overseas, shows that traditional sports are not mere curiosities, but living and breathing parts of modern sporting life. This was recognised internationally when Hurling was inscribed on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The opportunities presented by traditional and indigenous sports will therefore, as flagged in the EU Work Plan for Sport 2024-2027, be discussed during Ireland's EU presidency.

However, we will also embrace and grow other sports that provide opportunities for all our people to play, compete, and get fitter and healthier. Our ambition is to build a healthy Ireland and to embed sport as a key level in that national wellbeing effort. In that context, there are sports not yet played in Ireland that can be supported to ensure that every person has an opportunity to engage in sport and physical activity. The wider and stronger the base of our sports pyramid is, the better the chance of developing athletes on the international stage which, of course, provides a platform for engagement at multiple other levels.

I also want to ensure that there's a tangible participation legacy from the major international events we engage with so that the young people of Ireland will benefit from and engage with all these sporting opportunities.

**Mr. Charlie McConalogue T.D.**

Minister of State with responsibility for Sport and Postal Policy

## Foreword



Having had the opportunity to live and work overseas, I have experienced the positive benefits of playing sport abroad.

I had the privilege of playing rugby in Canada, Belgium and Ghana, and American Football at home.

For me, sport provided a chance to meet people, build a network with those with shared interests and enhance my understanding of new and diverse cultures. The friendships that I have made through sport, both as a player and supporter, have stayed with me over time and remain highly valued.

As Minister of State for International Development and Diaspora, I welcome the focus in this Framework on the role sport plays in deepening the ties between the Irish communities overseas and home. I am always pleased to visit sporting clubs abroad and to see first-hand how they foster enduring connections and often provide a home away from home for so many.

It is particularly heartening to see the continued popularity of Gaelic Games internationally and the growing numbers of Irish and non-Irish playing our national games at one of the more than 500 clubs based in every corner of the world. More importantly, the welcome they all receive from their local clubs is a reflection of us a people and the values we hold dear.

By bringing together people with different backgrounds with a shared passion, sport strengthens communities and promotes our culture and heritage.

Over the course of this Framework and the Government's new Diaspora Strategy due early next year, I will continue to work closely with our partners in the GAA and other Irish connected sporting groups to support their work and enhance the connections between them and home.

**Mr Neale Richmond, T.D.**

Minister of State for International Development and the Diaspora

# Vision

International sports diplomacy refers to the unique power of sport to bring different nations and cultures closer together, and to build connections between communities around the world.

Sport provides the world with a window into Ireland and the Irish people, while also providing Irish people at home and abroad with a powerful means of expressing our identity on the international stage. Sport offers unique opportunities to forge new ties and strengthen existing ones, with major international sporting events in particular an ideal venue for developing partnerships, enhancing intercultural understanding, advancing foreign policy priorities and promoting Ireland.

Ireland's rich and unique sporting heritage, the international competitiveness of our athletes and teams, and the attractiveness of Ireland as a location for major sports events and visiting sports enthusiasts, all represent opportunities for Ireland to increase the impact of our global engagement.

Ireland is ideally placed to take advantage of these opportunities, having invested well over €1 billion in the development of sport in Ireland since 2018 and having secured the hosting of a suite of significant international sporting events in recent years. These include annual US College Football season-opening games, a first-ever competitive NFL fixture in Autumn 2025, the Ryder Cup in 2027, the co-hosting with the UK of the UEFA EURO 2028 football championships and the Cricket T20 World Cup 2030.

The purpose of this Framework is to set out a vision for Ireland's approach to international sports diplomacy. It identifies four goals to achieve that vision, and commits to related next steps for each goal. The period ahead offers a range of opportunities to implement this Framework, including at major sporting events hosted in Ireland, such as the 2027 Ryder Cup in Adare, Co. Limerick, and major overseas events such as the Olympics and Paralympics in Los Angeles in 2028.

## VISION STATEMENT

To enhance Ireland's international engagement through the unifying power of sport, to establish Ireland as a sporting hub and to build a global reputation as a premier sporting nation, fostering opportunities for international partnerships, cultural exchange, diaspora engagement, advancing foreign policy priorities, increasing domestic participation and promoting Ireland.

The Programme for Government commits to strengthening Ireland's place in the world, developing whole-of-Government strategies covering Latin America, Asia-Pacific and China, the United States and Canada and Africa and to developing a new Global Ireland 2040 Strategy and Diaspora Strategy. This International Sports Diplomacy Framework gives further effect to these commitments and others in the Programme for Government to support our sporting ecosystem and to take an all-island approach to building participation in sport, hosting major international sporting events and advancing a "Team Ireland" approach to international engagement in line with the current 2025 Global Ireland Strategy.

## Goals

To realise our strategic vision, we will aim to achieve the following goals:

1. To elevate Ireland's international reputation as a sporting nation in order to promote and increase a positive awareness of Ireland overseas
2. To use sport, including our traditional sports, to foster our diaspora's connection to Ireland
3. To support international sporting partnerships and cooperation in line with Ireland's values and interests
4. To maximise the economic benefits of our engagement in and hosting of international sports

## Implementation

A whole of Government "Team Ireland" approach will be key to the delivery of this Framework, including Government Departments and state agencies. National governing bodies for sport (NGBs) are important stakeholders, as well as current and previous athletes and those working in the sports sector more broadly. Engagement with the private sector, particularly those in the areas of research and innovation and sports technology, will also be key. The Irish diaspora are both stakeholders and beneficiaries of this Framework.

To assist in the delivery of this Framework, the two lead Departments will organise a high-level stakeholder conference in Q3 2025 to discuss its implementation and alignment with wider sports and public diplomacy policies. Both Departments will then revert to Government with a dedicated Strategy for its delivery by end-2025.





### **Goal 1: To elevate Ireland's reputation as a sporting nation in order to promote and increase awareness about Ireland overseas**

Since 2018, the government has made significant investments in sports facilities across the country, including over €75m at our Sports Ireland Campus near Blanchardstown and over €874m on sports facilities through the sports capital programmes and large scale sports infrastructure funds. The government has also delivered has delivered €947.5 million in core funding and supports, including €177m during the Covid-19 pandemic, to the governing bodies of over 60 sports. In this period, funding to sport has doubled and this represents not just an investment in communities but also individuals, delivering a range of health benefits and opportunities, including the opportunity to develop their skills and compete at the highest level internationally. It also elevates Ireland's ability to host international sporting events and cater to elite competitive athletes.

Ireland has a roster of impressive athletes across a wide range of sports. The growing success of our athletes at an international level is reflective of their dedication, the support they receive from their communities and the investment that Government has directed to both grassroots and high performance sport.

The Government is committed to continuing to support our athletes at an international level and growing the Team Ireland brand so that Ireland becomes synonymous with sporting excellence. This will help to not only drive grassroots interest and participation in sport but also bolster Ireland's sporting reputation and levels of awareness about Ireland among overseas audiences.

Developing a strong reputation as a sporting nation and investing in our NGBs will help Irish candidates seeking elected office in international sporting federations. In turn, the presence of Irish people in senior roles in international sporting organisations can help to drive a focus on good governance and enhance our reputation as a sporting nation. Taking a more strategic approach to supporting such candidacies, including through the Embassy and Consulate network, serves to support the objectives of this Framework.

Sports diplomacy can have a positive impact at home as well as abroad. The level of participation in sport in Ireland currently stands at 49%, with an ambitious aim to increase this to 60% set out in the Sports Action Plan 2024-2027. By communicating the achievements of our international athletes, taking an all-of-community approach to hosting major sporting events, and continuing to invest in sport and sports facilities, sports diplomacy can be leveraged to boost participation in sport among local communities.

### **GOAL 1 NEXT STEPS:**

Over the lifetime of this Framework, we will:

- » Elevate Ireland's reputation as a sporting nation through continued investment in sport at all levels, including our national Sport Ireland Campus, by building upon our success in hosting major sporting events and by supporting our athletes to achieve on the international stage.
- » Build positive perceptions about and an increased awareness of Ireland, including through public diplomacy and outreach campaigns centred on major sporting events hosted at home and overseas, recognising that major international sporting events offer a powerful means of expressing our identity on the international stage. These campaigns, which will be informed by regional Global Ireland strategies, will utilise digital as well as in-person platforms and be tailored to reflect awareness levels of Ireland and local interest in specific sports.
- » Use Ireland's reputation as a sporting hub and destination, as well as sporting events hosted at home and overseas, to amplify messages about Ireland's priorities and values.
- » Consider how best to support current and former athletes as they engage in international promotional activities, recognising the important role that our international athletes play representing Ireland internationally.

- » Consider how best to support suitably qualified Irish candidates to seek roles in international sporting bodies, recognising the key role and influence which sports administrators can exercise in these organisations.
- » Leverage sports diplomacy actions to encourage greater engagement in sports among target cohorts in Irish society where there are lower than average participation levels, including people with disabilities and older people.

## CASE STUDY – 2024 PARIS OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

The 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games were the most successful ever for Ireland. Over 170 athletes carried the hopes of Ireland with them at the Olympic and Paralympic Games, competing in the green jersey across over 27 sports. This success was founded on significant Government high performance investment of €89 million over the Paris Olympic cycle of 2021 to 2024. 30,000 Irish fans visited Paris during the Olympics, many of whom experienced the integrated diplomatic, sports, tourism and other outreach initiatives that were supported by State investment.

At home, Irish Olympic and Paralympic athletes were celebrated in advance of the Games at an event in Iveagh House which included passport and consular messaging for Irish citizens travelling to France. Videos under the 'Global Ireland' banner celebrating Irish sporting achievements and highlighting the benefits of sport for society and for individuals generated more than 6 million impressions on social media globally.

The success of the team was highlighted at the Games through a coordinated campaign across Ireland's diplomatic network, led by Ireland's Embassy in Paris.

Another key element of Ireland's outreach during these Games was the use of the Irish Cultural Centre in Paris to celebrate 100 years of Ireland's participation in the Olympics, starting with the Games in Paris in 1924. An Embassy Paris commissioned exhibition traced the Irish State's emergence on to the international sporting stage. The Centre served as a hub for fans and athletes

to come together and to demonstrate Ireland's sporting culture to the world. The exhibition was staged at locations across France and a digital version housed on the Centre's web site.

The Games provided a backdrop to celebrate shared Irish and French values, such as inclusion and equality, and to promote Irish economic interests. The former included Embassy Paris and Tourism Ireland commissioning the French street artist 'The Blind' to create an immersive outdoor art exhibition that showcased Irish culture and landscapes, while raising awareness of visual impairments. The exhibition was staged in four high-profile fan zones across Paris during the Games.

Enterprise Ireland and the Embassy worked to promote Irish sports tech on the occasion of the Games. This included a French press visit to the Sport Ireland Campus to raise the profile of the sector with French audiences and buyers.



**Goal 2: To use sport, including Irish traditional sports, to deepen our diaspora's connection to Ireland**

There is value in investing in support for our diaspora, strengthening our international sporting ties and bringing an international perspective to sports in local communities all across Ireland.

Engagement through sport, whether as a participant, volunteer or supporter, promotes vibrant networks and fosters a connection to Ireland among our overseas diaspora. Participation in Gaelic Games in particular plays a special role for the Irish diaspora and the communities they live in. The more than 500 GAA clubs around the world frequently provide a home away from home for the global Irish family.

The inclusive nature of Gaelic games also offers a unique opportunity for newer generations of Irish people overseas, as well as others across the globe with an interest in Irish heritage, to participate in our sporting culture.

The strong international presence of the GAA provides an important platform, both in terms of providing a hub for our diaspora and as a powerful representation of our cultural and sporting identity. Participation in overseas GAA clubs by those born outside of Ireland offers a unique pathway for members of the diaspora and the affinity diaspora to engage with their local Irish community overseas and with other Irish cultural activities, and ultimately to enhance their knowledge of and connection with Ireland.

Many other overseas sports clubs also have a distinctive Irish character, primarily owing to the formative role that an Irish individual or individuals is making or has made to a club. It is important to recognise these linkages, the intersection with our diaspora and to consider how best to further support and enhance these connections into the future.

**GOAL 2 NEXT STEPS**

Over the lifetime of this Framework, we will:

- » Support GAA clubs abroad as a touchstone for Irish communities living overseas and as an important entry-point for local communities to engage with and learn about Ireland, recognising these clubs as part of Ireland's extended network around the world.
- » Through collaboration between the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the GAA, continue to support the development of Gaelic games internationally including through the Gaelic Games Development Fund, recognising that the promotion of our national games also assists in promoting Irish values and interest in Ireland overseas, while also building mutually beneficial political, economic and cultural ties around the world.
- » Foster Irish community networks abroad by facilitating community activities such as team sports, group hikes/runs etc., and support opportunities to gather collectively for big sporting moments.
- » Strengthen ties with members of the diaspora who contribute to the sports sector in their host country, be it as athletes, training and support staff, as sports commentators and journalists, or in the broader sports sectors in sports technology, science, research and development. We will use our diplomatic network, connections with key diaspora figures and with the clubs that have a distinctive Irish character for this outreach, recognising that engagement with these individuals can further the goals of this Framework as well as the broader Global Ireland 2040 and Diaspora Strategies.

## CASE STUDY – PROMOTING GAELIC GAMES OVERSEAS

There are currently over 500 recognised GAA clubs around the world. By encouraging engagement for all ages, these clubs play a key role in sustaining a strong sense of community and heritage among Irish communities overseas. They also provide a valuable network of advice and assistance for new arrivals as they start a new life abroad.

The Global Games Development Fund (GGDF) is a joint Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade - GAA initiative that provides financial support for clubs and initiatives to enhance opportunities for the Irish diaspora and other communities abroad to play Gaelic games. In 2025, the GGDF will fund 151 GAA clubs in 41 countries across the seven World GAA regions. In addition to the GGDF, the DFAT-GAA partnership also supports the employment of 14 Games Development personnel in the US, Britain and Europe.

The Galician Federation, for instance, supports 12 clubs in the Galicia region of Spain. The clubs are a source of support for new Irish arrivals to the region, including a number of young Erasmus students and language teachers who arrive to study or work in Galicia. The clubs also attract large numbers of local Spanish members, which is important in helping the Irish community to integrate with the local community. The popularity of the sport has grown to such an extent that Gaelic Games are now part of the physical education curriculum in Galician schools.



**Goal 3: To support international sporting partnerships and cooperation in line with Ireland's values and interests**

International sporting partnerships are a powerful tool to unite people in common purpose, with all stakeholders working together to achieve shared objectives.

For Ireland, sport has the potential to play a significant role in unlocking the full potential of the island of Ireland, supporting a lasting reconciliation for all communities, which is a key priority for the State. As acknowledged in the National Sports Policy 2018-2027, most sports operate on an all-island basis, which gives rise to the need for close cooperation by communities, volunteers and athletes on the ground and by Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland. The Government has made significant investments through the Shared Island Fund and other mechanisms across a range of areas, including tourism, arts, culture and civic society, and there could be opportunities within sport for similar investments.

The UK-Ireland 2030 Joint Statement recognises the unique ability of sport, alongside arts and culture to forge and foster ties between people across the two islands, and commits to exploring future co-hosting opportunities in the area of sports.

Beyond this island, there is value for Ireland in fostering relations with international stakeholders such as international sporting bodies, national and local authorities, as well as grassroots, community and civil society organisations operating overseas.

**GOAL 3 NEXT STEPS:**

Over the lifetime of this Framework, we will:

- » Promote an all-island approach to hosting major international sporting events, including supporting the hosting of such international events as Euro 2028, the T20 Cricket World Cup 2030, and the Open Championships in Golf. Drawing from the Major International Sports Events Policy and Strategy Framework 2024, we will also explore future opportunities to bid for major competitions that can deliver all-island benefit, including co-hosting opportunities. The possibility of hosting the Tour de France Grand Départ on both sides of the border, for example, has previously garnered cross-community interest and support.
- » Implement the Programme for Government commitment to expand cross-border sports opportunities, providing an opportunity for increased strategic coherence in sports policy across both jurisdictions. As part of this, Government has committed to providing up to €50m towards the redevelopment of Casement Park in Belfast.
- » Explore the all-island opportunities of hosting of the T20 Men's Cricket World Cup 2030 by Ireland and the United Kingdom
- » Use sporting events hosted in Ireland as an opportunity to facilitate broader bilateral programmes of engagements, recognising that international sporting events offer natural platforms to facilitate bilateral relations. This was well evidenced by the Paris 2024 Olympics and Paralympics. We will also leverage upcoming sporting events hosted overseas, such as the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles, to deepen our bilateral connections at a city, state and country-level.



- » Work with grassroots, civil society and community-based organisations to grow participation in sport in line with Sport Ireland's Women in Sport initiative and our commitment to the delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We recognise that these are important partners to foster participation in sport, with our rich sporting heritage and culture of community participation providing natural platforms to promote our values.
- » Explore, including with development partners, the use of sport as a vehicle for development cooperation including through supporting humanitarian, gender, education and health projects with sports components.
- » Foster ties with international sporting bodies.

## CASE STUDY – EAST-WEST COOPERATION ON EURO 2028 BID AND DELIVERY

The UEFA European Men's Football Championships (EURO), held every four years, is one of the largest global sporting events. The bid was formally made by the host football associations of the five partners, with the full backing of the Irish and UK Governments as well as the devolved governments and administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. UEFA, the regional governing body and holder of the rights for the EURO, has a wide range of requirements of the host country including commitments in regard to city administration, security, financial guarantees, public services provision, stadia, accommodation, transport, anti-doping controls, commercial protections, and customs and visas. In October 2023, UEFA announced that the UK and Ireland had been chosen to host EURO 2028.

The cross-jurisdictional, multinational, and multi-layered nature of this project, combined with its scale and ambition, make it unique and a potential springboard for future collaborations.

A Tournament Coordination Commission has been established with the aim of providing a strategic forum for direct engagement between the UEFA Events CEO, the Managing Director of UK&I 2028 Ltd and senior government officials.

Multiple forums exist to facilitate cross-jurisdictional cooperation including the Board of UK&I 2028 on which

the Governments have observer status, a Ministerial Group consisting of responsible Ministers from across the partnership and a Government Partners Group consisting of senior responsible public servants.

In addition, there is further cooperation across all levels with representation from all partners on working groups set up to deliver on specific workstreams such as Impact and Legacy, Communications and Project Management.

Planning and delivery of EURO 2028 will see full strategies and charters covering such areas as impact and legacy, sustainability, mobility and safety and security being agreed. The nature, size and scope of the project and the need to deliver a cohesive product across the event will necessitate further working groups and even closer cooperation as we move closer to 2028.



## CASE STUDY – HORSERACING IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The equine industry and horse racing more specifically, is an area where Ireland and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) share a historical cultural bond. In a country where knowledge of Ireland can be limited, our strong pedigree in horseracing is well understood and lauded by the Emirati population.

Ties in horse racing between Ireland and the UAE are two-way. Emiratis have a significant interest in stud farms and race days in Ireland. The Al Maktoum family, the ruling family of Dubai, has extensive bloodstock interests in Ireland, employing over 300 people in their stud farms, while Dubai Duty-Free sponsors the annual

Irish Derby at the Curragh Racecourse. A large number of Irish horses, jockeys, and trainers are based in the UAE, perhaps most notably multiple-time Dubai World Cup winner, Tadhg O'Shea.

The strong horseracing connection that Ireland and the UAE share has enabled a deepening of the bilateral relationship, increased government-to-government cooperation, and extensive collaboration in other areas of interest such as agri-produce, education, and medical technology, and the promotion of Irish culture in the UAE.



**Goal 4: To maximise the economic benefits of our engagement in and hosting of international sports**

Sport opens up a wide variety of opportunities at all levels, including trade and investment, tourism, business, research and innovation, in addition to bilateral engagement and the promotion of Ireland's values overseas.

This Framework aims to build on Ireland's Major International Sports Events Policy and Strategy Framework (2024), drawing in wider considerations of opportunities for economic diplomacy and the furthering of bilateral engagement and Ireland's values worldwide, in order to ensure major sporting events are utilised optimally as platforms for broad engagement. This will also draw upon key strategies across business and trade, including Ireland's Business Events Strategy 2030 (published in April 2025) and Ireland's Trade and Investment Strategy 2022-2026, as well as the Global Ireland Strategy, and the Government's new Diaspora Strategy.

These strategies aim to ensure Ireland maintains and expands its place as a premier location and partner for tourism, trade, investment and education. Major sporting events will provide a valuable platform to further Ireland's objectives in this regard.

**GOAL 4 NEXT STEPS**

Over the lifetime of this Framework, we will:

- » Develop a more strategic approach to leveraging major sporting events hosted in Ireland and overseas as opportunities for high level engagement in pursuit of trade and investment objectives.
- » Maximise the economic benefits of sport through enhanced coordination and an enhanced Team Ireland approach. We will do this by implementing our Major International Sports Events Policy and Strategy Framework, drawing from the recent experiences at the Paris Olympics and Paralympics, the 2023 Men's Rugby World Cup and the 2023 FIFA Women's Soccer World Cup in Australia and New Zealand.



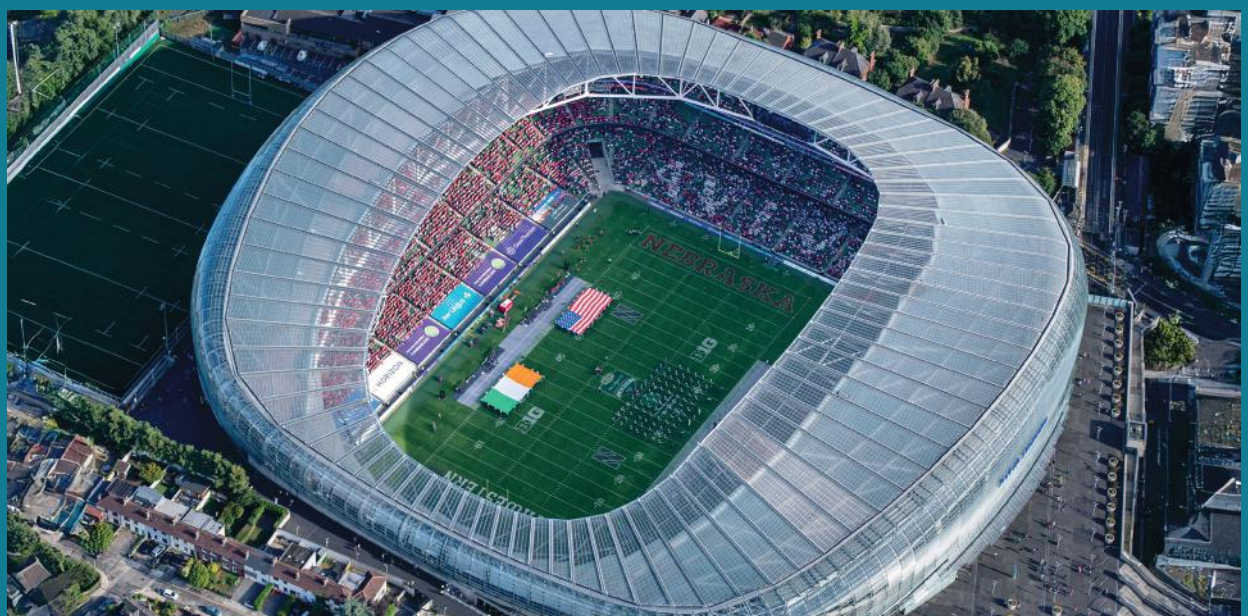
## CASE STUDY – AER LINGUS COLLEGE FOOTBALL CLASSIC SERIES

Since 2022, the Aer Lingus College Football Classic has been a key annual driver of connectivity between Ireland and the US. This has included tens of thousands of US sports fans travelling to Ireland to watch the games, high level political visits and an opportunity to further develop vibrant and dynamic two-way business relationship between Ireland and the US. The “Much More Than A Game” initiative has had a powerful impact in this regards with a suite of additional elements around the game offering a unique opportunity strengthening existing ties and creating new ones between senior C Suite business leaders from both sides of the Atlantic.

This public-private partnership between the Government and Irish American Events Limited, with commercial sponsorship from Aer Lingus and others, had delivered a number of high profile games pre-Covid. Since then, annual opening weekend “Week Zero” competitive matches from the US College Football Championships have taken place in 2022, 2023 and 2024 with games confirmed for 2025 – 2027. Government support to the Series has been primarily delivered via Fáilte Ireland and negotiations are currently

underway regarding a long-term extension of and commitment to the Series out into the 2030s.

The economic, cultural and networking opportunities from each year’s College Classic are well documented. In 2023, for instance, when Notre Dame hosted Navy at the Aviva Stadium, the post-event economic analysis showed that the event generated an estimated value of €180 million to the Irish economy. The historic sold-out game, the second of a five-game series, attracted over 49,000 attendees, with 39,702 from the US, 1,063 visitors from other parts of the world, and over 8,000 from Ireland.



## Commitments and Governance

In order to deliver on the goals of this Framework and achieve our vision of International Sports Diplomacy for Ireland, we will:

1. Establish a steering group to implement this Framework, jointly chaired by the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, with participation from relevant Government departments and state agencies.
2. Conduct a targeted consultation with key stakeholders, including National Governing Bodies for Sport, current and former athletes, relevant state agencies and local authorities, business and trade organisations, NGOs and civil society.
3. Develop a strategy to support the delivery of this Framework.
4. Jointly develop proposals for a fund to support initiatives under this Framework, with details of the fund to be addressed in the context of the 2026 estimates process.
5. Deliver a mid-term report to Government on delivery of this Framework and a final report at the end of the lifetime of the Framework.



# Appendix 1

## Key documents

- » National Sports Policy 2018-2027
- » Sports Action Plan 2024-2027
- » Sport Ireland Women in Sport Policy 2023
- » Major International Sports Events Policy and Strategy Framework 2024
- » Ireland's Business Events Strategy 2030
- » Global Ireland Strategy 2018-2025
- » Trade and Investment Strategy 2022-2026
- » Diaspora Strategy 2020-2025
- » Ireland's International Development Policy 2029



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