

# Department of the Taoiseach

## Strategy Statement 2015-2017



Roinn an Taoisigh  
Department of the Taoiseach

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**February 2015**

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## **Our Mission and Values**

Our purpose is to help the Taoiseach and the Government to develop a sustainable economy and a successful society, to pursue Ireland's interests abroad, to implement the Government's Programme and to build a better future for Ireland and all her citizens.

Our work is guided by the Vision, Mission and Values of the Civil Service, which are set out in the Civil Service Renewal Plan.

### **Vision**

- To provide a world-class service to the State and to the people of Ireland

### **Mission**

- To offer objective and evidence-informed advice to Government, respond to developments, and deliver Government objectives while striving to achieve optimal outcomes in the long-term national interest
- To serve citizens and stakeholders efficiently, equally and with respect, in a system that is open, transparent and accountable

### **Values**

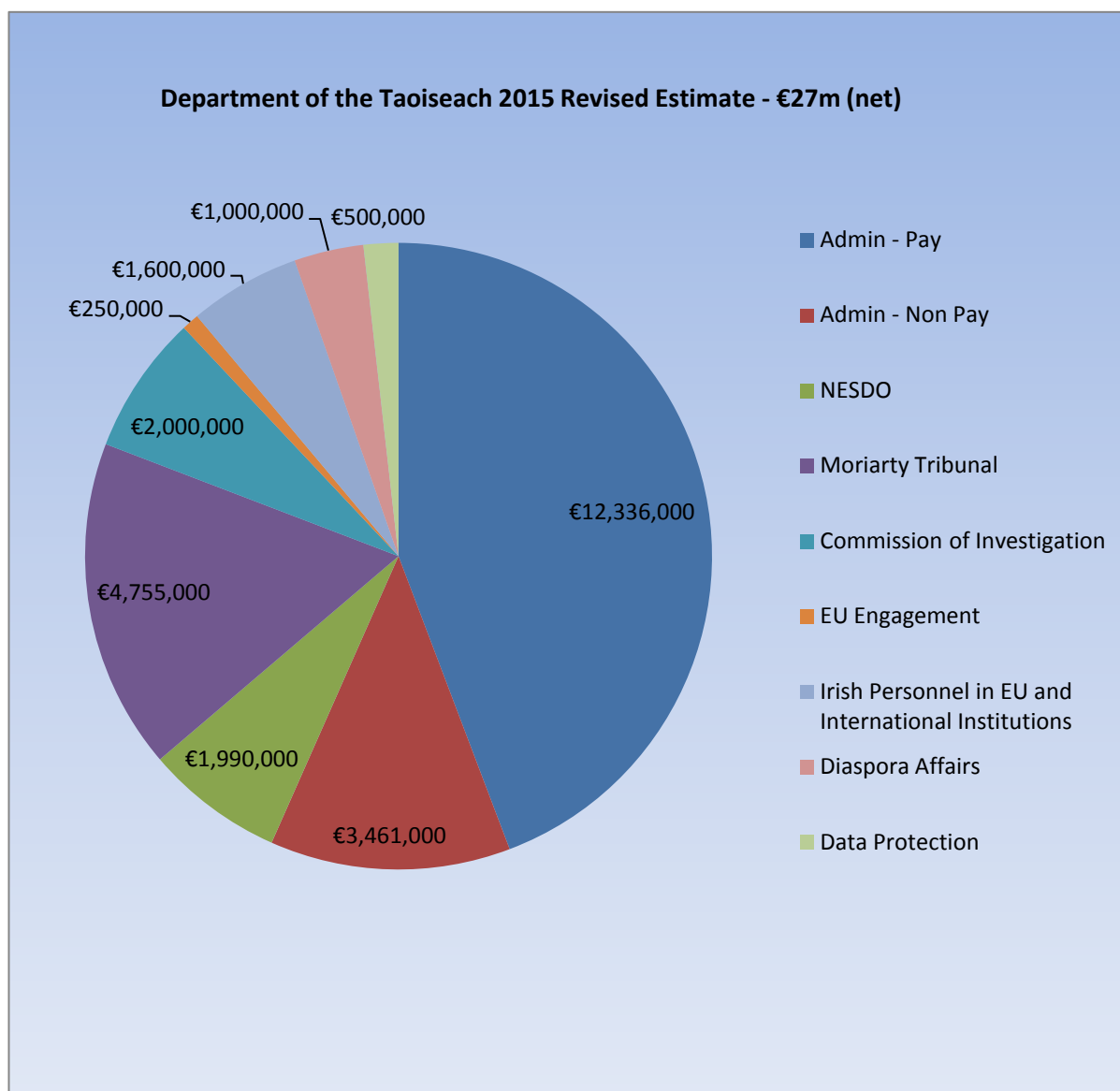
- A deep-rooted public service ethos of independence, integrity, impartiality, equality, fairness and respect
- A culture of accountability, efficiency and value for money
- The highest standards of professionalism, leadership and rigour



## Our Core Activities

Different countries take different approaches to organising the functions of the centre of government, including support for the Head of Government. In Ireland, the Department of the Taoiseach is directly involved in the provision of a range of essential Government services, as well as strategic policy advisory functions. We have a current staffing complement of 185 and our annual budget is €27m, of which €15.8m is spent on pay and administration.

## Allocation of Resources 2015



Our core activities are:

- the executive functions of the Taoiseach and the Government
- the Government Secretariat
- support for the Taoiseach in carrying out his duties as Head of Government, including in relation to the Oireachtas, Constitutional issues, Protocol, the European Council, the North/South Ministerial Council and the British-Irish Council
- engaging with the formulation and implementation of government policy, mainly through the system of Cabinet Committees, including the Economic Management Council, Senior Officials Groups and the Programme for Government Office
- the Office of the Taoiseach
- the Office of the Tánaiste
- the Office of the Government Chief Whip
- support for the Ministers of State assigned to the Department (with responsibility for European Affairs & Data Protection, Diaspora Affairs and International Financial Services)
- the Government Press Office
- providing briefing and advice for the Taoiseach on the full range of domestic policy issues and on international affairs
- supporting the Taoiseach and Government in the formulation and implementation of Ireland's EU policy, including the coordination of EU policy interests across the whole of Government
- delivering support services through Corporate Affairs Division (HR, Finance, IT and other services)



Reflecting the Government's national priorities, the current Cabinet

Committees are:

- Economic Management Council
- Economic Recovery & jobs
- Construction, Housing, Planning & Mortgage Arrears
- Social Policy & Public Service Reform
- Justice Reform
- Health
- European Affairs
- Economic Infrastructure & Climate Change
- Irish Language
- Commemorations

Across all of our areas of responsibility, considerable time and effort goes into answering parliamentary questions, preparing material for use in the Oireachtas, processing freedom of information requests, answering letters and queries from the public, organising events, preparing speeches and responding to media queries.

For example, in 2014 the Department of the Taoiseach dealt with 58 Government meetings, 76 Cabinet Committee meetings, 952 Government Memorandums, 20,000 pieces of correspondence, 805 parliamentary questions and 173 freedom of information requests. We also provided support for 214 speeches, 220 functions, 190 meetings, 25 overseas trips and over 100 press events involving the Taoiseach.

Carrying out this work to a consistently high standard remains central to our role in serving the Taoiseach, the Government and the Oireachtas, as well as providing public accountability.

### **Implementation**

As well as our role in policy formulation, the Department of the Taoiseach is committed to ensure Government policy is implemented fully and effectively.

We have significantly improved our capacity to ensure effective implementation since 2011.

Examples of this include our role in Ireland's successful exit from the Troika programme, the Action Plan for Jobs, the Programme for Government Office, the EU Presidency and the new Civil Service Renewal Plan.

We will continue to focus on implementation as a core activity, including through effective management of implementation and transparent reporting on progress on key national strategies.

## **Our Strategic Priorities**

The Department of the Taoiseach's Strategy Statement for 2011-14 was prepared in the context of a profound economic and political crisis in Ireland.

It also set out to successfully implement major structural changes in the Department which were decided upon by the Government.

There has been clear progress on all of the Department's strategic priorities for the period 2011-14. These include a significant fall in unemployment, a stabilisation of the public finances, the return of economic growth, a much improved position and better outcomes for Ireland within the European Union and internationally, wide-ranging political and public service reforms and the implementation of a range of new social policies by the Government.

This changed context allows Ireland new opportunities to create a sustainable economy and a successful society. However, we are also committed to continuing to work on the legacy issues of the economic crisis, including unemployment, emigration, debt, housing and the continuing programme of reform.

We are also determined to ensure that lessons are learned from the economic crisis and that the measures put in place to prevent another crisis are effective. This includes changes in culture, as well as in processes, legislation and governance.

In preparing this Strategy Statement for 2015-2017, we have carried out a full assessment of progress across all of our Strategic Priorities and we have also

considered the challenges that Ireland faces in the period up to 2017, and beyond. Our essential conclusions are that significant progress has been made, but that many legacy issues of the crisis remain to be resolved.

Our Strategic Priorities therefore remain broadly the same, but they are re-cast to reflect the changed context and the emerging challenges which Ireland faces.



## **Strategic Priorities 2015-2017**

### **A. A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY**

Sustainable economic development - jobs, growth, competitiveness, enterprise, trade and investment

### **B. A SUCCESSFUL SOCIETY**

Helping to ensure that Government policies and services support a socially inclusive and fair society

### **C. EUROPE**

Ensuring that Ireland plays a full and effective role in all aspects of the European Union, promoting and protecting our national interests while also contributing to progress and prosperity across the Union

### **D. PEACE**

Helping to maintain peace and develop relationships on the island of Ireland, and between Britain and Ireland, including through our common membership the European Union

### **E. PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT**

Overseeing and reporting on implementation of the Programme for Government, and the Statement of Government Priorities 2014-2016

### **F. SERVICE**

Providing excellent support services for the Taoiseach and Government

### **G. TRUST AND REFORM**

Helping to reform and restore trust in the institutions of the State and ensuring that the mistakes that led to the economic crisis will not recur

### **H. IRELAND IN A GLOBALISED WORLD**

Working to protect our interests, maximise our influence and increase our prosperity in a globalised world

## **New Areas of Responsibility**

Our Strategic Priorities also reflect new areas of responsibility assigned to the Department, including the assignment of three Ministers of State to new policy areas:

- Diaspora Affairs
- Data Protection
- International Financial Services

We have also been assigned additional responsibilities under the Civil Service Renewal Plan, including with regard to the new Accountability Board and the Civil Service Management Board, as well as other national priority areas such as Justice Reform.

## **New Areas of Emphasis**

Reflecting the changed environment, we will in future place greater emphasis on key national priorities, which in many cases have a significant EU dimension:

- Sustainable Economic Policies
- Competitiveness, Trade and Investment
- Legacy of the economic crisis, e.g. Housing, Debt
- Social Inclusion
- Health & Education
- Northern Ireland, British-Irish Relations and related issues arising from Britain's relationship with the EU
- Climate Change, and especially the implications for Ireland
- Commemorations, and especially the Centenary of the 1916 Rising
- The next phase of Public Service Reform

## **A. A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY**

*Sustainable economic development - jobs, growth, competitiveness, enterprise, trade and investment, full employment*

In line with the Programme for Government, we will continue to ensure that growth and jobs are at the heart of Government policy. We will work to help the Government achieve its target of Full Employment by 2018. As the economic recovery continues, we will work to ensure that there are widespread social benefits from Ireland's economic progress, in accordance with Government policy.

We will do this through the pursuit of greater competitiveness, increased levels of investment, trade and exports, sustained economic growth, a supportive enterprise environment, increased levels of entrepreneurship, continued improvement in the public finances, continued increases in job creation and further reductions in unemployment.

We will also promote sensible and sustainable delivery of necessary infrastructure, including housing, in accordance with emerging needs. We will actively support the whole-of-Government structures to drive and monitor implementation of key policies, strategies and initiatives, and report on progress in key areas including promoting economic growth and job creation, further improving the public finances, ongoing reform of the banking sector and credit provision, adjustments to the planning process and significant infrastructure and housing development. This work will also help to identify and resolve obstacles, and seek out new opportunities.

We will work with relevant Departments and agencies to assist promoting Ireland as an attractive location for business, investment, trade and tourism.

We will measure progress under relevant national and international benchmarks for job creation, unemployment levels, macroeconomic performance indicators, trade and investment data and overall international focus on and coverage of Ireland.

## **B. A SUCCESSFUL SOCIETY**

*Helping to ensure that Government policies and services support a socially inclusive and fair society*

We will help to ensure implementation of reforms in health, education and other services as outlined in the Programme for Government, in particular through relevant Cabinet Committees.

We will seek to ensure that the position of vulnerable groups in society are taken into account as the economic recovery continues, that the benefits of recovery are felt across all sectors of society and that there is an effective cross-departmental response where required.

We will work through the National Economic and Social Council and broader social dialogue to ensure that a full range of views can input to the development of economic and social policy.

There will be a focus on providing a safe and supportive environment for families, children and older people, including through reforms in the areas of housing, social services and the criminal justice system.



We will measure delivery of Programme for Government commitments and through national and international benchmarks (e.g. OECD and CSO statistics in education, health and deprivation).

### **C. EUROPE**

*Ensuring that Ireland plays a full and effective role in all aspects of the European Union, promoting and protecting our national interests while also contributing to progress and prosperity across the Union.*

The Department will continue to support the Taoiseach in his role as a member of the European Council and in his interaction with other Heads of State and Government and leading EU figures. We will also support the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade in relation to the EU dimension of his portfolio, as well as assisting the Minister of State for European Affairs. The Department will brief and advise the Tánaiste and other Members of the Government on EU issues.

We will co-operate with the Oireachtas as it discharges its role in EU scrutiny. We will also engage with non-governmental groups and organisations with an interest in EU issues and support the communication of such issues to the Irish public. The Department will continue to co-ordinate Ireland's engagement with the EU.

In co-operation with other Departments, we will lead on the implementation of the Government's strategic approach to the EU, including through analysing major developments and identifying priority issues. We will pay particular attention to ensuring a coherent approach to cross-cutting issues, and to promoting policies at EU level which can effectively contribute to the

achievement of domestic objectives, above all sustainable economic recovery, growth and employment.

Building on our 2013 EU Presidency and in continual liaison with Ireland's Permanent Representation to the European Union and Embassies in EU Member States, we will promote sustained engagement with the EU Institutions and other Member States, individually and collectively, in pursuit of Ireland's interests.

We will develop further the Government's policy of actively promoting the placement of Irish personnel in key EU and international institutions.

#### **D. PEACE**

*Helping to maintain peace and develop relationships on the island of Ireland, and between Britain and Ireland, including through our common membership the European Union*

We will continue to support the pursuit of continued, enduring peace and prosperity on the island of Ireland. In this context, we will support the Taoiseach in his engagements with the British Prime Minister and political representatives in Northern Ireland, including engagement with the First and deputy First Minister, the North South Ministerial Council and the British Irish Council.

We will work to ensure the full implementation of the various agreements, including the Stormont House Agreement concluded in December 2014. We will work with other Departments and agencies to support efforts to develop greater mutual understanding, trust and cooperation between the people on

the island of Ireland, including developing closer links with civic society as well as deeper economic and social ties.

Building on the ten year vision set out in the Irish-British joint statement of March 2012, we will continue to support the development of stronger economic and social links between Ireland and Britain, including through the mechanisms provided for in that joint statement and in the context of our common membership of the EU.

We will measure progress in these areas by monitoring the extent of peaceful daily life, progress on implementation of the Agreements and the associated institutional arrangements, and broader economic and trade data.

## **E. PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT**

*Overseeing and reporting on implementation of the Programme for Government, and the Statement of Government Priorities 2014-2016.*

We will do this through the Programme for Government Office, supporting an ongoing process of monitoring and reporting to the Taoiseach on implementation. Where there are problems with a Programme commitment, we will work to ensure they are addressed.

We will facilitate a whole of government or cross-departmental approach where that is required, usually through a Cabinet Committee. We will also implement outstanding commitments in the Programme for Government and the Statement of Government Priorities which are the direct responsibility of our Department.

We will continue to publish an annual progress report in March each year.

## **F. SERVICE**

*Providing excellent support services for the Taoiseach and Government*

We will continue to provide all of the support services required by the Taoiseach and Government, including the Government Secretariat, the Cabinet Committee secretariat, the Chief Whip's Office, Private Offices, the Government Press Office and the Protocol service.

In accordance with the Civil Service Renewal programme, we will continue to improve the effectiveness of our support services, including in the areas of human resources, ICT and financial management.

There will be regular internal management reports on progress, as well as independent scrutiny through the new Civil Service accountability framework, the Oireachtas, the C&AG, freedom of information, media, published progress reports and internal audit.

We will also consult with customers and stakeholders in line with commitments under the Customer Charter initiative.

## **G. TRUST AND REFORM**

*Helping to reform and restore trust in the institutions of the State and ensuring that the mistakes that led to the economic crisis will not recur*

We provide support to the Taoiseach, Government and key supporting processes such as the Cabinet Committees. We will work to ensure that these continue to operate efficiently and effectively.

We will continue to be open to new and diverse ideas and opinions, and to adapt our processes to learn lessons from the past and to plan for the future. We will engage with stakeholders about strategic risks facing the country and publish an updated National Risk Assessment each year.

We will play our part in the process of reform, including as appropriate developing/implementing proposals for constitutional, political and institutional reform. The Cabinet Committee on Justice Reform will oversee the significant change process underway in the policing and justice system.

We will continue to implement Programme for Government commitments to increase the openness and accountability of the public service. We will continue to promote Public Service Reform in order to deliver better services to the citizen, in particular through the Cabinet Committee process.

Through the new Civil Service Management Board, and the Civil Service Accountability Board, we will ensure collective leadership of the Civil Service Renewal programme, working closely with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

This aims to deliver a significant change process to ensure that the Civil Service operates as a single, unified, professional and independent organisation, which responds flexibly to change, is open to new ideas and challenge, and is accountable for performance.

Regular progress reports on public service reform will be prepared and published and performance will be measured against international benchmarks.

## **H. IRELAND IN A GLOBALISED WORLD**

*Working to protect our interests, maximise our influence and increase our prosperity in a globalised world.*

We will work with other Government Departments and agencies, and with partners at home and abroad, to protect Ireland's interests, to maximise our influence both politically and economically and to help increase our prosperity.

We will continue to co-operate closely with the Departments of Foreign Affairs & Trade, Justice & Equality and Defence to ensure that Ireland's policies and capabilities in foreign affairs, security and defence are appropriate and effective.

As a small open economy, our living standards and our ability to provide public services and social supports depend on a successful and competitive export-led economy. We will build on the success of recent years in repairing Ireland's reputation, in attracting foreign direct investment and in growing our export trade. We will consolidate those gains and seek to increase trade and investment, notably in emerging markets.

As well as our traditionally strong relationships with the United States, Britain and other EU partners, we will further develop our global links to other priority regions – including following up on the recent series of high-level political engagements with China and Japan.

We will work to optimise the whole of Government approach at home so as to ensure we maximise our potential opportunities abroad. We will also continue to focus on specific opportunities in the digital industries and international

financial services, in support of the Ministers of State with responsibility for those areas.

We will also help to implement a step-change in Ireland's relationship with our Diaspora, in support of the Minister of State for Diaspora Affairs.

## **Achieving Our Goals**

We aim always to learn and improve as an organisation.

We will continue to work:

- on improving our capabilities as an organisation
- developing our leadership and training programmes, building on progress already made
- on strategic thinking and forward planning
- on identifying major trends and risks and how they will affect Ireland
- on being open and transparent in our work and in actively listening to ideas, interests and concerns from all sections of Irish society
- on cultural change and rebuilding trust with the citizens

We will meet the commitments set out in the Civil Service Renewal Plan:

- to encourage creative and innovative thinking, constructive problem-solving, openness to change and flexible working methods
- to ensure through appropriate merit based recruitment, training, and life-long learning and development, that the Civil Service has the necessary expertise to advise on and implement public policy in a complex and changing world
- to maximise the contribution of all staff, by nurturing and rewarding talent and by encouraging civil servants to develop their potential in a workplace committed to equality, diversity, and mutual respect



We will implement the 25 actions in the Civil Service Renewal Plan, including developing our strategic HR capability, strengthening performance management and accountability, recognising excellence and innovation, strengthening policy-making skills and conducting an Organisation Capability Review.

In the first quarter of 2015, we will prepare a new HR Strategy 2015-17 to underpin the delivery of this Strategy Statement. We will also complete a Staff Consultation Initiative and implement actions to address its findings in the areas of leadership and strategic direction, culture and management style, staff recognition, communications, working conditions, career development and performance management.

## Programme for Government Commitments

The Department is directly responsible for the following commitments from the Statement of Government Priorities 2014-2016.

Commitment
We will continue to support the development of Dublin as an international city region that will have positive economic benefits for the entire country.
The Government remains committed to ensuring that the European Union prioritises the key themes which were central to Ireland's presidency – Jobs, Stability and Growth. Both government parties will work through their membership of the largest European political families – the EPP and PES – to ensure that growth and job creation are at the heart of EU's agenda.
We will continue to pursue additional Seanad reforms through the Seanad Committee on Practices and Procedures (CPP).
We remain fully committed to the full implementation of all aspects of the Good Friday Agreement. We will work closely with the British Government to support the efforts of the political parties in Northern Ireland to reach agreement on the issues of parades, flags and dealing with the issues of the past.
We will systemically publish details of all appointments to State Boards.

We will also continue to contribute to the implementation of all aspects of the Programme for Government and the Statement of Priorities 2014-16.