



Sinn Féin

Putting Ireland First | Éire Chun Cinn



MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

A vision for the global Irish diaspora

Ag bogadh ar aghaidh le chéile-Fís do dhiaspóra na hÉireann ar fud an domhain

FOREWORD

There are approximately 70million citizens across the globe who claim Irish roots. While we are a small Island, we are also a huge nation scattered across the continents.

Over the centuries the Irish have been forced to leave our homeland in order to find work and a better future for their families. Sometimes it was because of political repression. Sometimes because of famine and hunger and often it was economic. Men and women unable to find work at home and travelling overseas to build new nations in other places.

The current economic crisis is forcing 240 people to leave the Irish state each day. 400,000 have left in the last five years. These are the economic exiles – the lost generation. Every townland and parish the length and breadth of Ireland has a son or daughter in the diaspora. There are empty places at tables and GAA clubs stripped of their players.

We are immensely proud of our diaspora who have braved the enormous challenge of emigrating and who have built for themselves and their families a home in a new land. Over the years past generations of emigrants have contributed significantly to their new adopted nations.

Our diaspora has a deserved reputation for hard work, and diligence. Whether in the fields of the arts, sports, music, politics, education, business and philanthropy they have made their mark.

Today, Ireland is in transition both north and south. The mismanagement of the economy and the state's public finances have resulted in forced emigration, mass unemployment and an unfair banking debt being shouldered by ordinary citizens. This has created the demand for urgent radical change across our political, financial and even charitable institutions in order to end exploitation and the toxic culture of cronyism.

The Irish peace process has positively transformed society in the North and given hope to a new generation of young people who now enjoy social, economic and political rights which their parents and grandparents were denied. Many challenges remain however, and building the peace allied to building a vibrant economy is a key task.

Sinn Féin believes much more must be done to develop and strengthen our relationship with the diaspora.

Forced emigration is a crisis that successive governments have failed to tackle and which this government has encouraged through its austerity policies.

It is time to call a halt. To put in place strategies and policies that can reverse emigration.

A first step must be the creation of a government task-force on emigration.

Martin McGuinness, Mary Lou MacDonald and I over the past year also represented Sinn Féin as delegates to the government's Constitutional Convention where we

strongly advocated the case for extending voting rights in Presidential elections to Irish citizens living outside the state.

78% of delegates voted in favour of this proposal and Sinn Féin is now calling on the government to act and implement the extension of this right in the constitution by setting a date for a referendum.

Sinn Féin has also been putting forward the case for the reform of the Seanad which would include specific diaspora representation to our institutions of state.

We are also arguing for the appointment of a Minister of State for the Diaspora during this term and by this government.

As Sinn Féin President I participated in the Global Irish Economic Forum and the new Distinguished Presidential Service Awards for the Irish Abroad. These are worthwhile initiatives, but we must do more.

This decade is of significant historic importance as we commemorate the centenary anniversaries of the events that have shaped our social and political discourse over the past century, including the Easter Rising of 1916.

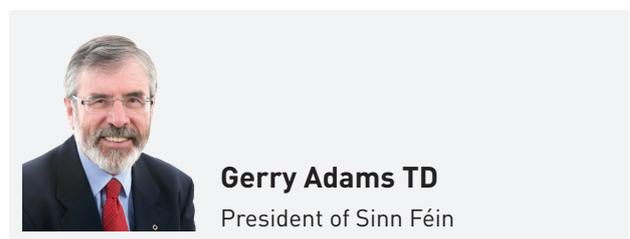
It is our strong view that these important centenary events offer us a huge opportunity to engage both at home and abroad through debate and discussion and the creative arts, giving expression to our heritage and culture, and discussing what kind of nation we want to build in the 21st century.

Sinn Féin have a clear vision in this regard. We want to see a New Republic. We want the British and Irish governments to hold simultaneous border polls or referendums north and south on Irish unity and in this regard require the strong support of our diaspora.

The government are not minded to act on any of these issues at this time. They will not do so unless and until Irish citizens both at home and abroad demand our rights.

We take huge pride in our diaspora. It is of profound importance that we do all in our power to foster and ensure the strengthening of positive relationships and connections. To do so, Sinn Féin believes that we need a diaspora strategy which is government-led and fully resourced.

I commend this Sinn Féin policy which hopes to set out our vision in this regard



RÉAMHRÁ

Tá timpeall 70 milliúin saoránaigh ar fud an domhain a deireann gur de fhréamhacha Éireannach iad. Cé gur oileáin beag muid, is náisiúin ollmhór muid atá scaipthe ar fud na ilchríoch.

Le blianta fada anuas chuirtear brú ar Éireannaigh bogadh thar sáille chun obair a aimsiú agus todhcháí níos fearr a chruthú dá teaghlach. Uaireanta tharla sé mar gheall ar cos ar bolg polaitíochta. Uaireanta mar gheall ar ghorta agus ocras agus go minic cúiseanna geilleagrach. Fir agus mná gan aon obair sa bhaile ag dul thar sáille chun náisiúin nua a thógáil in áiteanna éagsúla.

Tá an géarchéim eacnamaíochta atá againn faoi láthair ag cur brú ar 240 duine imeacht ón Stáit achan lá. Tá 400,000 duine imithe sna cúig bliana anuas. Is iadsan na deoraithe eacnamaíochta-an glúin cailte. Tá iníon nó mac ag achan baile fearainn agus paróiste ar fud fad na hÉireann mar pháirt den diaspora. Ta áiteanna folamh ag táblaí agus imritheoirí cailte ag clubanna CLG.

Táimid thar a bheith bródúil astu. Chuaigh siad i ngleic leis an dúshlán ollmhór a bhfuil i gceist le eisimirce. Tá siad tar éis baile nua a thógáil dá teaghlach i dtír nua. Thar na blianta is iomaí rud atá tugtha ag na h-eisimircí don náisiúin nua a bhfuil siad lonnaithe ann.

Tá ár ndiaspora aitheanta mar dhaoine a oibríonn go dian i réimse leathan de rudaí cosúil leis na healaíona, spórt, ceol, polaitíocht, oideachas, gnó, agus daonchairdeas.

Tá Éire, ó thuaidh agus ó dheas ag athrú. Mar thoradh de míbhainistíocht an geilleagar agus airgeadais poiblí tá eisimirce éigeantach, dífhostaíocht, agus fiachas baincéireachta ag titim ar ghuaillí gnáth saoránaigh. Mar gheall ar na rudaí seo tá géarghá ann athraithe ó bhonn a chur i bhfeidhm trasna na gcórais polaitiúil, airgeadas agus fiú cumainn carthanachta, chun deireadh a chuir le dúshaothrú agus an cultúr nimhiúil de chairdeas fabhair.

Mar gheall ar an bpróiseas síochána sa tuaisceart tá athrú dearfach tagtha ar an sochaí ó thuaidh. Tá dóchas ag glúin nua de dhaoine óga. Baineann siad tairbhe as cearta sóisialta, eacnamaíochta agus polaitiúil. Rudaí nach raibh ar fáil dá tuismitheoirí agus sean-tuismitheoirí. É sin ráite, is iomaí dúshlán atá fágtha, agus is tasc tábhachtach é síocháin a thógáil agus geilleagar láidir a chruthú.

Creideann Sinn Féin go bhfuil gá ann i bhfad níos mó a dhéanamh chun ár gcaidreamh leis an diaspora a fhorbairt agus a láidir.

Is géarchéim í an eisimirce éigeantach, agus go dtí seo theip ar rialtais i ndiaidh a chéile dul i ngleic leis an fhadhb seo, agus chuir a chuid polasaithe déine go mór leis an fhadhb.

Tá an am ann chun stop a chuir le seo. Caithfear stráitéisí agus polasaithe a chur i bhfeidhm a bhfuil ábalta an eisimirce a aisiompú.

An chéad rud ar chóir déanamh ná tascfhórsa rialtas eisimirce a chruthú.

Le bliain anuas bhí mé féin, Martin McGuinness agus Mary Lou MacDonald mar ionadaithe sa tionól bunreachtúil. Ansin, mhol muid gur chóir ceartaí vótála sna toghcháin uachtaránachta a thabhairt do saoránaigh Éireannach a bhfuil ina chónaí lasmuigh den stáit.

Chaith 78% de toscairí vóta i bhfabhar an togra seo agus anois, tá Sinn Féin ag impí ar an rialtas reifreann a eagrú chun é a chur i bhfeidhm.

Chomh maith le sin, ba mhaith linn Aire Stáit don diaspóra a bheith ceaptha i rith an téarma seo.

Mar ceannaire Sinn Féin ghlac mé páirt sa Fóram Eacnamaíoch Éireannaigh an Domhain agus an Gradam Seirbhís Uachtaránachta d'Éireannaigh thar lár. Is tionscnaimh maithe iad, ach caithfidh muid níos mó a dhéanamh.

Tá tábhacht stairiúil bainteach leis an deich mbliana seo. Beidh muid ag comóradh ócáidí a raibh tionchar ollmhór acu ar ár díoscúrsa sóisialta agus polaitiúil, Éirí Amach na Cásca 1916 san áireamh.

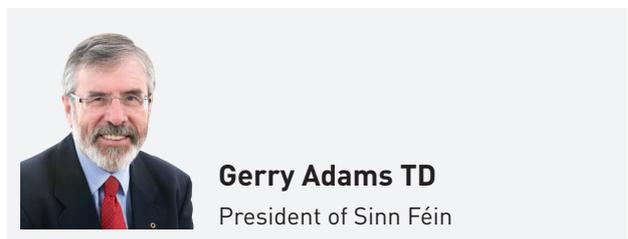
Creideann muid go láidir go dtugann na heachtraí chéad bliana deis iontach dúinn chun dul i ngleic sa bhaile agus thar lár, trí dhíospóireacht, trí phlé agus trí na healaíne cruthaitheacha, ag tabhairt dreacha ar ár n-oidhreacht agus ár gcultúr, agus ag plé cén saghas náisiúin atá muid ag iarraidh tógáil sa 21ú aois.

Tá fíis soiléir ag Sinn Féin mar gheall ar seo. Ba mhaith linn Poblacht Nua a chruthú. Ba mhaith linn go ndéanfaidh rialtas na hÉireann agus rialtas na Breataine pobalbhreith ar cheist na teorann ag an am céanna nó reifrinn ó thuaidh agus ó dheas ar aontacht na hÉireann agus le seo, beidh tacaíocht láidir ónár ndiaspora an-tábhachtach.

Ní dhéanfaidh an rialtas seo muna éilíonn saoránaigh na hÉireann anseo agus thar lár ár gcearta.

Tá muid an-bródúil as ár ndiaspora. Tá sé thar a bheith tábhachtach go ndéanann muid achan rud is a féidir linn a dhéanamh chun caidrimh dearfach a neartú agus a chintí. Chun sin a dhéanamh, creideann Sinn Féin go bhfuil stráitéis diaspora de dhíth a bhfuil faoi stiúir an rialtas agus maoinithe mar is ceart.

Ba mhaith liom mo mholadh a thabhairt don pholasáí seo agus tá súil agam go léireoidh sé ár bhfíis i mbealach éifeachtach.



INTRODUCTION

As Sinn Féin Spokesperson on Foreign Affairs and the Diaspora I am pleased to present our party's vision and proposals which we would consider merit a new approach by the government going forward in how we build sustainable connectivity with Irish citizens abroad.

Irish people across the world have always shared a close bond and solidarity amongst one another. Moving forward to the future Sinn Féin wish to put forward our vision of how best we can strengthen and improve the relationship between the Irish government and Irish citizens who do not at this time reside on the island of Ireland.

The island of Ireland has historically been known for high levels of emigration. So much so that although the island has a population of approximately 6.3 million, over 70 million people worldwide can and do claim Irish ancestry. However, it is estimated that only approximately 3 million Irish passport holders are resident outside the State. Of these, approximately 1 million (or one-third) were born in Ireland.

Ireland, like most colonised nations, was dreadfully affected by imperialist economic and social policies. This has forced many Irish people to travel to the furthest parts of the globe in order to try better their circumstances and provide a better life for their children. One of the biggest and most well-known drivers of Irish emigration was An Gorta Mór.

Since the beginning of the economic crisis thousands of Irish people have been forced to emigrate. Figures released from the Central Statistics Office in August 2013 found that between April 2012 and April 2013 89,000 emigrated from the 26 Counties. That is approximately 240 people per day, or 10 people an hour, or 1 every six minutes. This is causing huge communal and societal damage, particularly in rural Ireland.

There is no expectation among huge sections of our people that they can be born, live, work, and grow old in the place of their birth. This is a shame and a national disgrace.

Now, more than ever before, Irish citizens abroad and the diaspora are connected to Ireland and are able to keep themselves informed of developments at home mainly due to modern technological advances.

Sinn Féin has a longstanding record on diaspora affairs and our elected representatives have built firm relationships and connections across all sectors where Irish citizens are involved, particularly so in the USA, Canada, Britain, Europe and Australia.

SINN FÉIN PROPOSALS INCLUDE:

1. **Extending the right to vote in presidential elections to Irish citizens living and working outside the state.**
2. **Extending the right to vote in Dáil and Presidential elections to all adults of voting age and legally resident in the country for at least 5 years.**
3. **Introducing appropriate diaspora representation in the Dáil by way of reserved constituency, with voting rights subject to a valid passport and regular registration requirement.**
4. **Reform of the Seanad and provide diaspora representation.**
5. **Appointing a Minister of State for Diaspora Overseas.**
6. **Establishing a Government Taskforce on Emigration.**
7. **Providing permanent provision for diaspora representation on the Council of State.**



Seán Crowe TD

Sinn Féin Spokesperson on Foreign Affairs and the Diaspora

VOTING RIGHTS CEARTA VÓTÁLA

Sinn Féin firmly believes in the core republican principle of equal citizenship. We therefore unequivocally support the right of all Irish citizens of voting age to vote for the Irish President, regardless of their place of residence. Furthermore, we believe that the Irish diaspora should have the right to appropriate representation in the Dáil by way of reserved constituency, with voting rights subject to a valid passport and regular registration requirement and also be entitled to representation in a reformed Seanad also.

We also believe that the right to vote in Dáil and Presidential elections should be extended to all adults of voting age who have been legally resident in the country for at least 5yrs.

European and International Context

Complete voting disenfranchisement of citizen's resident outside the State is the exception, not the rule, for countries around the world.

According to research by the Overseas Vote Foundation, 115 other countries extend some form of the right to vote to citizens living abroad.

The right to have a say in the democratic process in their home State is extended to emigrated citizens of almost every other European country. In addition, ensuring that non-resident citizens maintain the right to vote in their country of origin may now also be regarded as an emerging EU norm, and an aspect of respecting the EU fundamental right to free movement.

Thus, the EU Commission recently recommended that all EU citizens should be able to maintain their right to vote in their country of origin, if living elsewhere in the EU. The Commission maintains that to disenfranchise such citizens is to effectively punish them for exercising their right of free movement.

Why extend voting rights and how would it work?

Sinn Féin supports the introduction of appropriate diasporic parliamentary representation in the Dáil by way of reserved constituency, with a valid passport and regular registration requirement. Both northern and diasporic citizens should also be represented in a reformed Seanad. Citizens' resident outside the State should also have a vote in Presidential elections.

Many diasporic citizens actively contribute to the economic, social and cultural life of Ireland from afar, in the form of remittances or investment, active support of the Peace Process, or participation in and promotion of Irish heritage and culture, through philanthropic, community and voluntary, language, arts, and sporting organisations.

For many Irish emigrants (and for their descendants), departure from (and/or continuing non-residence in) Ireland has been promoted by an economic or political situation beyond their control. For those diasporic citizens who exert the effort to maintain connections to the nation of their birth or ancestry, that is to their credit.

The diaspora is a fundamentally important part of the Irish nation, in both historical and contemporary terms.

Extending voting rights and allowing the Irish diaspora to express their democratic voice is one of the inclusive actions which the government can take to help improve and strengthen its relationship with the diaspora.

In Sinn Féin's submission to the government on the Constitutional Convention, we called for it to have a mandate that will allow it to discuss 'the extension of voting rights for northern citizens and citizens in the diaspora'. This was favoured by 78% of delegates who support this demand. Sinn Féin now calls on the government to set a date for a referendum on this matter.

How would non-resident citizens vote

In-person voting at Embassies and Consulates will not be practical for many citizens, and may act as an impediment to their exercise of the franchise. For this reason, we suggest postal voting for the diasporic vote, which can be done through the relevant Embassies and Consulates, made subject to appropriate safeguards against electoral fraud.

REFORM THE SEANAD AND PROVIDE DIASPORA REPRESENTATION

DÉAN ATHCHOIRIÚ AR AN SEANAD AGUS CUR IONADAÍOCHT AN DIASPÓRA AR FÁIL

In October 2013 the government's referendum proposal to abolish the Seanad was rejected by the people. However, all participants and parties involved in the referendum campaign were clear in saying that the Seanad in its current form is elitist, undemocratic and unacceptable. The result cannot be viewed as a vote to retain the Seanad in its present form and piecemeal reforms are not enough. It should be fundamentally redesigned to better serve the people.

Sinn Féin wants to see the diaspora represented as a part of a reformed Seanad which is fully inclusive, representative and accountable institution.

APPOINTMENT OF A MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE DIASPORA AND IRISH OVERSEAS CEAPACHÁN AIRE STÁIT DON DIASPÓRA AGUS ÉIREANNAIGH THAR LÁR

Sinn Féin strongly believes that Irish citizens living abroad are entitled to permanent representation in relation to government decision-making. We believe that in order to give this effect the Taoiseach should appoint a Minister of State for the Diaspora and Irish Overseas.

The Minister of State would be responsible for the co-ordination of government policy and resources between Departments and agencies. They would provide the political leadership required to strengthen strategic alliances through the strong network of Irish embassies and Consulates abroad with the wide range of Irish based community, cultural, business and educational and arts organisations located throughout the globe.

ESTABLISH A GOVERNMENT TASKFORCE ON EMIGRATION BHUNAIGH TASCFHÓRSA RIALTAIS AR EISIMIRCE

The current government should establish a Taskforce on Emigration which would comprise individuals with the necessary expertise to engage relevant stakeholders in determining what support the government can provide to those living and working abroad. The commissioning of research undertaken on the ground at grassroots community level with Irish citizens and their families to provide an informed analysis when considering government supports would be critical. Inviting both individuals and organisations to make formal submissions would also assist this process. The report of the Taskforce would be made public and presented to both the Dáil and Seanad for consideration and debate. A government-led implementation strategy would be taken forward by the Minister of State for the Diaspora and Irish Overseas.

DIASPORA REPRESENTATION ON THE COUNCIL OF STATE IONADAÍOCHT DIASPÓRA AR AN CHOMHAIRLE STÁIT

It is at the discretion of the President of Ireland to appoint under Article 31 of Bunreacht Na hÉireann members of the Council of State to aid and counsel the President on the exercise and performance of their powers. Although the current President has taken the proactive and positive decision to appoint a member of the Irish diaspora in Britain to the Council of State, Sinn Féin would argue that permanent provision should be made in this regard through a Constitutional Amendment going forward.

CONCLUSION CONCLÚD

It is time to take a new approach in how the state and diaspora engage. This must be based on sustainable connectivity which is both strategic and meaningful and has a real sense of purpose.

Ireland is in transition and as we move forward we must do so as one nation and a people together.

Sinn Féin is pleased to offer our vision for the global Irish diaspora and would welcome an informed debate around these important matters which is

inclusive of all stakeholders including government, our parliament, other political parties, third level institutions, business and commerce and arts, cultural and sporting bodies alongside the diaspora and their families at home and abroad.

We take great pride in the vast achievements and celebrate the huge positive impact our citizens have made and continue to make globally.

Sinn Féin has sent forward our proposals to An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD for consideration.

For further information contact

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