

Germany – Ireland

Joint Plan of Action for Enhanced Bilateral and EU Cooperation

Updated with new Projects – January 2021

I. Principles

The overriding principle of the joint plan of action is that Ireland and Germany share many common values and goals, and that increased cooperation is in both our national interests and our common European interest.

While our relationship is positive, we also recognise that there is much unused potential. As strongly like-minded EU-partners, our level of engagement and routine liaison activities can be further improved. We want to seize new opportunities, i.e. to promote fields in which we are like-minded and better understand our respective positions where we are not.

Germany is located in the centre of Europe, and Ireland at its western periphery – but neither geography nor size should limit our relationship.

In the two years since the publication of the first version of this plan in November 2018, the level of engagement on bilateral and EU policy issues has notably increased. This provides a strong foundation for the further development of our joint efforts. Significant potential remains in our relationship while the challenges facing both our countries have multiplied since 2018. Our work continues to be guided by shared principles, which have not changed.

1. Shaping the future of the EU

Every day and on almost every subject, Germany and Ireland work well together within the shared European Union that we have both helped to build. It is vital to us both that we improve and strengthen the functioning of the institutional framework. We are committed to driving EU policies towards the best outcome for the citizens of the Union and to shaping a prosperous and secure Europe. Our common goal under the treaties is to continue building a strong and sovereign Europe as a stronghold of the rules-based international order, as a security provider for its citizens and as an economic power which upholds a just international economic order. To that end, cohesion of the EU Member States is of paramount importance. We acknowledge the challenges posed by the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union and reiterate the importance of EU27 unity and acting in our common European interest.

2. Acting like-minded in the world

Ireland and Germany are both committed to a rules-based international system and effective multilateralism. We support and promote united EU action and policies abroad. We consider the United Nations to be the key body for legitimate global action. Together, we believe in upholding human rights, open societies, the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the protection of the vulnerable. We share a responsibility to combat climate change and to protect the environment, both locally and globally.

3. Strengthening economic ties

We understand and value the central importance of both the Single Market and rules-based free trade to our economic wellbeing. Our bilateral trade, including goods and services, is currently valued at approximately €42 billion per year.¹ We will promote the further deepening of our economic ties, the implementation of an ambitious EU trade agenda, and the strengthening of a global rules-based trading system.

4. Fostering people-to-people links

The future of the European Union is most powerfully shaped by involving citizens throughout the continent – both near and more distant neighbours. Our citizens already travel between Germany and Ireland in both directions to holiday, study, work, invest, live and learn from one another. We want to see these people-to-people contacts further intensified as soon as the public health situation allows. We will promote opportunities for exchange at all levels in our societies, with a particular focus on young people as well as on young politicians.

5. Seizing opportunities

Germany and Ireland are exceptionally strong research partners. Under the concluding Horizon 2020 Programme, Germany is Ireland's second largest partner, with over 4,000 research and innovation collaborations. We want to highlight and celebrate this future-focussed, dynamic area of cooperation under the upcoming Horizon Europe Programme. We are committed to maintaining the highest level of ambition and wish to extend it where possible.

II. Platforms

Germany and Ireland recognize that increased dialogue at various levels is an essential ingredient for tangibly increasing Irish-German cooperation. We are committed to continuing the intense bilateral political engagement that we have achieved to date.

We intend to maintain the following formats, which were established under the original plan:

- The second set of consultations between State Secretaries and Secretaries General of the German Federal Foreign Office and the Department of Foreign Affairs of Ireland will take place on 9 February 2021 with the participation of the Ministries of Agriculture, Defence, Economy and Finance. Consultations in this format will continue to be held approximately every eighteen months with other Ministries invited, based on the current agenda and their competences.
- The Ireland Germany Joint Vision Forum has taken place annually since 2018 alternating between Dublin and Berlin, with the most recent session held by VC. This format and pattern of meeting will be maintained. The stakeholders are the German Federal Foreign Office, the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, the Berlin based Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) and the Dublin based Institute for International and European Affairs (IIEA).
- Consultations between Political Directors, EU Directors General, UN Directors General and Policy Planning Units in the Federal Foreign Office and at the Department of Foreign Affairs have taken place regularly since 2018 and will be maintained.

¹ €21 billion in goods

<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/gei/goodsexportsandimportsdecember2019/> Table 4

€21 billion in services <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/its/internationaltradeinservices2019/> Table3

- Cross-departmental consultations at senior official level (Heads and Deputy Heads of Units) on current EU agenda issues as well as on international affairs took place in early 2020 and will be continued approximately every 18 months. Bilateral consultations on individual issues will be held regularly between these sessions.

III. Projects

Increased bilateral cooperation should translate into concrete projects in specific fields. To this end, the following action points have been agreed for the period ahead. This work will be kept under active review, including at the next sessions of the State Secretary / Secretary General Consultations and further projects will be added over time.

A report on the implementation of projects to date will be prepared in advance of consultations at State Secretary / Secretary General level and completed projects under the 2018 plan are included in the annex to this plan. A number of continuing projects which proved successful between 2018 and 2020 are being maintained in this updated version.

1. Increase foreign policy cooperation and highlight shared values

Shaping EU policy on Africa

- The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Ireland and Germany share a strong belief in the importance of EU engagement with Africa. For scheduling reasons it did not prove possible to arrange a joint visit to the region prior to 2021. Both Ministers remain committed to the proposal and dates for a joint visit, possibly in the Sahel, will be explored as soon as the public health situation allows. This will also be an opportunity to further explore the potential for Irish-German cooperation in Africa, including within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- A joint visit to the Sahel region could also be used to explore further Irish-German cooperation in this area. In June 2020, Ireland (as an observer member) joined Germany in the Sahel Alliance. Ireland has also appointed a Special Envoy to the Sahel for the period 2021-2022.
- Ireland and Germany will continue to collaborate with other like-minded partners to shape a more effective and ambitious EU-Africa partnership, and to actively support the African Union's role in promoting peace and security. Ireland will continue to engage closely in 2021 with the trio Presidency of the Council of the EU, which includes Germany and is expected to build on the work of the German EU Presidency in 2020 in advancing the EU-Africa partnership.

Strengthening effective multilateralism and the United Nations

- We will use our partnership to strengthen effective multilateralism, and we aim to fully use the potential of smaller and medium-sized countries to stand together for the preservation and further development of the rules-based multilateral order. We will maintain the pattern of regular, detailed consultations at OR Director General in the AA / Political Director level in DFA to identify issues that should be tackled, both jointly and with multilateral partners. We are convinced that effective multilateralism needs a resilient international system with a strong United Nations at its core, as well as concrete and effective implementation of joint decisions.
- Ireland will remain an active participant in the Alliance for Multilateralism established by Germany in 2019.

- The UN and the EU are natural partners, and we attach great importance to this partnership. We will continue to support the EU's cooperation with the UN, including in the field of peace and security.
- In view of Ireland's membership of the UN Security Council from 2021 to 2022 and Germany's membership of the Security Council from 2019 to 2020, we will continue to discuss and identify ways for EU Member States taking up Council membership to continue to bring to the Council's work EU values, norms and principles.

Greening Foreign Ministries

- Against the backdrop of our shared commitment to Climate Action, the Federal Foreign Office and the Department of Foreign Affairs will hold a workshop on internal strategies to reduce the climate impact of their work, including in relation to travel and Embassy buildings.

Climate and Security

- Tackling climate related fragility and security risks is an increasingly important agenda item across a number of multilateral fora, including the EU and UN. As a member of the UN Security Council, Germany played a key role in founding the Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security. Ireland will take up its role as co-chair of this Informal Expert Group in 2021. Accordingly, Ireland and Germany will strengthen their engagement on climate and security to ensure continuity and sustained knowledge exchange.

2. Deepen UN Peacekeeping and EU CSDP Cooperation

UN Peacekeeping Training Cooperation

- Ireland and Germany will explore increasing their cooperation and / or establishing exchange programmes between their respective UN training centres through consultations or workshops.
- Consultations will be held on possible cooperation on joint training efforts (e.g. pre-deployment training) for UN peacekeeping operations.

UN Peacekeeping Operation Cooperation

- Ireland and Germany will explore the potential for greater information sharing in relation to UN Peacekeeping.
- Exchanges will be held on lessons learned from Irish-German cooperation in MINUSMA.
- Consultations will be arranged on possible joint deployments in UN Missions.

Deepen cooperation between Ministries

- Develop ideas and identify potential fields for future cooperation between the Irish and German Ministries of Defence, while fully respecting Ireland's policy of military neutrality.

Highlighting Shared Values in relation to Women, Peace and Security

- Building on existing cooperation between the Irish and German Ministries and Permanent Missions to the UN in New York, continue to seek joint opportunities to highlight the importance of women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all aspects of UN activity.

CSDP Cooperation

- Exchange of information and policy strategies in relation to CSDP initiatives, including missions, EU Battlegroups and the European Defence Fund.
- Explore the potential for joint initiatives and training.

3. Create a step change on joint engagement regarding EU policy issues of common interest

Cooperation on Financial Policy Issues

Digital euro/cryptoassets

- Germany and Ireland will exchange their considerations on a digital euro and cryptoassets, as well as the related regulatory challenges, including the MiCA proposal.

Payment services

- Germany and Ireland will monitor developments in the market, and share experiences and research findings, with a view to ensuring that payment service users maintain access to safe and secure payment services in a well-functioning payment services market. Germany and Ireland will also discuss potential gains resulting from improvements in the existing payments system in the context of the recently published Retail Payments Strategy for the EU.

Financial Stability Committees

- Cooperation on the topic of financial stability between the Irish Financial Stability Group and the German Financial Stability Committee (Ausschuss für Finanzstabilität)

Cooperation on agricultural policy

- Develop and implement a joint DE-IE research project on a topic in the area of livestock production (with a focus on animal welfare), between BLE and DAFM in 2021.
- Ongoing exploration in 2021 to determine the potential to establish a student/post-doc exchange between institutions in Ireland and Germany and development of research topics in areas of mutual interest.
- Continue to highlight and, where relevant, strengthen collaborative research in Europe between German and Irish Institutions via relevant mechanisms e.g. ERANETs and Knowledge Hubs (MACSUR SciPol pilot). This should also include future networks, e.g. the Horizon Europe Partnerships.
- Cooperation in the field of plant health, including investigating whether research cooperation is possible in this area.

- Exploration of possible cooperation in the areas of forest practices – on the German side at the level of a Bundesland – and timber industry research.
- Exchange of views on agricultural issues of mutual interest arising from the implementation of EU-UK Trade and Co-operation Agreement.

Cooperation on Economic Policy Issues

Important Projects of Common European Interest

- Exchange with a view to advancing projects on new technologies that create important opportunities to strengthen business links through investment aimed at developing and strengthening European capacity and capability and building value chains around these.
- Promote and provide opportunities for dialogue between interested stakeholders, enterprises and organisations, with a view to identifying potential opportunities for collaboration.

Space

- Develop ideas and identify potential fields for cooperation within the space domain between the Irish and German Ministries and their responsible agencies.

GAIA-X

- Exchange on the potential of the GAIA-X project which is aimed at linking existing European cloud and data offerings to create an innovative digital ecosystem that will strengthen cloud and data capabilities, thereby creating opportunities in a strong data economy.
- Promote dialogue between relevant GAIA-X stakeholders and interested companies and organisations on the question of building a GAIA-X ecosystem in Ireland.

Women in Business

- Exchange on policy strategies and best practice initiatives aimed at increasing the participation of women founding, leading and growing businesses.
- Explore the potential for specific joint initiatives.

Cooperation on Energy Policy Issues

- Exchange experience on grid renewables integration and system operation and best practices for information, dialogue and participation in order to raise public awareness and social acceptance for the importance of and need for infrastructure projects including between Eirgrid and German Transmission System Operators.
- Continue to co-operate within the framework of Strategic Energy Technology Plan.

- Continue to exchange in the North Seas Energy Cooperation on facilitating the cost-effective deployment of offshore wind and promoting interconnection between the countries in the region, and strengthen cooperation in research and innovation in different fields of energy technology.

4. Highlight and strengthen research links

- We will continue to promote the strong and increasing cooperation between Irish and German research institutions. Recent notable examples of collaborations with the Science Foundation Ireland include for instance: The Fraunhofer Project Centre for Embedded Bioanalytical Systems at Dublin City University with Fraunhofer IPT and the Science Foundation Ireland's Research Centre for Smart Manufacturing CONFIRM. Having signed the MoU between the University of Limerick and the Fraunhofer's Institute for Factory Operation and Automation IFF, CONFIRM is now adopting the Fraunhofer 4.0 Check-up for exclusive use in Ireland, under the name "The CONFIRM Industry 4.0 Check-up based on Fraunhofer Technology". CONFIRM and Fraunhofer IFF are also collaborating on joint research projects. Further collaborations between Fraunhofer Institutes and Science Foundation Ireland's Research Centres are under consideration.
- Ireland and Germany will explore opportunities to further increase links between young researchers.

5. Deepen German – Irish political and parliamentary links

- We consider the exchange of views between citizens' elected representatives to be a crucial part of our intensified bilateral relations. Building on the visit of the German-Irish Parliamentary Friendship Group in the Bundestag to Dublin in 2019, we will work to arrange an early visit of the recently constituted German Friendship Group in the Oireachtas to Berlin. Efforts will be maintained to ensure a regular pattern to these visits as well as visits in both directions by other Parliamentary Committees notably the European Affairs Committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee.
- A cross-party visit by young Irish politicians to Berlin in 2018 was very impactful. The planned 2020 visit was postponed due to the public health situation but will be pursued in the second half of 2021 or in 2022. Opportunities for increased cooperation between the youth wings of political parties will continue to be explored during visits.
- A visit by Bundestag political advisers to Dublin in September 2019 was very successful. Subject to public health developments, a similar visit will be organised in 2022. The possibility of an exchange involving parliamentary officials of the Oireachtas and the Bundestag will be further explored.

6. Deepen people-to-people and educational exchanges between Ireland and Germany

- “21st Century PenPals” – a new project will be jointly initiated by the German Embassy in Dublin and the Irish Embassy in Berlin. The project will involve the respective Embassies “adopting schools” in Ireland and Germany. In addition to engagement with the Embassies, students in the schools will be paired with email pen pals in Germany. Six schools are expected to be involved in the initial project. Significant work had been undertaken on this project and it was due to launch in March 2020. It was postponed due to COVID 19 but work will commence again in 2021 or 2022 subject to public health developments.
- The Irish Embassy in Berlin and the German Embassy in Dublin will continue work on a joint mapping project on current second and third level educational links between Ireland and Germany and will develop proposals to revitalise these links.
- Efforts by the Embassy in Berlin to establish a “travelling” guest professorship in Irish Studies, initially in the University of Wuppertal, will be continued with a view to a visiting professor being in place in the 2021 to 2022 academic year.
- The Embassy in Berlin will explore a programme to engage interdisciplinary artistic collaborations in partnership with arts universities in Ireland and Germany, with the artistic collaborations projects being exhibited by the Embassy in partnership with a suitable festival.

7. Promote the German language in Ireland

- In order to underpin the efforts to further promote and develop the German language in Ireland, the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) supports six German as Foreign Language Lectureships (“Lektorat”) at Irish Universities (Dublin City University, University College Dublin, Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork, University College Galway, University of Limerick). To support this positive development, the DAAD established an additional lectureship at the University of Maynooth in autumn 2019 and a new specialised lectureship (“Fachlektorat”) at the Department of Political Science of Trinity College Dublin in autumn 2020.
- A new German language network within the Irish civil service has been established under the co-sponsorship of the Department of Foreign Affairs and the German Embassy in Dublin and as part of the Joint Plan. This network will be maintained and further developed.
- The Embassy in Dublin and Goethe Institut Dublin remain committed to extending the network of schools in Ireland with a special focus on teaching German and to adding to the AA’s Partnerschulen network (PASCH). Work on this will continue.
- Both sides will work together to enhance the implementation of Languages Connect – Ireland’s Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026 with respect to the German language in particular, as outlined in the review on German-Irish relations prepared by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. This remains a key area of focus for the period ahead.

Annex A

Projects completed to date

(Note: This does not reflect all work undertaken to date. Significant progress has also already been made in ongoing projects which remain within the active section of this plan.)

Original Project	Implementation
<p>Cooperating on civilian crisis management</p> <p>A workshop on best practices in recruitment, deployment and post deployment strategies for experts in civilian crisis management will be conducted. It is hoped that this workshop will produce ideas and recommendations which can be helpful at national level while also feeding into current EU work in this crucial area.</p>	<p>A joint workshop on this issue was co-hosted by Ireland and Germany in Dublin in September 2019.</p> <p>Under the leadership of the German Federal Foreign Office, the European Centre of Excellence for Civilian Crisis Management (CoE) was established in Berlin in February 2020. Ireland joined in 2020 and is one of nineteen members of the CoE. The CoE supports its members and EU Institutions in implementing their commitments under the Civilian CSDP Compact and assists to enhance civilian capacities to strengthen EU crisis management.</p>
<p>A partnership in the area of pre-competitive Collective Research within CORNET will be explored. CORNET is a network of ministries and funding agencies that combine their existing funding schemes to increase the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In this way, CORNET supports new funding organisations worldwide to introduce pilot actions and schemes for pre-competitive Collective Research.</p> <p>Similarly, cooperation within the Central Innovation Programme for SMEs will be also explored. The aim of the programme is to foster market-driven technology-based R&D work within SMEs. The programme is designed to enhance companies' capacity to innovate and to strengthen their long-term competitiveness. Both countries could organize common bilateral calls for bids or Ireland could join the IraSME network. (Note: IraSME is a network of ministries and funding agencies which are owners or managers of national and regional funding programmes for cooperative research projects between small and medium-sized</p>	<p>A number of bilateral engagements took place to explore possibilities for collaboration under this programme. The information exchange proved extremely valuable and, for example, has helped to inform Ireland's recently published review of SME and entrepreneurship policy.</p>

<p>enterprises (SMEs) and in participation of research and technology organisations (RTOs.)</p>	
<p>Germany and Ireland intend to build on efforts by key Irish stakeholders and the German Center for Research and Innovation (Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft) to establish links in the area of agri-digitalisation and for engagement regarding EU funding opportunities under Horizon 2020. We want to further align policy, funders, research centres and industry in this area.</p> <p>We want to intensify research and innovation on agriculture, climate change and land use management by identifying leading researchers in these areas to assist in developing a carbon neutral and circular agri-food system.</p> <p>The Ministries of Agriculture of Ireland and Germany envisage a dialogue on current issues in agricultural policy, with a focus on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (i.e. an exchange on proposals by the European Commission on CAP 2020) and the challenges for Ireland and Germany with regard to rural areas as well as the contribution of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) to rural development.</p> <p>To promote links between the professional agriculture communities in Ireland and Germany we intend to organize further expert visits.</p>	<p>In close collaboration, ATB, BLE and DAFM facilitated an inaugural Germany-Ireland Bilateral Workshop at the Leibniz Institute for Agricultural Engineering and Bioeconomy, Potsdam on the 25th-26th November 2019 in order to identify mutual research demands and to establish a sound foundation for future transnational research cooperation that included scientists/researchers from both German and Irish institutions. The findings of the workshop will form the basis for the development of research topics and funding opportunities in these particular areas and leads to the next phases of collaboration, which is currently under discussion. Additionally, subsequent to the workshop, further cooperation has been initiated between German and Irish scientists in research areas identified linked to the workshop, such as agri-digitalisation.</p> <p>DAFM engaged with BMEL specifically on CAP related issues, including the EAFRD during the CAP negotiation process and in advance of the Council General Approach being agreed. Council General Approach was agreed in October 2020, and while DAFM will continue to engage with BMEL on CAP related and other agriculture policy issues, this does not need to be reflected in a new Joint Plan of Action.</p>
<p>The Department for Communications, Climate Action and Environment of Ireland and the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy of Germany will foster an exchange on best practices in the area of energy modelling, including between the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and the German Environment Agency (Umweltbundesamt – UBA) and an exchange of experience on grid renewables integration and best practices for information, dialogue and participation in order to raise public awareness and social acceptance for the importance of and need for infrastructure projects including between Eirgrid and German TSOs (Transmission System Operators). They will continue their exchange in the North Seas Energy Cooperation on facilitating the cost-effective deployment of offshore wind and promoting interconnection between the countries in the</p>	<p>Useful exchanges in these areas took place between Ireland and Germany over the course of the last Joint Plan of Action. The areas of focus have now been refined for the current version.</p>

<p>region. Furthermore they will strengthen their cooperation in research and innovation in different fields of energy technology under the umbrella of various European instruments, such as the Strategic Energy Technology Plan.</p> <p>While climate adaptation can be considered in context and country-specific terms, particularly when it comes to climate risk and governance, it is also an area where Member States are facing a number of common challenges and that offers good potential for cooperation and information exchange. In the future, Germany and Ireland intend to intensify their knowledge transfer on the implementation of Climate Change Adaptation</p>	
<p>Highlight and strengthen research links</p> <p>We have requested our respective Embassies in Berlin and Dublin to place a particular emphasis in their public diplomacy in the coming period on highlighting and celebrating our scientific and research links and cooperation in order to make it better known and appreciated.</p>	<p>Over the course of 2019 and 2020, both the Irish Embassy in Berlin and the German Embassy in Dublin carried out a number of public outreach and social media campaigns focussed on Irish and German research links. This included public speeches on the theme and most recently a significant social media campaign coinciding with Berlin Science Week.</p>
<p>DAAD considers establishing a new specialised lectureship (“Fachlektorat”) at Trinity College Dublin (TCD) from autumn 2020 onwards. The principal aim is to further strengthen teaching and research on Germany’s political system and its role within Europe at TCD’s “Centre for European Studies”.</p>	<p>This new specialised lectureship was established in autumn 2020.</p>