



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

IRELAND'S APPLICATION

for Arctic Council Observer Status



What is the Arctic Council?

- » On 21 December 2020, Ireland submitted an application to become an Observer to the Arctic Council.
- » The Arctic Council is the primary forum for international cooperation and coordination in the Arctic region.
- » Its members are the eight Arctic states: Canada, Denmark (including Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States.
- » Six Arctic indigenous peoples' organisations are Permanent Participants at the Council.
- » There are currently thirteen Observer states (France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, China, Poland, India, Korea, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland and the UK), as well as thirteen Observer Intergovernmental and Inter-Parliamentary Organisations.
- » The eight Arctic States will make a decision on Ireland's application at the ministerial meeting due to take place in Reykjavik in May 2021.

Why has Ireland applied to become an Observer?

Ireland has been exploring ways in which to enhance its engagement with the Arctic region for a number of years.

As an island nation at the edge of Europe in the North Atlantic, having a culture, heritage and identity intrinsically linked to the seas that surround it, the fundamental changes taking place in the Arctic region impact directly on Ireland as well as being of wider global concern.

The adverse impact on the Earth's oceans and environment from the loss of sea ice and the melting of the Greenland Ice Sheet are subjects of immediate concern and relevance to Ireland.

With the changes we see and experience in our climate there is a growing awareness that the only successful way forward is to work together with others in developing solutions to the problems and challenges we all face.

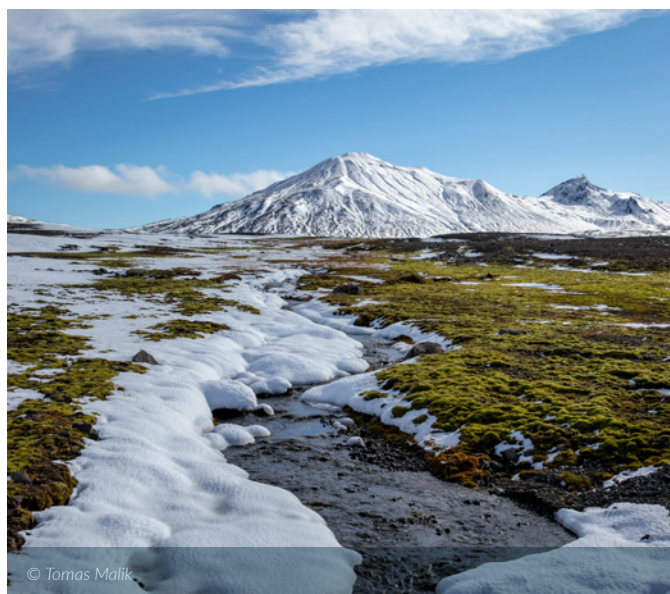
By contributing to an understanding of the dynamics of change in the region, the impact on all who live there and in promoting and empowering action, Ireland will be serving not only its interests as an island nation geographically close to the Arctic, but also those of the wider world.



How would Ireland intend to contribute to work of the Arctic Council?

Ireland's application focusses on three core strands through which it would bring strong added value to the work of the Arctic Council:

- i) Policy and scientific capacity;
- ii) Experience as a proactive global actor and bridge builder;
- iii) Empowering vulnerable communities.



POLICY AND SCIENTIFIC CAPACITY

- » Ireland's scientists have a long track record of cooperation and collaboration with their counterparts in the permanent Member States of the Arctic Council and of other Observer nations.
- » For Ireland to deliver effectively as an Observer, it will need to harness the great strengths available in its scientific and research community to make a substantive contribution to the Working Groups, and these have been set out in detail in the application.
- » From subjects as diverse as weather forecasting and meteorology, pollution including marine litter, the development of marine protected areas to new subjects such as ocean acidification, Ireland has the policy, scientific capacity, expertise and commitment to be an effective Observer to the Arctic Council.



RV Celtic Explorer journey to the Arctic. © Audrey Morley

IRELAND AS A PROACTIVE GLOBAL ACTOR AND BRIDGE BUILDER

- » Ireland has a long history of constructive participation in international organisations, as illustrated by taking up a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council on 1 January 2021.
- » Ireland has a strong track record of listening to all sides when working to promote international cooperation, helping to build collective solutions to global challenges.
- » Ireland currently holds the chair of the OSPAR Commission (a multilateral mechanism to protect the marine environment of the North East Atlantic). Through this role, Ireland is leading the development and delivery of a new Northeast Atlantic Marine Environment Strategy that will tackle climate, biodiversity and marine litter issues amongst others, all of which are issues which also affect the Arctic.

EMPOWERING VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

- » Ireland, because of its history, its values, and its attachment to peaceful international cooperation, can play a positive role in ensuring that Arctic issues are more widely understood and acted upon, in a way that empowers the indigenous communities and all those who inhabit the Arctic region.
- » Ireland has a highly regarded development cooperation programme and proven capabilities in empowering vulnerable communities. This experience can be applied to engage with the concerns of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic region and seek to build cross-cultural exchanges.
- » Ireland is committed to finding fair, just and sustainable solutions to the environmental challenges facing the Arctic, including for indigenous peoples.