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# ‘Internationalisation’ Developing an action plan for a more competitive and open Dublin

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Workshop Report  
24th September 2009

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Led by international expert, Greg Clarke

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*Dublin is a partner city in the Belfast led EU Urbact project, OPENCities. OPENCities is a British Council project developed in partnership with cities around the world. This workshop was delivered as part of Dublin’s commitment to OPENCities Urbact.*



Dublin City Council  
Comhairle Cathrach Bhaile Átha Cliath



Office of  
International  
Relations  
& Research

## Background

The Office of International Relations and Research held a workshop on 'Internationalisation' in September 2009. The purpose of this workshop was to initiate a process to develop and align actions to ensure that Dublin can be a more 'open' and competitive city region. This dialogue was led by Greg Clarke<sup>1</sup> who has extensive international experience in this area. The discussion involved a cross section of people representing Dublin from business, education and city management<sup>2</sup>.

The outcome of the workshop will inform the development of an 'Internationalisation Action Plan' which Dublin City will deliver as part of its participation in the European-funded (Urbact) initiative, OPENCities<sup>3</sup>



Dublin City

<sup>1</sup> Greg Clark provides strategic advice and peer reviews for many cities and regions world wide. He is chairman of the OECD LEED Forum of Development Agencies and Investment Strategies which convenes City and Regional Authorities from across the OECD to address imperatives in local economic and employment development. Greg has recently launched a report for the OECD called *Recession, Recovery and Reinvestment: The Role of Local Economic Leadership in a global crisis, 2009* and is the co-author of a report, *Investment in cities in a Changed Economic Climate* for the Urban Land Institute and ING Bank.

<sup>2</sup> Representatives from Department of Foreign Affairs, Councillors, IBEC, Dublin Chamber of Commerce, Dublin Convention Bureau, St Patrick's Festival, Event partners, Dublin Regional Higher Education Authority, Trinity College Dublin, FÁS, Belfast City Council

<sup>3</sup> OPENCities is an international network of cities committed to attracting international populations to visit, work, and study in their cities. Creative city economies require diverse populations and cities need to create the environment that attracts and welcomes cultural diversity. OPENCities was developed by the British Council and is currently funded under Europe's URBACT programme. Dublin is a member of the OPENCities Network. URBACT is jointly financed by the European Union (European Regional Development Fund) and the Member States.

## Report of the Workshop

Greg Clarke presented best practice in the area of 'Internationalisation' and also began to identify how Dublin City can, through co-operation between city government, business and education, develop actions that enhance economic competitiveness through internationalisation.

The workshop centred on the following questions:

- 1) Why internationalise?
- 2) How to internationalise?
- 3) Progress to date
- 4) What are the key issues/challenges?
- 5) What does Dublin need to do?

### 1) Why internationalise?

*Dublin needs to consider its role as a world city.* Considering the debate on Dublin versus the rest of the country, we should think about what would Ireland be like without a strong world city like Dublin? Can the country afford not to have Dublin as a globally internationally competitive city? Is it not better for Irish graduates to be able to find employment in Dublin than to have them emigrate for opportunities?

Internationalisation is about being open to the world. For Dublin we need to internationalise to enable our city to serve the global value chain. Increasing levels of globalisation<sup>4</sup> and the importance of internationally traded services combined with the relatively small size of our domestic economy make this imperative (the potential for future economic growth of our city is in internationally traded sectors).

Smaller but highly internationalised cities are capable of being extremely successful. However for such cities it is clear that they

<sup>4</sup> Globalisation is the growing economic interdependence of countries worldwide through increasing volume and variety of cross border transactions in goods and services, free international capital flows, and more rapid and widespread diffusion of technology (IMF)

cannot compete in all sectors therefore require carefully considered strategies including a strong focus on the niche areas in which they can become world leaders.

It is clear that Dublin is in the category of a smaller world city. There is evidence to demonstrate that cities with smaller populations often perform higher in terms of quality of life and are in fact more attractive cities in which to live and work. Larger cities are often beset with more problems of congestion, pollution and social inequalities.

It is recognised that staying open to the world is more important in terms of the value added in the long term and in responding to the expected economic upturn.

Other clear benefits include:

- The extensive Irish Diaspora require Dublin to be an internationally competitive city
- Our education sector requires Dublin to serve an international market
- Companies located in Dublin need Dublin to be a world city
- Dublin needs to be capable of hosting and attracting major international events
- Companies need to be able to attract talent from all over the world
- Attracting international populations adds to the cultural and social fabric of the city



Dublin's Boardwalk

## 2) How to internationalise?

The following key areas were identified:

- Attracting International Students

We need to recognise the assets that we develop abroad as a result of attracting international students to our city (including future export potential).

We need to recognise the potential of international students to Dublin's economy and future success. New Zealand and Australia are world leaders in this market<sup>5</sup>. The fiscal value to the city economy is simply too great to ignore this opportunity.

- Attracting International Investment

This is led by the IDA through a complementary strategy that recognises the strength of Dublin as an investment opportunity. A well developed coherent city strategy on internationalisation will enhance the IDA proposition. The majority of companies do not differentiate between Ireland and Dublin – however a strong Dublin equates to a strong Ireland. If you are promoting the country you are promoting the city and vice versa. There is also a requirement to continuously satisfy the large number of international investors that have established operations in the city.

- Attracting and Leveraging International Events

This is an area that Dublin is only starting to capitalise on. Between the City of Science 2012, City of Sport 2010 and St Patrick's Festival there is excellent progress being made in this regard. Further actions could increase our competitiveness in this regard.

The nature of events that we attract can also assist in the positioning of Dublin as a recognised knowledge city with a high quality of life.

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<sup>5</sup> In New Zealand this sector is worth \$2.6 billion per year.

- Attracting International Talent

It is clear that the city needs to be able to attract and equally retain skilled workers. Dublin has to be a truly world class city where creative and innovative people want to live. In order to service a global market we also need to be able to call upon specialist skills required to deliver these specialised services.

- Developing Strategic International Linkages

We need to carefully consider the cities and networks with whom Dublin engages and interacts. The strategic alliances that we develop need to offer tangible benefits to the city.



Greg Clarke addresses the workshop

### 3) Progress to date

Dublin has developed as an international city in an ad hoc manner, without a coherent plan or debate. The debate on internationalisation needs to be informed, the time is right to pursue such a strategy and to engage a broader base of support while also engaging the media and general public. Dublin's participation in the global OPENCities network has highlighted the importance of developing a clearly defined internationalisation strategy.

The following questions were raised with the group:

- Dublin is an international city but is it a truly world class city?
- The city has experienced an exciting period of growth –but what is next for Dublin?
- What kind of Dublin do we want? Dublin is a city with remarkable potential; it should and can be the jewel in the crown of European cities. We have seen Dublin increasingly represented and performing strongly in international rankings. However more recently the city is seeing a real decline in its performance. To ensure Dublin maintains and builds on its recent success we need to be looking outward and focusing on developing a coherent Internationalisation strategy.

What is clear now is that prior to the economic crisis cities did not have to work too hard to ensure economic growth. It is now clear that innovative and collaborative responses are required to ensure future city success.

### 4) What are the key issues/challenges for the city?

- National / City Communication

There is a need to move the debate from the 'Dublin versus the rest of the country' to how 'Dublin can benefit the country'. The city needs to use its powers to influence elected representatives in the city, to engage TDs and articulate the *Case for Dublin*. We need to investigate how national government can be seen to support our capital City in the wider interests of the country

The debate needs to be centred on what can the city do for our country? What can Dublin do for Ireland? It is about making the case and developing a strong alliance in the city to develop this.

We need to identify the city's assets and demonstrate how these impact the country It is about turning the argument around – is it

not better to have opportunities for Irish people in Ireland based in Dublin than to see them emigrate for new opportunities?

We need to move away from the anti-urban bias that currently exists; we need to continue our focus on regeneration in the inner city to ensure that it is a welcoming proposition for all.

- Brand / Competitive identity

As a city we need to fully understand the brand identity of the city.

We have a unique Cultural Brand that is globally recognised. However is there a requirement for a business investment brand for the city? This could be something that promotes leadership / innovation / actions in the city.

Experiences need to match with the reality of the brand. It is about aligning the brand with the product and delivering on the product.

The work on this internationalisation group needs to feed into the city branding initiative that is being progressed through the Creative Dublin Alliance.



Lord Mayor of Dublin Cllr Emer Costello addressing the workshop

##### 5) What does Dublin need to do?

- Establish a 'Team Dublin' Approach

A consortium of stakeholders will engage with the city to jointly agree actions for

internationalising the city. This consortium will address the following issues:

i) How can we position Dublin as a truly 'world class' city and how do we demonstrate this to an international audience? What would it look like? What can we do to achieve this? We need to collaborate on actions to increase the cities long term competitiveness.

ii) Establishing a voice for Dublin or 'Team Dublin' – representing the customers of government in the city and also listening to current investment in the city. What are we doing to address their concerns issues, what is the message for them?

iii) We need to encourage Higher Education collaboration in the city and support initiatives such as 'Destination Dublin' in which the universities are developing joined up marketing and branding opportunities. There may be an opportunity to establish in Dublin a single point of contact for university education for all international students intending to come to Dublin. Dublin has real advantages over other international cities in the international student market due to relatively small class sizes.

- Develop research to enhance the debate

It could be useful to develop research on the Fiscal Return of internationalisation to the city and national economy. This may identify the value of Dublin's international activities to the national economy (attracting international events, international education opportunities, attracting talent).

It may also be useful to benchmark how other cities are making the case to their national governments and leaders.

Why do certain cities attract investment, attract people? What are the local factors, what kind of cities are they, what are their knowledge assets?

- Showcase the city and develop Dublin's unique international proposition

It could be argued that we undersell ourselves and the assets of the city to an international audience. We should develop an audit of our assets and promote ourselves as a 'world class city' of urban thinkers. There needs to be more recognition of areas where we as a city or country excel on the world stage. We should do more to highlight progressive national employment legislation particularly in the areas of diversity and equality.

- Establish a PR/Media strategy

This may involve the following:

Agree a Media Strategy for the city which sells the concept and importance of internationalisation that garners local support on the ground to promote these actions. New York and London have succeeded in this approach. This may also involve leveraging sponsorship and encouraging active participation with media to develop the internationalisation agenda.

- Develop a strategic programme for international collaboration

Identify strategic collaboration opportunities with other cities by means of cultural, economic and social programmes.



Aerial View of Dublin City

## 6) Conclusion

During 2010 Dublin City Council's International Advisory Group will agree and implement an internationalisation action plan for the Dublin Region. As part of this process the group will invite participants to a number of themed workshops to participate and agree actions.

The following topics will be developed as part of this action plan:

- Attract International Students
- Attract International Investment
- Attract and Leverage International Events
- Attract International Talent
- Agree Strategic International Linkages

If you have any comments on this paper or would like to contribute to the development of this agenda in the city please contact us on [research@dublincity.ie](mailto:research@dublincity.ie)

We would also encourage you to join our Cities Linked website which allows you to develop connections with a host of international cities that Dublin has collaborated with. [www.citieslinked.com](http://www.citieslinked.com)