

Irish Diplomats Serving in Brazil

Embassy of Ireland, Brasilia

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Introduction

In 2025, Ireland and Brazil celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations – and our ties are growing stronger each year.

As the Irish diplomats currently serving in the Irish Embassy in Brasilia and the Consulate General in Sao Paulo, we are delighted to see the connections between Ireland and Brazil gaining depth with each passing day. We are also keenly aware that the Ireland-Brazil relationship – which has seen such growth in recent decades – reaches much further back than the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1975. Indeed, records dating to the 16th century show that Irish people have played a significant role in Brazil’s history, and many researchers, artists, historians and fellow diplomats have followed in their footsteps since then. It is with equal measures of pride and humility that we attempt to carry forward their legacy in our current roles.

Diaspora and people-to-people links

One of the best-known and most positive aspects of the Irish-Brazilian relationship comes in the form of our strong people-to-people connections. It is thought that over 70,000 Brazilians are now studying and working in Ireland – making Ireland the EU Member State with the largest resident Brazilian community after Portugal and Germany. The growth of the Brazilian diaspora in Ireland probably represents one of the biggest shifts in our bilateral relations in the past few decades. Almost every Brazilian that we encounter here in Brazil – after they ask us about the cold Irish climate! – will remark that they have a friend or family member living in Ireland. We know that the Brazilian population has enriched Irish society in countless ways,

and one of our aims is to ensure that the community there is as well-settled, integrated and content as possible. (We also harbour hopes that our national football team might benefit from the arrival of so much Brazilian talent to our shores!).

On the other hand, Brazil is home to a smaller but growing number of Irish citizens – including many dual Irish-Brazilian citizens – and, increasingly, there is a growing affinity diaspora in Brazil, who feel a strong connection with Irish culture and traditions, often because they have lived in Ireland themselves or because they have children, siblings or parents who have done so.

The growing size of the respective communities in both Ireland and Brazil undoubtedly makes our job in promoting and raising awareness of Ireland much smoother, and even more enjoyable.

Culture

One of the most striking parts of being an Irish diplomat in Brazil is the fact that Brazilians take such great interest in Irish culture. We see this perhaps most obviously with celebrations like Hallowe'en, St. Brigid's Day, St. Patrick's Day, and Bloomsday – attendance at the events that we organise around these milestone dates is ever-increasing, and the enthusiasm with which Brazilian guests approach them never fails to impress!

The Irish Studies landscape in Brazil is one of the most prolific in the world, of course, with hubs located across several Brazilian universities, including São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Brasília, Salvador, Rondonópolis and Florianópolis. We are always humbled to visit these institutions and meet the academics who have devoted their careers to studying Irish history and literature (and we frequently find that they know much more about these aspects of Irish culture than we do!). Very often, these individuals had been working to promote Irish heritage in Brazil before Embassies were established in either country, adopting the role of diplomat and performing it with exceptional diligence. The work that they have done, and continue to do, to promote Ireland in Brazil is invaluable, and we will remain forever indebted to them. This sentiment has been echoed by our colleagues and previous diplomats who have worked in Brazil, who have extended both their gratitude and congratulations for all the work these organisations, including the Association of Irish Studies in Brazil, have done. Indeed, the President of Ireland has even bestowed the Presidential Distinguished Service Award to two

leading Irish Studies academics in Brazil, a true testament to their dedication in promoting Irish culture over the course of their careers.

Visits by so many established and emerging Irish writers to Brazil over many years have provided Irish diplomats in Brazil with the opportunity to meet some of our most celebrated creative individuals, a chance many of us might not otherwise have had. The interest in newer Irish writing, the warm Brazilian reception that these writers received, and the insightful questions posed by the future writers and academics that they met while in Brazil makes us very confident that Brazil made a deep impression on each of these visitors. Each of those who visited left with a desire to return and a confidence that the study of Irish literature in Brazil will go from strength to strength. And all of us are confident that the next generation of Brazilian writers promises much that will resonate with an Irish audience.

One of our responsibilities in Brazil is to manage applications to Ireland's Emigrant Support Programme, which provides financial support to organisations that work to assist the Irish diaspora and promote Irish heritage abroad. This programme is a particularly important part of Ireland's outreach in Brazil and it has allowed us to establish connections with a range of groups working in these areas, including through the WB Yeats Chair of Irish Studies at the University of São Paulo, the Nucleus of Irish Studies at the Federal University of Santa Catarina, the Association of Irish Studies in Brazil (ABEI) and the Brazil branch of Comhaltas Ceoltóiri Éireann, a group of talented musicians and dancers celebrating traditional Irish music and dance. Additionally, in São Paulo the theatre company Cia Ludens has dedicated its work to translating and performing Irish plays on the Brazilian stage, and in Campinas the acclaimed dance school Banana Broadway teaches classes in Irish and sean-nós dancing to both children and adults. Again, these are organisations that have worked tirelessly to promote Ireland in Brazil for many years, and we owe them a debt of gratitude.

Political and multilateral cooperation

Ireland and Brazil's political relations have never been closer, and have intensified considerably following the COVID-19 pandemic; the last three years have seen significant visits of Irish Government Ministers to Brazil to mark St. Patrick's Day, for example. A major milestone will be reached this year when Minister Mauro Vieira will become the first-ever Brazilian Foreign Minister to visit Ireland. In turbulent times globally, these visits and the interconnections that

they represent carry more weight than ever before, and we will work to ensure that they have maximum impact.

The shared policy priorities between Ireland and Brazil are numerous: the importance we attach to the sustainable development goals (in particular, eliminating poverty and hunger), our shared views on climate action, our commitment to gender equality, and our like-mindedness on many major geopolitical issues are just some examples. Central to both our approaches to the world is our strong support for multilateralism, with both Ireland and Brazil advocating for a strong UN at the core of a robust rules-based world order. We both recognise that the countries of the world are stronger when working together, and this spirit has provided the bedrock for lots of strong collaboration – including when we served together on the UN Security Council in 2022. It has never been more important for defenders of the multilateral system to stand together, and we are proud to count on Brazil as one of our allies in this regard.

Economic relations

Economic links between Ireland and Brazil continue to prosper; Brazil is Ireland's second-largest trading partner in the region, and a large number of Irish companies have thriving operations in the country, across a range of sectors. Bilateral goods trade in 2024 was the highest figure ever registered, at just over €1.1bn, and our services trade is even more impressive, standing at over €1.3bn in 2023. It is our hope, of course, that these figures will continue to grow, as Irish companies' awareness of Brazil as a potential export market increases. Equally, we are working hard to ensure that Brazilian firms have a positive view of Ireland as a destination for trade and investment – and we are delighted to see the Brazilian entrepreneurial spirit already taking hold in Ireland, with Brazilian citizens living there opening a range of businesses to considerable success.

Enterprise Ireland has its South American offices headquartered in Brazil, demonstrating the Brazilian market's significance in the region in the eyes of Irish business. Education in Ireland is also present, promoting Ireland's higher education excellence and helping to secure Ireland's position as the fourth-most popular English-language destination among Brazilian students.

Values-based engagement

Ireland has a strong tradition of values-based engagement in Brazil, perhaps most notably in the areas of environmental protection and human rights; this stretches as far back as the renowned work of Roger Casement, who exposed serious abuses in the Amazon rubber industry and whose legacy Brazilians still recall in conversation today.

As Irish diplomats in Brazil, the protection of human rights is one of the issues that we are proudest to work on, and where we feel that the Irish and Brazilian spirits of solidarity, sincerity and compassion are best showcased; and we are pleased to say that this area of Ireland's engagement in Brazil has expanded considerably of late. Roger Casement's legacy, indeed, is honoured today with the Roger Casement Fellowship, which allows Brazilian students to undertake a fully funded Master's degree in Ireland in areas related to human rights.

Unsurprisingly, climate action has become a particularly important strand of Ireland's engagement in Brazil in recent years, and perhaps the most obvious manifestation of this comes in the form of Ireland's commitment in 2024 to join Brazil's Amazon Fund, with a €15m contribution beginning in 2025. We were delighted to formalise this announcement when our Minister Seán Canney (Minister of State for International and Road Transport, Logistics, Rails and Ports) met with Minister Marina Silva in March this year.

In addition, Ireland recognises the vital role played by Indigenous and traditional communities in Brazil when it comes to protecting Brazil's biomes – as well as the enormous pressure that many of these communities are facing. For this reason, we have supported a number of NGO partners that work with these communities across Brazil in the last number of years. Meeting with representative of these communities, and hearing both of the issues that they face and of the importance of Irish support, is always a motivating experience.

We support a number of other organisations and projects in Brazil that align with Irish values. In 2024, these included: a project focused on sustainable development and upskilling of a remote island community in Bahia; a project in support of an online platform showcasing creative content from the Amazon; a project delivering training on food security for community leaders based in Rio de Janeiro; funding for a sports organisation in São Paulo state promoting access to education for vulnerable youth; and a project focused on supporting migrant women who are victims of gender-based violence.

Conclusion

Representing Ireland abroad is always an enormous privilege, and representing Ireland in Brazil even more so.

The depth and variety of work in Brazil for Irish diplomats is both fascinating and never-ending, and much of the work that has been done to forge the deep relations that we enjoy today is nothing short of awe-inspiring. That said, as we mark half a century of diplomatic relations between our two countries, we also recognise that we have still only scratched the surface of the huge potential that exists in the Ireland-Brazil relationship.

As we look forward to the next 50 years, we are confident that the many bonds that bring us together will endure, and that our successors – be they in the diplomatic, cultural, civil society or business spheres! – will continue working tirelessly to amplify the work begun centuries ago.