

## SIX NATIONS IT'S NOT ALL DOOM AND GLOOM

Gordon D'Arcy  
Sport



“ The presentation of shamrock to the White House, a tradition that began as an Irish effort to improve US-Irish relations, is now about as symbolic as a Melania meme coin

Kathy Sheridan  
Opinion



## ROMANCING THE FINANCES DATING, DEBT AND AWKWARD MONEY TALK

Joanne Hunt  
Business

# Citizenship could be fast-tracked for military personnel

Proposal to allow foreign nationals to become naturalised after time in military

Framework aims to boost numbers in Defence Forces and increase diversity

CONOR GALLAGHER  
Crime and Security  
Correspondent

The Government is examining plans to fast-track citizenship for immigrants who complete military service in Ireland.

Sources say the proposals under consideration include allowing foreign nationals to become naturalised citizens after serving in the military for a number of years and waiving the standard fees for citizenship applications.

Immigrants must have lived in the Republic for five of the previous nine years before being allowed to apply for naturalisation and must pay about €1,000 in fees.

The proposals under consideration are similar to the system in operation in the United

There are about 250 foreign-born members of the Defence Forces, from more than 30 countries. Most are from the EU, but in recent years, there has been an increase in recruits from outside the bloc.

Other measures outlined in the plans include boosting annual recruitment numbers to 900, persuading former members to rejoin and increasing the number of roles for civilians.

The Department of Defence says it expects to complete an evaluation of the proposal by the middle of this year.

Offering military personnel a path to citizenship was one of the recommendations contained in the 2022 Commission on the Defence Forces report.

It said supports are needed “to enable the Defence Forces to become a more welcoming place for recruits from more diverse backgrounds and, as recognition of their commitment to this State, it is recommended that measures should be taken to enable easier access to Irish citizenship for those who serve in the Defence Forces”.

Military representative associations have called for similar measures in the past.

In 2021, the Permanent Defence Forces Other Ranks Representative Association said citizenship should be available cost-free after the required five years.

Last year, delegates from the Representative Association of Commissioned Officers called on the Government to “support non-Irish-born officers when applying for Irish citizenship”.

Releasing the latest strategic framework, Minister for Defence Helen McEntee said 54 of the commission’s recommendations (out of 130) had been implemented to date.

The document set out timelines for reaching the Government’s goals of dramatically increasing the Republic’s military strength, including acquiring military radar systems, counter-drone technology and new armoured vehicles.



■ Minister for Defence Helen McEntee: released the latest strategic framework

States, which allows military members with one year’s service to apply for citizenship.

According to the latest Strategic Framework for the Transformation of the Defence Forces, which was published yesterday by the Department of Defence, proposals for fast-track citizenship applications for military members are undergoing “further evaluation”.

Easier access to naturalised citizenship is one of several proposals outlined in the framework to boost Defence Forces numbers and increase diversity within the organisation.

The Government has committed to increasing military strength from the current 7,750 to 11,500 by 2028, a target it is all but certain to miss.

Citizenship is not a requirement to join the Defence Forces. Those with a right to live in the Republic and those who reside in the State, including refugees and EU citizens, are eligible for service.



## Parting glass

Staff and friends pay their respects to Noel Hawkins, barman for over 40 years at Mulligan’s, Poolbeg Street, Dublin, yesterday. The hearse was on its way from the funeral Mass in Ringsend to Mount Jerome.

Photograph: Cyril Byrne

# Child protection rapporteur’s reports delayed

JACK HORGAN-JONES  
Political Correspondent

Key reports from the State’s special rapporteur on child protection were delayed, internal documents have shown.

Three annual reports were submitted in recent weeks by the outgoing rapporteur, human rights lawyer Caoilfhionn Gallagher, covering her three-year term in office.

Documents released under freedom of information laws show the submission of reports was the subject of protracted correspondence between officials in the Department of Chil-

dren and Gallagher extending back to 2023.

By the middle of last year, senior officials wrote to Gallagher seeking updates on her first and second annual reports, saying they were “the key output associated with the position” and “essential to its effectiveness”.

The department said it received a draft of a report covering 2023/2024 at the end of January and a draft of the 2024/2025 annual report last week, and a draft report covering July 2022 to January 2023 in January.

In one instance, Gallagher indicated a submission date in the

weeks or months ahead to officials, but a report was not submitted within that period after she indicated she was expanding the time frame covered.

Previous rapporteurs have said government departments ignore correspondence and delay publication of annual reports.

### Resources

The documents reference resources made available to Gallagher, with the rapporteur indicating in 2023 that she intended to employ an assistant to make for “smoother” logistical arrangements, and in 2024 rais-

ing administrative support with the department.

In 2023, Gallagher told officials she could not take on a review of alignment between Irish legislation and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child without “changed resourcing”.

She indicated timelines for analysing upcoming legislation were “very tight”, on one occasion pointing out that this was particularly the case “as I have no secretarial or other support”.

In a statement to The Irish Times, Gallagher said: “I have filed three annual reviews with

the department: for 2022/23 (a period before my term began, but for which I insisted coverage be included); for 2023/24; and for 2024/25. Following standard processes, the department is considering these reports prior to them being formally submitted to Government for consideration, prior to publication.”

Asked about resourcing, Gallagher said: “Questions regarding resourcing and support of the role are matters I have addressed in my annual reports and they are currently under consideration.”

Asked if there were adequate

resources in place, the department said the terms of reference were agreed by government and set out in the advertisement for the role.

The documents also show Gallagher raised an “extremely concerning” case in October 2024 with three cabinet ministers, including then minister for children Roderic O’Gorman, offering assistance and suggestions as well as requesting a meeting on the case.

In December, she told the department that she had not received a response from the other two ministers or a Tusla review into the case.

# Man arrested on suspicion of murder of Daniel Aruebose

CONOR LALLY  
Crime and Security Editor

A man deported to Ireland has been arrested on suspicion of the murder of Daniel Aruebose, the boy whose remains were found buried on waste ground outside Donabate, north Dublin, last year.

The arrested man, who is in his 20s and is Irish, was known to the dead child, as was a woman arrested for questioning last year. Both suspects have been central to the investigation since concerns for Daniel’s welfare and his whereabouts were first raised late last August.

Garda headquarters confirmed the man detained yesterday was being questioned on suspicion of murdering the boy, who was last seen alive in 2021 when aged about 3½ years.

“He is currently detained under section 4 of the Criminal

Justice Act, 1984, at a station in the Dublin region,” a Garda statement said of the suspect, adding investigations were ongoing.

The Irish Times understands gardai have been in close contact with the authorities in Bra-



■ Daniel Aruebose: remains found buried outside Donabate

zil, where the man has been living in recent years. The Garda investigation team learned of the suspect’s whereabouts in Brazil and had knowledge of his arrest there last year related to his immigration status, which was irregular.

Following his deportation

from Brazil to Ireland, via Portugal, he was arrested yesterday after arriving into Dublin Airport and taken for questioning.

He can be interviewed for up to 24 hours before gardai must charge him with an offence or release him without charge. His deportation and arrest by gardai for questioning were both expected, though the timing came as a surprise.

Though Daniel was last seen alive in 2021, and gardai believe he was killed at that time, nobody appeared to notice his absence and the alarm was not raised. Eventually, last August, routine checks on a social welfare payment in respect of the child led to concerns for him.

Officials carrying out the checks could find no trace of his whereabouts. Those concerns were escalated to Tusla, the child and family agency, and the Garda.

## Weather

Brightening up after a dull start. Scattered showers and highs of 9-11 degrees.

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## World News



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