



**Belfast
City Council**

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

International Relations Framework

2016 - 2021

October 2016

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1 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – A NEW FRAMEWORK

Belfast City Council (BCC) has been involved in European and International activity for several decades. During that time the focus has shifted from EU funding and access to EU networks to an increasing emphasis on international relations in a broader sense, including Sister City agreements and outward and inward missions for trade and investment, student and tourist attraction. With enhanced economic development and new planning powers acquired under Public Sector Reform, and expected regeneration powers in coming years, we have an increased ambition to position the city as a competitive location to start and grow a business and to live, work, visit, trade with and invest in. Growing the economy is a priority for the City, as outlined in our 'Belfast Agenda 2035'. This International Relations Framework will reflect and complement these ambitions and the vision they represent.

1.1 Purpose and scope

We are one of many city stakeholders with established international connections through a range of channels and relationships, such as Sister City agreements and trade missions, aimed at attracting visitors, investment, talent and students. The purpose of this International Relations Framework is to ensure that Belfast is optimally positioned on the international stage to realise our ambitions, and that our resources and priorities are aligned with the overarching strategic vision for the city and - as a driver of the regional economy - with Northern Ireland's Programme for Government. It provides the rationale that a city such as Belfast can and should be active internationally, that the Council has a 'value add' role to play, and together with our partners across the city we can compete internationally for the benefit of our citizens.

1.2 Unprecedented times require renewed effort

Cities, and their role as drivers of economic growth, is not a new concept but is one that is gaining increasing attention as more of the world's population shifts towards city living. Today, 600 cities generate 60% of global GDP. It is not just large conglomerations such as New York and London that are attracting people and growth; mid-size and smaller cities across the world are enjoying an economic renaissance. Across the UK, city growth is gaining new momentum through initiatives such as the Northern Powerhouse and the Midlands Engine - Belfast must be part of this trend for city region led growth.

Competition between cities and how cities position themselves in the world market are crucial considerations of any city with ambition, such as Belfast. We have an increasingly dynamic and compelling proposition to make internationally – there is a new energy about the city, demonstrated

through successes such as the MTV music awards, the Tall Ships event, hosting the Giro D'Italia, the new Waterfront Hall, our Innovation Factory and ambitious plans for North Foreshore. As a Council, we want to achieve much more. By 2035, our aim is for the City to be a place where all people are benefitting from a thriving and prosperous economy and be a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally friendly city¹. Getting there is not without its challenges and will require considerable effort across infrastructure development, regeneration, tourism promotion, talent development, indigenous business creation/growth and international business and investment attraction.

The UK vote to leave the European Union brings a vastly changing context to international relations work and the uncertainty created by the decision to leave the European Union adds additional impetus to Belfast's need to be an 'outward facing' international city. The rise of an ever more connected world and globalisation adds weight to the argument that to stand still is to fall behind; BCC recognises it cannot stand still on international relations. This new International Relations Framework will shape and guide Belfast City Council's efforts to create a more competitive, attractive and global city.

1.3 Building on success

We can draw on considerable achievements in international relations to date. A selection of highlights includes:

- The Financial Times named Belfast as the world's most Business-Friendly City of its size, and the city has achieved notable successes in attracting inward investors such as Baker & McKenzie, Rapid 7, CME and Citi.
- In North America, Sister City agreements with Nashville and Boston are building substantive links and tangible outputs including the 'Friendship Four' hockey tournament – the first ever competitive National Collegiate Athletic Association college ice hockey fixtures outside of North America. Strong links are being developed between our universities and institutions in the USA.
- Securing increased co-operation for the J1 visa programme for students from Queen's and Ulster Universities travelling to Boston.
- In China, we have had a Sister City agreement with the city of Hefei since the 1990s. Since then several inward delegations have been hosted and reciprocated. Building on links with China, a new Sister City agreement was signed in 2016 with Shenyang, which presents considerable opportunity for international collaboration with the world's second largest (and fastest growing major) economy, and its most populace country.
- Links with India are developing. The Global India initiative resulted in 350 CEOs from top Indian companies, as well as senior politicians, coming to the Belfast to discuss investment opportunities and establish business leads.

¹ Draft Belfast Agenda 2035

- Working groups focussed on North America, China and India have been established, which bring together key stakeholders to seek and manage opportunities between Belfast and these regions
- Closer to home, Belfast and Dublin have signed an agreement to explore the economic potential of the 100-mile economic corridor that joins the two cities and links have been established with London & Partners (the official promotion company of London) to undertake mutually beneficial cross working with the UK Capital.

1.4 A Partnership Model

Our international ambitions rely on strong collaboration with a range of partners including the Executive Office, Invest NI, the universities, FE colleges and a range of bodies with shared ambitions to attract investment, tourism, conferences, students and so on.

This framework recognises the work that other partners are undertaking, alongside their strategies and ambitions for growth. At its core is the recognition that City Council has a key role to play in promoting the city and to complement and amplify the work of these partners, rather than compete against them.

This framework sets out the context in which we as a City Council will operate, and outlines the key principles that will guide our international relations work in partnership with others towards shared outcomes.

2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Building strong international relations is now more important than ever for our city's economic success. The UK vote to leave the European Union has created significant uncertainty over the content of any exit agreement, including whether the UK will maintain access to the EU single market. It is vital that we establish a refreshed international relations framework to enable us to build on opportunities in progress, identify and plan for new ones, and seize others as they emerge. This section places the international relations framework in the context of both emerging and current policy, and assesses the importance of international relations for our city.

2.1 Policy Context

The policy context, including the enabling activities and strategies of BCC and its partners, is summarised in the figure below. It should be noted that BCC is in the process of developing a range of strategies in a citywide context with city partners:

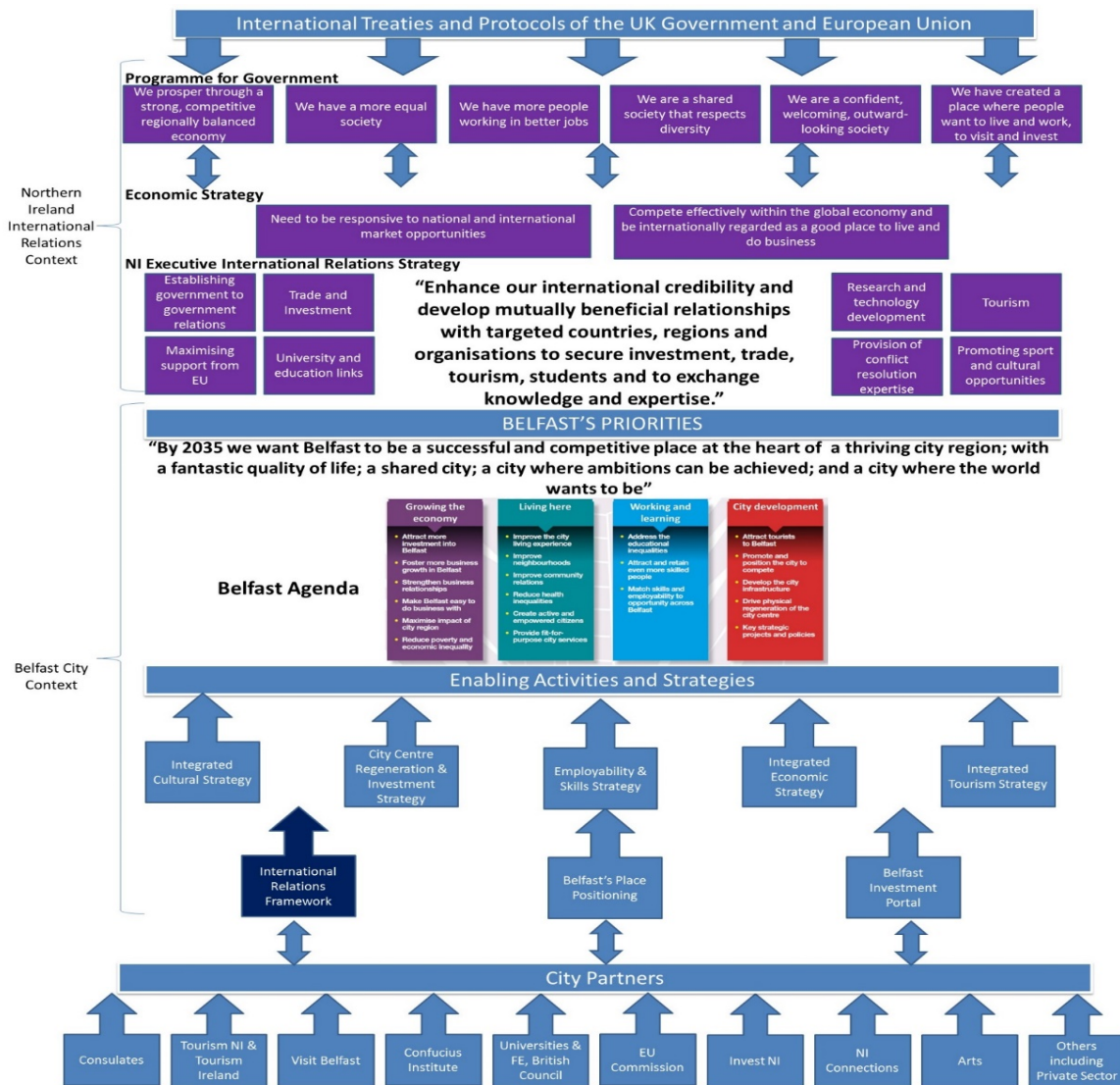


Figure 1 - Policy Context Overview

2.1.1 National Policy

Our International Relations Framework will evidently take cognisance of international treaties and the protocols of the UK government and (while a member) the European Union. At a Northern Ireland level the Programme for Government, Economic Strategy and Executive's International Relations Strategy provide a regional vision and outcome framework for Northern Ireland's societal, economic and international relations.

The forthcoming Programme for Government 2016-2021 focuses on achieving 14 strategic outcomes which the Executive determine best describe the society we wish to have. Of those proposed, there are several that relate directly to international relations. These, and the role that international relations can contribute to their achievement, are noted in the table below.

Table 1 - The role of international relations in the new Programme for Government

Programme for Government Strategic Outcome	Link to Council international relations work
<p>Outcome 1: We prosper through a strong, competitive regionally balanced economy</p>	<p>The Executive notes that attracting and embedding greater levels of higher quality inward investment and supporting the conditions where a greater number of businesses are competing successfully overseas is a key facet of achieving this outcome.</p>
<p>Outcome 3: We have a more equal society</p>	<p>Diversity can strengthen and enrich our society through embracing the talents and the range of perspectives of different people and communities. An improved international reputation is cited as one indicator of measuring success towards this outcome.</p>
<p>Outcome 6: We have more people working in better jobs</p>	<p>This outcome relates to both the creation of jobs and the attraction of the best talent to Northern Ireland (including drawing back those who have moved abroad) by creating high value employment opportunities. It also relates to attracting high quality employers, and encouraging growth of indigenous businesses, to offer sustainable employment opportunities.</p>
<p>Outcome 9: We are a shared society that respects diversity</p>	<p>BCC's city partners have noted that creating a city that is welcoming to international visitors, students and workers is an important enabler of successful international relations outcomes. This Programme for Government outcome acknowledges that diversity builds strength and adds value to our community.</p>
<p>Outcome 10: We are a confident, welcoming, outward-looking society</p>	<p>A key outcome from an international relations perspective, this outcome relates to building NI's reputation and standing on the international stage. Integral to this will be building confidence in communities to view connections with the wider world as opportunities to build a stronger society.</p>
<p>Outcome 12: We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest</p>	<p>This is another key outcome from an international relations perspective. It relates to encouraging others to come to visit and explore, to be inspired by what NI has to offer as a tourist destination and to want to return. It is also about encouraging business investment both indigenously and in terms of foreign direct investment. To achieve this outcome, the Executive proposes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively promote Northern Ireland as a destination for high quality investment and jobs. • Develop an internationally competitive and inspiring tourist destination of which our community can be proud. • Recognise the economic importance of tourism and the potential to grow the tourism industry into a high-performing export-led sector. • Continue to invest in our economic infrastructure and in our strategic

network of gateways to improve our connectivity.

- Working to build our reputation on an international stage

The Programme for Government notes an intention to work with key partners, including diaspora.

The Executive's Economic Strategy (currently being refreshed) also points towards a strong international relations theme. In recognising the need to be responsive to national and international opportunity, there is a commitment to keep the economic strategy under review to identify new opportunities, both at home and abroad. Within the economic strategy the overarching aim of rebalancing the economy recognises a need to compete effectively within the global economy and be internationally regarded as a good place to live and do business. Under a banner of 'competing globally', the strategy places an emphasis on attracting FDI, increasing exports and improving air links.

Recognising that key objectives in the Programme for Government 2011-2015 would require inward investment, tourism and increased exporting, in 2014 the Executive published an International Relations Strategy with the objective of enhancing our international credibility and developing mutually beneficial relationships with targeted countries, regions and organisations to secure investment, trade, tourism, students and to exchange knowledge and expertise.

Focussing on North America, Asia/Middle East, Europe and South America, International priorities are identified as follows - many of which are in alignment with BCC's International Relations Framework:

- Establishing government to government relations;
- Trade and investment;
- Maximising support from the EU;
- Tourism;
- University and education links;
- Research and Technology development;
- Provision of conflict resolution expertise; and
- Promoting sport and cultural opportunities.

2.1.2 Council Policy

There is a comprehensive range of strategies that have been developed, or are under development, within Council which cover focus areas such as economic development, tourism, employability and skills, culture, regeneration and investment.

Each is influenced by, and factor into, our Community Plan (the Belfast Agenda 2035) and seek to contribute to the four priorities noted to the right. It is evident from the aims and objectives of each key priority that there is a significant role for international relations to contribute to achieving our vision as a successful place where people seek to live, work, visit, study, trade and invest in.

Figure 3 - draft Belfast Agenda Priorities



At an operational level, the Local Development Plan (under development) is the spatial plan for the city to 2035 and identifies multiple strategic objectives for the City, several of which require strong international relations to enable delivery, such as:

- Strengthen the local tourism economy through supporting the development of suitable tourism and cultural facilities, and visitor accommodation; and
- Grow the population of Belfast to connect with other cities across the UK and Ireland in supporting a greater level of inward investment.

2.2 External Context – why international relations are important for Belfast

Belfast’s economic, cultural and social fabric is heavily influenced by a long history of being an open, internationally facing economy; a cause and effect relationship that will continue and expand over the coming decades. The importance of international relations to the city in terms of attracting investment, trade, tourism and students cannot be understated. The external context provides a useful guide to identifying where global opportunities for our city lie.

2.2.1 Trade

The NI Economic Strategy notes that export led growth is a key economic driver, citing a need to both grow exports and diversify into new markets. Northern Ireland companies sell £22bn of goods and services outside Northern Ireland annually; the major markets that Northern Ireland exports serve are presented in the table below.

Country	Share of total NI exports	Country	Share of total NI exports
Irish Republic	34%	China	1%
United States	18%	Belgium	1%
Canada	6%	Australia	1%
Germany	6%	Saudi Arabia	1%
France	5%	Poland	1%
Netherlands	2%	UAE	1%
Thailand	2%	Switzerland	1%
Spain	1%	Other markets	18%

Figure 4 - Destination markets of NI exports. Source: HMRC

The spread of key markets for Northern Ireland’s exports is therefore relatively small, with Ireland, the US, Canada, Germany and France accounting for nearly 70% of total outbound goods and services. India, which has been a focus market for Northern Ireland does not yet feature as a large trading partner. It should also be noted that, having posted significant growth in exports in 2012 and 2013, the Department for Economy reports that Northern Irish exports declined by 2.6% in 2014.

From a city perspective, trade data relating to Invest NI clients in Belfast shows that export sales in 2014 (the most recent year for which data is available) totalled £1.48bn – 40% of the total turnover of these firms. Invest NI’s Belfast based companies biggest export markets are GB, USA, Canada and RoI, as shown in the diagram below:

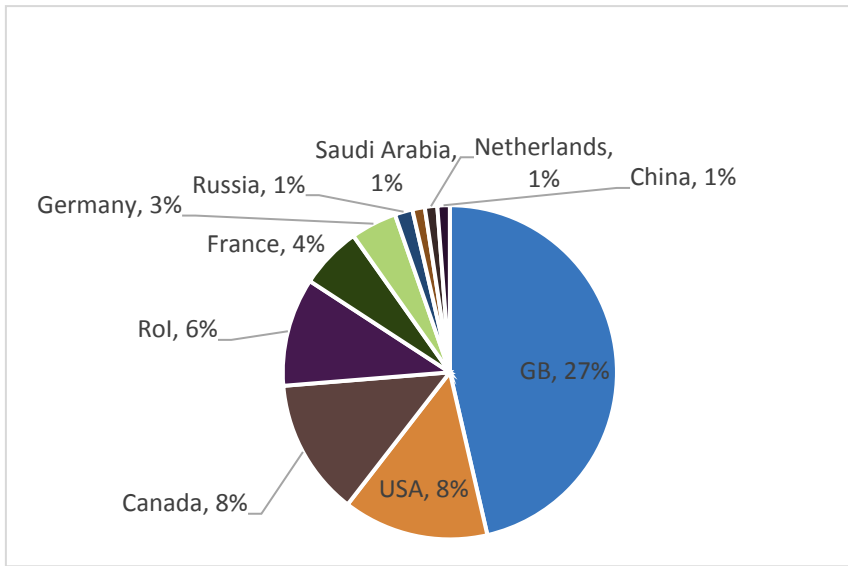


Figure 5 – Invest NI Belfast Clients: export destination markets. Source: Invest NI

2.2.2 Inward Investment

Belfast is an inward investment success story, having secured over 20,000 inward investment jobs in the past decade. A significant proportion of these jobs have originated from a small number of source countries - out of a total of 23 investing countries that have delivered projects into Belfast, the top five account for 80% of projects. The map included immediately below, showing source markets over the past five years, illustrates this:

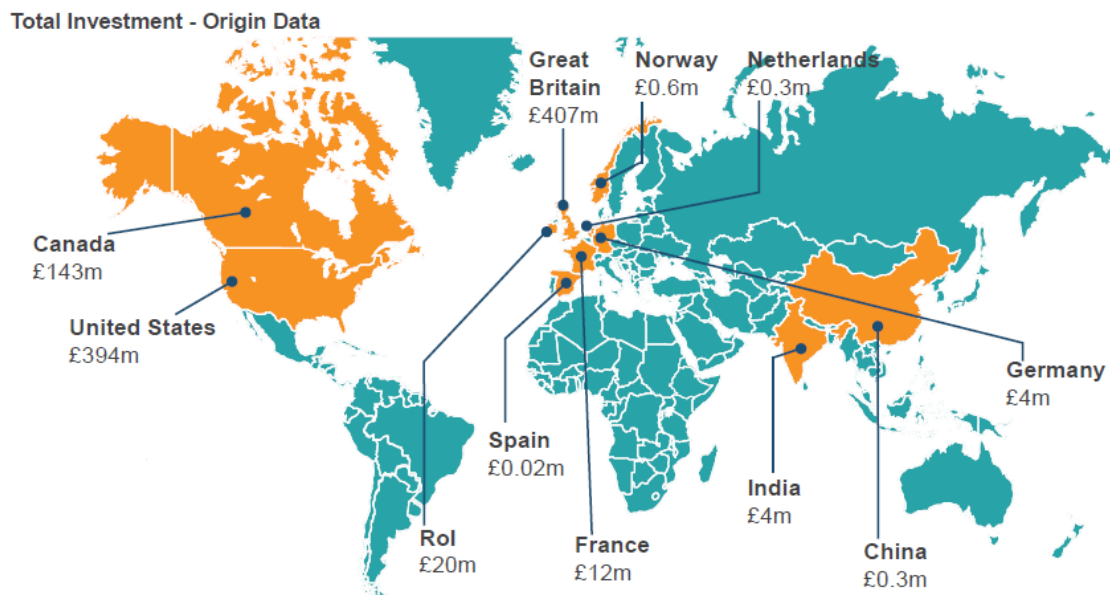


Figure 6 - Total Inward Investment to Belfast 2010/11 - 2014/15 by Source Region. Source: Invest NI

Inward Investment and core cities

Belfast's success in attracting inward investment is evidenced further when considered in the context of UK core regional cities and Dublin. The table below shows the volume percentage of inward investment projects into Belfast and competitor cities by top source cities; shaded cells reflect a top three destination for the source city. For example, Belfast is receiving 15% of projects from NYC, second only to Dublin and is thus shaded.

Source City	Destination City	Dublin	Belfast	Manchester	Edinburgh	Glasgow	Birmingham	Bristol	Leeds	Cardiff	Liverpool	Nottingham	Total Projects
NYC (NY)		36%	15%	10%	13%	9%	4%	1%	3%	5%	3%	1%	177
London		100%											110
Paris		28%	5%	10%	11%	14%	11%	6%	3%	6%	5%	2%	109
Dublin			38%	18%	13%	8%	6%	1%	2%	1%	8%	4%	99
San Francisco (CA)		74%	2%	7%	3%	5%	5%	3%	0%	0%	2%	0%	61
Tokyo		34%	9%	9%	9%	13%	9%	6%	6%	2%	4%	0%	47
Stockholm		26%	3%	16%	8%	11%	13%	3%	8%	8%	3%	3%	38
Dubai		6%	3%	21%	27%	15%	12%	6%	0%	3%	3%	3%	33
Amsterdam		35%	6%	13%	3%	6%	3%	13%	6%	10%	3%	0%	31
Chicago (IL)		48%	16%	16%	3%	3%	3%	6%	0%	3%	0%	0%	31
Seattle (WA)		55%	0%	0%	17%	3%	7%	10%	3%	0%	3%	0%	29
Sydney		31%	0%	17%	10%	14%	10%	14%	3%	0%	0%	0%	29
Boston (MA)		41%	34%	3%	7%	0%	7%	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%	29
Munich		26%	4%	19%	15%	11%	7%	7%	11%	0%	0%	0%	27
Mumbai		4%	23%	19%	0%	15%	12%	0%	8%	12%	8%	0%	26
Zurich		24%	4%	8%	32%	8%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	25
Mountain View (CA)		80%	12%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25
Brussels		35%	15%	10%	15%	10%	10%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	20
Luxembourg		26%	0%	26%	5%	16%	16%	0%	0%	5%	0%	5%	19
San Jose (CA)		63%	5%	11%	11%	5%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	19
Total Projects		399	108	105	96	80	61	34	30	30	29	12	984

Figure 7 - Inward investment Projects in Belfast and selected cities, 2003-2016 by source city. Source: Wavteq/FDI Markets from the Financial Times

Based on the table above, there is little to suggest that Belfast is missing out on any significant source markets and much to be positive about in terms of the number of projects secured. Our city is the second largest recipient of inward investment from these sources behind Dublin, which has several inherent advantages (such as size, a lower corporation tax and the seat of central government) which Belfast cannot challenge [or readily challenge].

Although not major sources, we have achieved a high proportion of inward investment from Boston and Mumbai, two cities with which we have established links during the previous International Relations Framework. Conversely, source cities such as Stockholm, Dubai, Amsterdam, Seattle or Sydney are not fruitful source markets for Belfast. There is an emerging case for Belfast to build additional international relations in markets such as the Middle East or Australia which we will continue to monitor.

Whilst corporation tax rates represent one of many factors which overseas companies assess when selecting office locations, there is a significant correlation between its level and the volume/value of inward investment. Our international relations work must be cognizant of this in the context of a planned reduction in NI Corporation Tax, and aligned (where appropriate for our international relations objectives) to Invest NI's developing strategy for maximising the value that can be derived from this reduction.

Can the success last: Brexit

The vote to leave the European Union in June 2016 has created significant uncertainty in terms of prospects for economic growth and attracting investment. For all our success in attracting inward investment, retaining it and drawing more in will be difficult whilst there remains little understanding of future access to the EU single market. Taking a truly compelling offer to inward investors is a priority for the city. Our ongoing work on 'place positioning' will contribute to maximising the value and mitigating any losses created by Brexit, and our International Relations Framework must be flexible enough to manage associated changes and impacts through to 2021.

While it is true that the vast bulk of inward investment comes from North America, there are downside risks to future opportunities if access to the EU single market is important to these firms. The Centre for Economic Performance (CEP) estimates that EU membership increases FDI in member states by 14-38%, with the average impact an increase of 28%. The CEP estimates, conservatively, that FDI into the UK will fall by 22% over the next decade due to Brexit. Furthermore, analysis by Wavteq (an FDI specialist firm) suggests that 70% of FDI in NI is at 'medium or high' risk if the UK does not retain membership of the single market. Brexit, and the terms of the deal that follows in the coming years, is a key driver for refreshing our international relations framework for the city.

2.2.3 Tourism

Attracting international visitors (either for conferences, other business or leisure) is an important element of any international relations framework.

There were close to 4.2 million overnight trips taken in Belfast during 2015, with overnight visitors predominantly local or from GB (71%). 21% of overnight visits to Belfast are from mainland Europe and RoI.

Growing tourism numbers and increasing tourism spending is a BCC objective – one that requires international marketing (in its widest sense). Determining what type of tourist (e.g. city break, socially active or culture seekers) should be targeted/prioritised is a decision that Belfast and its partners will decide upon as the city develops its place positioning and 'go to market' plans.

2.2.4 International Students

With approximately 435,000 enrolled in UK universities, international students generate a significant economic contribution to the UK. Universities UK, a body representing higher education institutions, estimate that nearly 20% of output generated by the higher

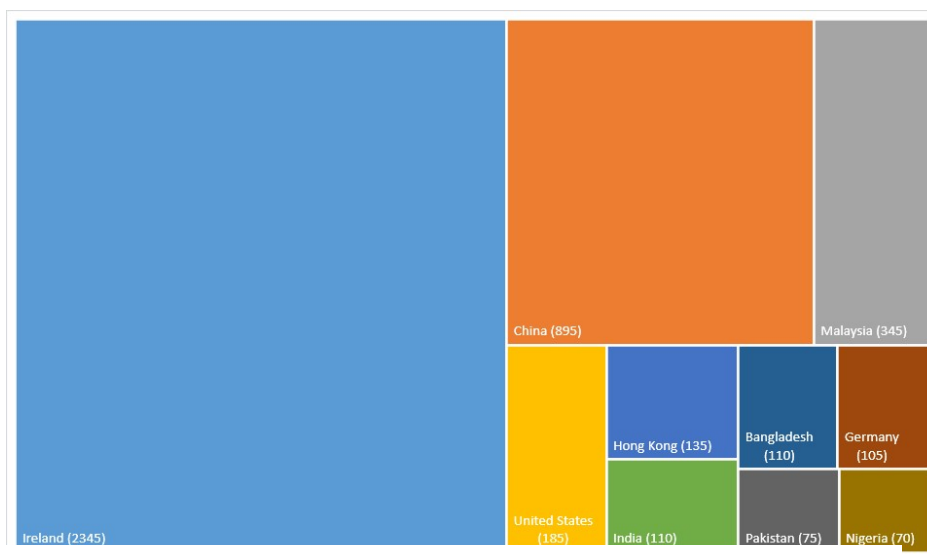


Figure 8: International Students Enrolled in NI. Source: HESA

education sector can be attributed to the enrolment of non-EU students. Accounting for all non-UK students, export earnings of the HE sector in the UK were over £10bn. Belfast currently has approximately 5,000 international students enrolled, or ~1% of the UK total, against a population of nearly 3% of the UK total. To place NI performance in further context, 1% of students that come to study in the UK from China come to Northern Ireland, with Scotland attracting 8% and Wales 5% (in approximate line with their total UK population share). Obviously, the number of institutions and available places is an influencing factor but both local Universities, and Belfast Metropolitan College, are in the process of renewing their international student attraction strategies. Each institution recognises the importance of attracting students and are setting considerably higher targets than previously established. Our international framework will align with these, and indeed the efforts of any of our schools to attract international students.

2.3 Conclusions

The internal and external context serves to demonstrate that the opportunities that exist from international markets are significant. Several key points emerge from the preceding section:

- Strong and active International relations are an important enabler to deliver on Northern Ireland's and our City's strategic ambitions, and will support the achievement of a selection of Programme for Government outcomes.
- Our international relations work has and should continue to contribute to a range of economic drivers:
 - **Trade:** Two opportunities are evident in a trade context - Belfast companies do not export enough and those that do need to diversify to more markets.
 - **Inward Investment:** Our success story in inward investment provides an opportunity to embed these inward investors into the city and grow their presence, and provides strong credentials with which to promote the city as an attractive place to do business. Brexit challenges aside, our city has much to offer inward investors.
 - **Tourism:** we have an opportunity to attract a greater proportion of visitors to the island of Ireland to visit and stay in Belfast, as well as market the city in recently launched air route destinations from the city.
 - **International Student Attraction:** Education providers in the city all recognise the upside benefits of attracting more international students. Opportunities exist to grow the international student base that comes to the city.

The international relations activities that we will undertake over the duration of this framework will, with our city partners, contribute to delivering growth across each of these key drivers.

3 OUR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS FRAMEWORK

Wide ranging consultations with city partner organisations and desk research have raised a series of priorities for our role in international relations. The activities and initiatives we will undertake to maximise our role and contributions through to 2021 will be guided by the principles outlined in this section.

3.1 Our Role

City Council is one of many important stakeholders, including private companies, tourist bodies and higher education institutions who have a role to play in Belfast's international promotion. Our optimal role in international relations work (i.e. where we can deliver the most value for trade & investment, tourism and education) will be to leverage our resources towards shared outcomes with city partners; to amplify the work of these partners; co-ordinate and organise where appropriate and utilise our civic leadership functions to open opportunities and access to influencers on a scale that is beyond what these partners could achieve unilaterally. As lead authority for Belfast's economic growth, it is important that we play a convening role which brings our city partners together and drives common purpose.

Our optimal role is therefore complimentary, working alongside our partners in a structured, 'joined up' approach, but we will be involved only where a value for money benefit to the residents of Belfast is shown.

3.2 Guiding Principles to fulfil our role

The following principals will guide our international relations work.

Communicating a single proposition

Belfast has a range of target audiences to engage across multiple international markets, from potential investors to students and tourists, and we need to raise our international profile. Over time, the city has developed a suite of marketing materials and 'place positioning' collateral that have served specific needs well. We need to ensure that, as we 'approach the market', we are communicating a shared message that clearly and concisely articulates the benefits of our city, and

what differentiates it on a global stage. Defining and communicating an overarching, compelling message for our audiences, in collaboration with our city partners, is a priority.

Strengthening our relationships

Building successful international relations takes time, resources and effort. Within the context of this guiding principle, we have identified the following priorities:

- **International partnerships:** our international focus aligns well with the NI Executive and other key city partners. We are open to new opportunities from wherever they emerge and will assess each opportunity on its merits. Maximising our current relationships will however take priority.

Recent years have seen a new impetus behind our Sister City agreements in North America and China – the recent signing of an agreement with Shenyang represents a significant opportunity to build new links with the World’s second largest economy, and most populace country.

Maximising the outcomes from these agreements will be a focus through to 2021, to ensure the resources and effort that created these important links are translated into benefits for Belfast.

We will also seek to assess, repurpose and refocus our activities with other key international partners where we have existing links, specifically Dublin, London and India, building on the Belfast-Dublin Economic corridor, links with London & Partners and the Global India initiative respectively. In North America, there is an emerging case to build on our strong cultural and business relationships with Canada and leverage our common trade, employment and diaspora links.

- **City Partnerships:** Our partners play a valuable role in Belfast’s growth and its positioning on the world stage. These organisations include the private sector, Invest NI, Visit Belfast, Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland, British Council and NI Connections, amongst many others. Complementing their activity and amplifying its’ impact is both a core role of the Council and a core principle of this framework. We will work with these partners to ensure our role contributes to theirs for the benefit of the city; our measures of success will be developed in conjunction with these partners to further cement this ‘additionality’ role and ensure our resources are deployed towards shared outcomes.

To support partnership working, we will review and refresh our existing stakeholder groups, to maximise their productivity and contribution going forward. We will seek to:

- Restructure agendas, discussions and actions to align to the three key themes (of Trade & Investment, Tourism and Student attraction); contributing to the Belfast Agenda should be positioned as the primary objective and continually reviewed.
- Terms of Reference should be updated to ensure the remit, role, objectives and activities of each Stakeholder Group is clearly understood and shared.
- Membership of the groups will be reviewed and refreshed to ensure appropriate representation under the new framework.
- Stakeholder Groups will be deputy chaired by city partners, potentially on a revolving basis, to encourage involvement and joint ownership of both the forums and their outputs. The Chair should remain a City Councillor or appropriate Council Officer.

We will also seek ways to support our partners by sharing collateral developed by the Council, which could benefit our partners as they seek new international opportunities or develop existing ones. As a Council, we produce a significant amount of material to support our international promotional efforts; making this available to others to support them in the delivery of shared outcomes will benefit the city as a whole.

- **Civic Leadership:** In addition to playing a convening and complementary role with our partners, we have an important civic role to play in international relations, enabling and facilitating access to key influencers and networks. In addition, the role of the Lord Mayor in outward visits and in hosting delegations that visit the city has been recognised by our city partners as a vitally important contribution that City Council makes. The Lord Mayor also plays an important role in supporting decision making and the planning of international relations work, including on the development of the Belfast City landing service for potential investors. We will ensure our elected members play a key civic leadership role where their involvement supports our strategic objectives.
- **Diaspora:** There are tens of thousands of people across the world who were born and/or raised in Belfast, who share an affinity towards the city. In addition, there are many other individuals who are 'friends' of the city, having lived or studied here over the past decades. It is important for us to engage this diaspora and identify both business and cultural opportunities for Belfast in their current locations.
- **Best Practice and Influence:** We hold several international (or internationally facing) memberships and subscriptions such as Eurocities, Smart Cities, NI Connections and Friends of NI in China. We have also recently been selected as one of 100 Rockefeller Resilient cities from around the world, which gives our city support to develop responses to the challenges of the 21st century and plugs us in to a global network of cities with similar aspirations. Ensuring we access

and leverage both the learnings and experience of others will help us maximise the value of our international relations work; as part of this we will assess the value and effectiveness of all our existing memberships, and identify new ones that can strengthen and augment our promotional work.

Objectively assessing new relationships and opportunities

While we will focus on maximising the relationships we already hold with Nashville, Boston and Shenyang, new opportunities for city partnership working will undoubtedly arise. These opportunities, which could be generated either by our work, or via city partners through their own activities, will require measured assessment to determine value to the City and our residents. Using an objective assessment tool, we will evaluate each new opportunity against a range of economic, tourism, cultural, educational and operational factors before investing in any new opportunity.

Promoting Trade and Investment

Belfast has achieved significant success in attracting inward investment in recent years. This inflow extends beyond job creation and includes attracting investment for infrastructure and regeneration projects. Our recent attendance at MIPIM is an example of where we can work closely with city partners to advertise and augment Belfast's investment opportunities to a global audience. Maximising future opportunities to attract investors is paramount to growing our city.

Under our 'Growing the Economy' priority within the Belfast Agenda 2035, we will establish an Economic Forum in conjunction with our city partners; this forum will enable strategic discussion and challenge, agree and oversee the economic growth priorities, and support the delivery of these. International relations work will be both an input and an output of this forum's activities and will therefore be heavily involved in its work.

Importantly, our activities will not stop once an investment is secured and delivered. Through maintaining regular communications with key international investors, we will ensure that we are well placed to proactively support a response to their needs, with the objective of seeking their further expansion in the city. This is not limited to new/potential investors – it also includes engaging with major overseas owned companies who have established operations in Belfast.

Belfast is home to many small dynamic and ambitious companies. Building the confidence and capabilities of these companies and helping them find international trade links and increase exports will help our economy thrive. We will support these companies into international markets, and support the international trade efforts that our partners already undertake.

Attracting Visitors & Students

We have world class facilities such as Titanic Belfast, the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall within our city, and can boast a safe and friendly environment. Our partners in Visit Belfast, Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland and our private sector tourist attraction/venue operators play a crucial role in attracting visitors and students here. Our investment support for Visit Belfast allows this public/private partnership to promote the city to a wide range of potential visitors across the world, in collaboration with over 500 partners. It is now the largest combined tourism, hospitality and retail membership organisation in Northern Ireland, and directly contributes to the continued success of positioning Belfast as an attractive location to visit and study. In 2015, for example, Visit Belfast's activities contributed £92 million to the local economy – a return of investment at a ratio of 26:1.

We have an ambitious Tourism Strategy for our city and we aim to double the value of tourism by 2020. Attracting people to our city for study, leisure or business/conferences involves several related elements. The first requires a marketing strategy that sells the city to students, conference operators and leisure visitors, focussing on what each audience views as important to their own decision making, and cognizant of the overarching place positioning of our city. Access to the city is also important and we will work with our airports and seaports to support their route development efforts, where possible, and target marketing efforts in destination cities/regions. Once here, we must ensure Belfast provides a rich, positive experience through our culture, arts, leisure and events provision so that visitors leave with a positive experience, a desire to share those experiences and a wish to return.

Ensuring Transparency

International visits by Councillors and officials must demonstrate purpose and value for our ratepayers. Full transparency on costs, delegation size and itineraries will form a central tenet of our international relations work. Visits will have a clearly defined purpose, will be undertaken with the minimum viable delegation size and costs will follow best practice expenditure guidelines.

Measuring and Communicating Success

Whilst vital for international relations work, success cannot be measured solely on the volume of activity undertaken; actions and activities do not necessarily produce value in and of themselves - value is achieved via the benefits that can and are delivered by the activities the Council undertakes. By focussing all international relations work towards achieving the [relevant] outcomes defined in the Belfast Agenda 2035, we will be able to maximise ROI against achievable goals that align and compliment the wider strategic objectives the Council is seeking to achieve.

Defining goals in collaboration with city partners is critical to ensuring joint ownership and alignment of effort. The Council unilaterally deciding it will aim for 1,000 more students from China, for example,

could run directly counter to the universities' priorities, capacity and targets. We will therefore define targets for shared outcomes in agreement with our city partners - focussing on trade & investment (including Invest NI for example), tourism (including Visit Belfast and Tourism NI for example) and education (including both universities for example).

These indicators could include:

- Increase in the number of foreign owned companies in Belfast.
- Improvement in attractiveness as a destination (spend by visitors).
- Increase in our export intensity (exporting as a proportion of GDP).
- Increase in the number of international students in the city (HESA Statistics).
- Improvement in our international reputation (City Competitiveness index).

Defining the proportion of a target or outcome achieved by a single party in a multi-stakeholder environment, particularly when inputs extend beyond quantitative inputs (such as £ invested) is complex, open to challenge and can be damaging to relationships. However, calculating additionality – even subjectively – can be a useful indicator of success if it is caveated and communicated appropriately.

We will therefore adopt a model that calculates our proportional contribution to increases in trade & investment, tourism and students. Where we provide funding (as in the case of Visit Belfast, for example) we can directly calculate additionality. Where contributions are less clear (such as in effort invested, collateral produced, introductions made that led to new business into Belfast etc.) a subjective % of the final success will be calculated as BCC's additionality.

Alongside the outcome based indicators mentioned above, we will continue to track the activities and outputs that our international relations work produces, as evidence of the significant volume and effort undertaken for the benefit of the City. We will also expand this tracking to include feedback from partner organisations (generated after specific initiatives/events or issued on a bi-annual basis as appropriate), given the role we play in the facilitation and support for such activities. Alongside acting as a measure of success, such feedback will also generate valuable insights that we could use to enhance (and continually maximise) the value we deliver towards the realisation of international relations goals.

Our annual programmes of work will be presented to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for review and approval, with quarterly progress reports against these plans also presented to this Committee.

3.3 International Relations Core Activities

Based on our guiding principles our international relations activities (across the Council as a whole) will include the following actions to maximise the value we can provide. The focus is on the period 2016-2018:

Category	Actions & Activities	Target date for completion
Defining and communicating a single proposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will develop a single 'promotional' narrative for the City that provides a shared, consistent message to all audiences we need to reach. • Building on our 'Belfast at MIPIM' online portal, we will liaise with the City Centre Team with a view to develop an external and internal facing 'Destination Belfast' portal to a) External: ensure consistency of messaging across key partners in promoting our city to international investors and visitors by convening the parties together to agree messaging and b) Internal: provide one repository of BCC's international relations collateral (briefings, presentations speeches) for use by BCC councillors, officials and our city partners. • We will objectively assess and appropriately partner with stakeholders in promoting the city internationally around major events (e.g. student recruitment events) and in new air route destinations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q1 2017 • Q1 2017 • Ongoing
Strengthening our relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will build on our existing international relationships to deepen the economic, social and cultural ties that exist by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developing, with our city partners, a multi-annual engagement and activity plan for each of our Sister Cities and international partners². Securing success from international relations takes time and continuity in relationships. Planning activity beyond one year cycles will help build momentum. ○ Working with our partners through repurposed stakeholder groups to ensure activities are coordinated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2017 • November

² Current formal relationships and agreements are in place with Nashville, Boston, Shenyang, Hefei and Dublin. Although no formal agreements are in place, there are existing links with India which we will assess for opportunities as appropriate.

	<p>and outcome focussed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will undertake a mid-term review of our Sister City activities and assess each against their value and benefit to BCC's strategic objectives, with a view to withdrawing, refocusing or continuing. • We will ensure all our elected officials are provided with regular briefings on Belfast's international relations work and are offered training on promoting Belfast internationally. Briefings and an annual international relations work programme will be agreed with incoming Lord Mayors and Deputy Lord Mayors. • We will engage with our global diaspora to build a network of friends and ambassadors who will promote our city and bring inward opportunities. Through NI Connections, we will implement a diaspora engagement action plan. • We will review all our organisational memberships and subscriptions to assess the value they bring to the city with a view to freezing or renewing membership. We will also assess additional memberships and agree involvement based on the value they could deliver. • We will develop our Rockefeller 100 Resilient Cities membership and bid to host a Rockefeller 100 Resilient Cities event to showcase our city and share learnings with our resilient city network. 	<p>2016</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q3 2018 • Ongoing • March 2017 • Q2 2017 • Ongoing
<p>Objectively assessing new relationships and opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will introduce an evidence based assessment framework³ that evaluates proposed new city partnerships based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Export potential: e.g. current value of trade between Belfast/NI and the proposed location as a proportion of total Belfast/NI trade ○ Investment potential: e.g. how many inward investment projects the source location has provided to Belfast, NI, UK or Ireland over the past three years ○ Student/Education links potential: e.g. Assessment of how many students already come from the source location to Belfast/UK/Ireland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 2016

³ See Appendix

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tourism potential: e.g. Assessment of how many tourists come from the source location to Belfast/UK/Ireland ○ Cultural links: e.g. Assessment of how many residents in Belfast are from the potential source market ○ Ease of doing business: e.g. World Bank 'doing business' rating, Assessment of direct flights from Belfast/rest of Ireland/Partner Priorities: e.g. Identification of how many Sister City agreements the proposed location already has ○ Costs: e.g. Estimated/indicative costs involved of entering a new partnership arrangement, and ongoing support to develop associated opportunities 	
Promoting Trade and Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will promote trade and investment opportunities across our Sister Cities network, driven primarily through refreshed and repurposed working groups and via appropriate (value assessed) events. • We will work with Invest NI to determine and action the most effective channels to maximise inward investment to Belfast. • We will explore the feasibility of creating an investor liaison/concierge role to ensure new investors in Belfast can establish in the city with ease and that we maintain a strong links with our investors. • We will partner with Invest NI on relevant trade missions and support non-Invest NI client companies with high growth potential to enter new markets. • We will shape and actively participate in the City's Economic Forum, drawing together all relevant parties, to define our city wide economic strategy and priorities, and to drive actions against these. • We will keep a 'watching brief' on the progress of Brexit negotiations and EU engagement opportunities, to target opportunities and mitigate associated risks as the terms of exit become clearer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing • By Summer 2017 • 2017 • Ongoing • Q1 2017 onwards • Ongoing
Attracting Visitors & Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will work with our partners to promote the city for tourism, students and conferences by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Directing marketing to destinations which are served from Belfast airports. ○ Ensuring our Lord Mayor and elected officials are an 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Per European & International Unit annual work planning

	<p>integral part of promoting our city to in-bound business, educational, cultural and political delegations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with external city partners and BCC's tourism and events units, we will showcase our city internationally by hosting major international events and conferences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing
Ensuring transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will hold our international relations activities to the highest standards of cost effectiveness, following Foreign and Commonwealth Office guidance on subsistence allowances and seeking the most cost effective accommodation and travel We will ensure outward trips are undertaken by as few people as is viable. We will publish itineraries and publish a post visit report online. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing Ongoing Post major events
Measuring and communicating success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will agree appropriate key performance indicators and targets with our city partners to measure success towards shared outcomes, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in the number of foreign owned companies in Belfast. Improvement in attractiveness as a destination (spend by visitors). Increase in our export intensity (exporting as a proportion of GDP). Increase in the number of international students in the city (HESA Statistics). Improvement in our international reputation (City Competitiveness index). We will work closely (on an ongoing basis) with city partners to assess measurement against these targets, and BCC's contribution We will engage with our stakeholders on an annual basis to review international relations activities and review objectives. We will proactively seek feedback on events and initiatives, using a standardised form (to enable like for like comparisons over the course of this framework) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing Ongoing Annually (at Financial Year End) Ongoing, within 1 week of event/initiative

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will review our International Relations work programme activities annually and publish an International Relations status report tracking outputs and progress towards shared outcomes 	<p>completion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing
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4 APPENDIX: ASSESSING

To objectively assess whether proposed cities/regions represent appropriate opportunities for BCC resource investment, we have provided an assessment tool that delivers the capability to evaluate such locations.

This Excel based tool assesses locations across 8 criteria, to be used whenever a new international relationship/link is proposed.

Data sources are included in the tool and each criterion is scored on a scale of 1-3, based on individual guidance provided for each. For example, if a proposed overseas city has been a source of FDI into Belfast in the past three years, it scores the maximum points available given this 'track record' of investment suggests there is an opportunity to increase it in the future. If there have not been projects to Belfast but there have been to the UK or Ireland, then 2 points are awarded; if no inward investment projects have come from the source market to Belfast or the UK/Ireland then a minimum 1 point is awarded.

A total score is delivered as a percentage. Scoring is weighted to reflect the rationale for the proposed partnership/link - there is little merit, for example, in scoring FDI potential if the rationale for the partnership is cultural. A score of over 70% suggests a 'good fit' for Belfast. A score of 50% to 70% suggests the case for partnership is unconvincing but may have potential, and a score below 50% suggests a 'poor fit' for Belfast.

The tool is designed to be used as input to the Council's decision making process, rather than as a replacement to existing processes. The screenshot below illustrates a hypothetical assessment example, evaluating a city that resulted in an opportunity score of 80%.

Focus of Opportunity	Y/N (select Y/N from the drop down list in each cell)
Trade & Investment	Y
Visitors	Y
Culture	Y

Criteria	Indicator	Score (select a score in each cell)	Data Sources
Export Potential	Trade Intensity: The trade intensity index (T) is used to determine whether the value of trade between two countries is greater or smaller than would be expected on the basis of their importance in world trade. It is defined as the share of one country's exports going to a partner divided by the share of world exports going to the partner.	No trade relationship – points: 1	Belfast data: Invest NI NI data: HMRC Tradinfo Global data: Statistica/World Bank http://comtrade.un.org/
	Priority Sector Match	At least 2 shared priority sectors – points: 3	Belfast data: Belfast City Council Global data: Statista.com
Investment Potential	FDI flows from destination	No Belfast projects but UK or Ireland has secured projects from source in last three years – points: 2	Belfast data: Belfast City Council Global data: FDI Markets from the Financial Times
	Sovereign Wealth Fund/Pension Fund Potential for Regeneration Funding	Yes – points: 3	Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute – http://www.swfinstitute.org/
Student/Education links Potential	How many students from source market come to Belfast?	1-100 – points: 2	HESA Statistics – https://www.hesa.ac.uk/
	How many students from source market come to UK/Ireland?	More than 5000 – points: 3	HESA Statistics – https://www.hesa.ac.uk/
Tourism Potential	How many visitors come from source market to Belfast?	Top 6-10 –points: 2	Tourism NI
	How many visitors come from source market to UK/Ireland?	Not a top 10 source market – points: 1	ONS/CSO
Cultural Links	How many residents in Belfast are from source market?	More than 50 NINOS applications in past year – points: 3	National Insurance Number Applications (ONS)
	Does Belfast have a cultural link or shared experiences from which to share learning (e.g. emerging from conflict, waterfront regeneration, port city regeneration, etc)?	Yes – points: 3	Belfast City Council
Ease of doing business	Doing business' rating	41-100 – points: 2	http://www.doingbusiness.org/
	Free Trade Agreement with destination?	Yes – points: 3	Desk trawl/search engine
	Business Language used	Non-English – points: 1	Desk trawl/search engine
	Direct flights from Ireland to destination	Yes – points: 3	Desk trawl/search engine
Partner priorities	How many sister city agreements does the destination already have?	None – points: 3	Desk trawl/search engine
	Do any of Belfast's City Partners have links to the destination?	Yes – points: 3	Desk trawl/search engine
Cost	Is there a cost involved?	None – points: 3	Belfast City Council

Total Opportunity Score: 80%
Good fit for Belfast