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This booklet provides a general overview of Ireland's political, economic and cultural life. While it is not possible to include every aspect of life in Ireland in this short publication we hope that you will discover a little about Ireland and its people.

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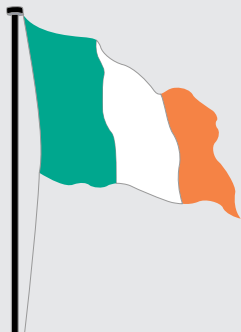
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Constitution



National Flag



Official Emblem

Name of State

The Irish Constitution provides that the name of the State is *Éire* or in the English language, *Ireland*. The Republic of Ireland Act of 1948 provides for the description of the State as the Republic of Ireland but this provision has not changed the use of 'Ireland' as the name of the State in the English language.

Island of Ireland

The geographical island of Ireland contains two separate legal jurisdictions comprising the sovereign independent state of Ireland comprising 26 counties located to the south, east, west and north-west of the island, while Northern Ireland comprises the remaining six counties to the north-east of the island, under the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom.

Language

Article 8 of the Irish Constitution makes the following affirmation:

- 1 The Irish language as the national language is the first official language.
- 2 The English language is recognised as a second official language.

Flag

The national flag is a tricolour of green, white and orange. The flag is rectangular in shape, the width being twice the depth. The three colours are of equal size with the green next to the staff.

Emblem

The harp has been regarded as the official symbol or coat of arms of Ireland since medieval times. The heraldic harp is used by the Government, its agencies and its representatives at home and abroad. It is engraved on the seal matrix of the Office of the President as well as on the obverse of all coinage. It features on the Irish euro coins.

Anthem

The text of *Amhrán na bhFiann* (*Soldiers Song*), consisting of three stanzas and a chorus, was written by Peadar Kearney who also

composed the music together with Patrick Heeney. The chorus was formally adopted as the National Anthem in 1926. A section of the National Anthem (consisting of the first four bars followed by the last five) is also the Presidential Salute.

The National Day

Saint Patrick's Day, (17 March) is the National Day.

Tradition holds that it was the use of the shamrock (a green trefoil) by Saint Patrick when preaching in Ireland, which led to its adoption as an Irish symbol.



Watching the Saint Patrick's Day parade

Online

St Patricks Day Festival:

www.stpatricksday.ie

Government

Ireland is a parliamentary democracy. Its law is based on common law and legislation enacted by the Irish Parliament under the Constitution. In addition, regulations and directives enacted by the European Union have the force of law in Ireland. EU regulations become part of national law and are enforceable in national courts immediately once they come into force. They do not need to be brought in by any national legislation.

EU Directives require Member States to implement national legislation to achieve a specific result and must, therefore be transposed into Irish legislation.

The Constitution of Ireland sets out the form of government and defines the powers and functions of the President, both Houses of the

THE IRISH STATE

Oireachtas (National Parliament) and the Government. It also defines the structure and powers of the Courts and outlines the fundamental rights of citizens. The definition of rights covers five broad headings: Personal Rights, The Family, Education, Private Property and Religion.

The President is the Head of State. Where there is more than one candidate for the office, the people elect the President by direct vote. A President may only serve for two terms. President Mary McAleese was elected in November 1997 and began her second seven-year term in November 2004.



The President of Ireland Mary McAleese

There are fifteen Government Departments each headed by a Minister who collectively form the Government. Executive power is exercised by or on the authority of the Government, which is responsible to the *Dáil* (House of Representatives). The Head of the Government is the *Taoiseach* (Prime Minister) while the *Tánaiste* is the Deputy Prime Minister.

There are two Houses of Parliament, known as *Dáil Éireann* (House of Representatives) and *Seanad Éireann* (Senate). The *Dáil* has 166 members known as Teachtaí Dála (TD). They are elected on a system of proportional representation by universal suffrage. Elections take place at least once every five years. The most recent General Election was held in 2007. The political parties represented in the *Dáil* are *Fianna Fáil*, *Fine*

The Dáil Chamber



Gael, the Labour Party, the Green Party, Sinn Féin and the Progressive Democrats. (The present government, formed in June 2007, is made up of a coalition between *Fianna Fáil, the Green Party, the Progressive Democrats*, supported by a number of independent members of the *Dáil*.)

The *Seanad* has 60 members, eleven of whom are nominated by the *Taoiseach* (Prime Minister) while the rest are elected from a number of vocational panels and by graduates of universities. The *Seanad* may initiate or revise legislation, but the *Dáil* has the power to reject any such amendments or proposed legislation.

Political Parties

Fianna Fáil, the Republican Party has 79 elected members in the *Dáil* (elected in June 2007) and 4 elected Members of the European Parliament. It operates as part of the 'Union for Europe' group in the European Parliament. It describes itself as a broadly centrist party whose aims include securing, in peace and agreement, the unity and independence of Ireland, and the development of a distinct national life in accordance with the diverse traditions of the Irish people. It has been the largest party in *Dáil Éireann* since 1932, and has formed the

Government Buildings, Dublin



government seven times since Ireland gained independence in 1921.

Fine Gael, the second largest party, has 51 elected members in the Dáil (elected in June 2007) and 5 elected Members of the European Parliament. It describes itself as the party of the “progressive centre”, with core values focused on fiscal rectitude, free enterprise and reward, individual rights and responsibilities. They are strongly pro-EU integration and operate as part of the European People’s Party in the European Parliament.

The *Labour Party* is affiliated to the Socialist International Party and is a member of the Party of European Socialists (PES) in the European Parliament. It seeks to build a society free from deprivation and based on the principles of democracy, equity, participation and co-operation.

The *Green Party* is a political party associated with Green Parties in over 30 other countries. It stands for protection of the environment, community decision-making, freedom of information, open government and peace through disarmament. The Green Party motto is ‘Think Globally, Act Locally’. The Party is represented at local, national and European Parliament level.

Sinn Féin is an Irish republican party. Its objectives are the reunification of Ireland, political independence and national sovereignty.

The *Progressive Democrats* was established with the aim of providing Ireland with a modern, forward-looking liberal party in the European mould and is working to develop the role of the State in the economic and social life of the country.

Online

Government of Ireland:	www.irishgov.ie
President of Ireland:	www.president.ie
Fianna Fáil:	www.fiannafail.ie
Fine Gael:	www.finegael.ie
Labour:	www.labour.ie
Green Party:	www.greenparty.ie
Sinn Féin:	www.sinnfein.ie
Progressive Democrats:	www.progressivedemocrats.ie

Note: Websites for Government Departments can be found in relevant sections throughout this booklet as well as in the index list of websites at the back of this booklet

Local Government

The local government system is administered by 114 local authorities and is undergoing a process of renewal and reform.

The services provided by the local authorities can be described under eight main headings:

- housing and building;
- road transportation and safety;
- water supply and sewerage;
- development incentives and controls;
- environmental protection and waste management;
- recreation and amenity;
- education, health and welfare, and
- miscellaneous services.

Education, health and welfare services are however primarily delivered at local level by other public agencies. The local government reform programme has seen local government expand its community development role and widen its sphere of influence in locally delivered public services. Local government is funded partly by central government and partly by local sources including motor tax proceeds, rates (on commercial property) and local charges such as refuse, rents and so on.

There are eight regional authorities and two regional assemblies whose members are nominated by local authorities. Their main tasks are to promote public service co-ordination and to monitor and advise on EU structural and cohesion funding programmes.

The regional assemblies in addition are the managing authorities for the Regional Operational Programme under the National Development Plan.

Online

Department of the Environment and Local Government: www.environ.ie

The Courts

Irish law is based on Common Law as modified by subsequent legislation and by the Constitution of 1937. In accordance with the Constitution, justice is administered in public by courts established by law. The



The Four Courts, Dublin

President appoints judges on the advice of the Government. Judges are usually senior practising lawyers. Summary offences and minor civil cases are dealt with by the District Court presided over by a District Judge. More serious cases are heard by the Circuit Court, presided over by a judge who sits with a jury of twelve citizens in criminal cases. The most serious cases are heard by the High Court, presided over by a judge; when trying criminal cases it sits with a jury and is known as the Central Criminal Court. The court of final appeal is the Supreme Court which is also the final arbiter on the interpretation of the Constitution.

Online

Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform:	www.justice.ie
Irish Courts Service:	www.courts.ie
Director of Public Prosecutions:	www.dppireland.ie
Office of the Attorney General:	www.attorneygeneral.ie

Police and Defence Forces

The national police force, *An Garda Síochána*, was established in 1922. The general direction, management and control of the service is, subject to regulations made by the Minister of Justice, Equality, Law and Reform, vested in a Commissioner appointed by the Government.

The Garda Síochána

Ombudsman Commission, which opened its public offices on May 9th 2007, is responsible for receiving and dealing with all complaints made by members of the public concerning the conduct of members of the Garda Síochána. The Garda Ombudsman's mission is to provide the public with an independent and effective oversight of policing, and to deal with the public's complaints concerning Gardaí fairly and efficiently so that everyone can have confidence in the complaints system.

An Garda Síochána is unarmed with the exception of some specialized units. The crime detection rate is comparable to that of other European countries. Since 1989, *An Garda Síochána* have served in numerous United Nations (UN) missions around the world. They have also served under the EU flag in the former Yugoslavia, Macedonia and Eastern Slavonia and have provided monitors for the South African and Palestine elections.

The Permanent Defence Forces, which include the regular Army, Naval



Garda helicopter

Mounted Gardaí on street patrol





Naval Vessel

Service and Air Corps, operate under the auspices of the Department of Defence. The Department is also responsible for the general planning, organisation and co-ordination of Civil Defence measures. Recruitment to the Permanent Defence Forces is voluntary. The Defence Forces have extensive peacekeeping experience

and have served with the UN all over the world since 1958.

The longest-running mission is with UNIFIL in Lebanon where the Army committed in excess of 30,000 tours of duty since 1978. Defence Forces personnel have served, and continue to serve, in a number of other UN and UN led missions in areas such as Cyprus, the Middle East, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, East Timor, Afghanistan and, most recently, Chad.

Online

Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform:	www.justice.ie
Garda Síochána (Irish Police):	www.garda.ie
Garda Ombudsman:	www.gardaombudsman.ie
Department of Defence:	www.defence.ie
Irish Defence Forces:	www.military.ie

Irish troops peacekeeping in Kosovo





Ireland's location as an island to the west of continental Europe and close to Britain has, in large measure, shaped her history.

Ireland, which has been inhabited for about 7,000 years, has experienced many incursions and invasions, resulting in a rich mixture of ancestry and traditions. The first settlers, mostly hunters from Britain, brought with them a Mesolithic culture. They were followed around 3000 B.C. by farmers who raised animals and cultivated the soil. After these Neolithic settlers, around 2000 B.C., came prospectors and metalworkers.

By the Sixth Century B.C. waves of Celtic invaders from Europe began to reach the country. While Ireland was never unified politically by the Celts, they did generate a cultural and linguistic unity.

The introduction of Christianity in the fifth century A.D. is traditionally credited to Saint Patrick, though there is evidence that there were Christians on the island before his arrival. Unlike most of western Europe, Ireland never experienced the barbarian invasions of the early medieval period and, partly as a result, the sixth and seventh centuries saw a flowering of Irish art, learning and culture centering on the monasteries. Irish monks brought Christianity to many parts of Europe in the period before 800 A.D.

During the ninth and tenth centuries, Ireland was regularly raided by the Vikings. They were also traders and did much to develop life in Dublin, Cork and Waterford. Following the defeat of the Vikings by Brian Boru, the High King of Ireland, at Clontarf in 1014, the Viking influence faded.

In the twelfth century, the arrival of the Normans, who had earlier settled in England and Wales, shattered such progress as had been made towards the creation of a centralised State under a single High King. They quickly gained control over large parts of Ireland, which then came under the political authority of the King of England.

For the next 400 years the Normans and their descendants were an influential presence in Ireland. However, many areas of the country remained in Irish hands and, by the early sixteenth century there were widespread fears in England that English influence was in danger of collapse, both as a result of Gaelic incursions and of the progressive Gaelicisation of the Norman settlers.

Gaelic Ireland

Religious change in England at this time had a major impact on Ireland. The descendants of the Norman settlers in Ireland, who came to be called the Old English, were, by and large, hostile to the Protestant reformation which had led to the establishment of the (Anglican) Church of Ireland. In addition, the central strategic importance of Ireland, as an island close to both Britain and continental Europe, and hence a possible base for English malcontents or foreign enemies, gave Irish affairs an urgency that they had not had for centuries.

Following a series of revolts in Ireland — which arose in response to religious differences and to the English Crown's policy of introducing new settlers from Britain, Gaelic resistance was worn down and in 1603, the last Gaelic stronghold, Ulster, was brought under Crown control. The Ulster plantation which followed brought many English and Scots settlers to Ulster and had a lasting impact on the religious and political complexion of the province.

Irish political history in the seventeenth century was intimately linked to events in England and Scotland, including the Civil War, the rise of Oliver Cromwell, the restoration of Charles II and the Glorious Revolution of

Viking swords found in Dublin





Detail from "Battle of Fontenoy"



Red Hugh O'Neill

1688 which placed William and Mary on the English throne. A struggle for supremacy between the Catholic Old English and Gaelic Irish on the one hand, and the Protestant New English (who included further new settlers) on the other; was, after numerous ebbs and flows throughout the period, finally settled at the Battles of the Boyne (1690) and Aughrim (1691). The Old English and the Gaelic Irish were crushed and many of their leaders and followers ('The Wild Geese') left Ireland to pursue military, religious or commercial careers abroad. The Protestants of the Established Church monopolised political power and ownership of the land, and penal laws discriminated against Catholics.

Eighteenth Century

In the eighteenth century, there was much economic development. The linen industry flourished, particularly in Ulster; and Irish wool, beef, butter and pork were important exports. The Protestant Ascendancy came to see itself as the Irish nation and developed a vigorous and distinctive parliamentary tradition. Sustained Irish emigration began in the eighteenth century, as many thousands of Ulster Presbyterians and a lesser number of Catholics departed for the New World.

The developing dispute between Britain and her colonies in North America from the 1760s helped create a tradition of radical patriotism that was ultimately, under the impact of the French Revolution, to produce the Society of United Irishmen. In 1798 the United Irishmen staged an insurrection in Ireland, with the objective of establishing an independent Irish republic in which all religions would be equal, though



O'Connell election meeting in County Clare

the rebellion was marked by some episodes of sectarian violence. This rebellion was crushed and the Act of Union of 1800 created a full parliamentary Union between Britain and Ireland.

By this time however, Britain and Ireland were moving apart, especially in economic and demographic terms. As Britain industrialised and urbanised, Ireland, outside Ulster, in effect de-industrialised, with the bulk of its rapidly growing population becoming ever more dependent on the potato for sustenance. In the late 1840s, as a result of the wholesale failure of the potato crop in successive years, a terrible famine occurred: one million people died of starvation and epidemic disease and some two million emigrated in the ten year period 1845–1855. The population had fallen by more than a quarter from 8 million to less than 6 million by 1856, and would fall further as emigration became a dominant feature of Irish society. Comparison with other modern and contemporary famines establishes beyond any doubt that the Irish famine of the late 1840s, which killed nearly one-eighth of the entire population, was proportionally much more destructive of human life than the vast majority of famines in modern times.

In politics, the nineteenth century was dominated, initially, by the pursuit of Catholic emancipation. The penal laws were gradually loosened from

the late eighteenth century on, and in 1829 Catholics, led by Daniel O'Connell, won the right to sit in parliament. Thereafter, there was a succession of efforts to reform or undo the Union between Great Britain and Ireland. The Great Famine (1845–1848) was not just an immense human tragedy and a socio-economic watershed, but had far reaching political repercussions. The British Government stood indicted in the popular mind and the desire of a majority of Irish voters for some form of self-government was strengthened. Irish landlords, too, came under political and economic pressure in the post-Famine decades. By the early twentieth century, after sustained agrarian unrest, legislation was in place inducing the great landlords to sell land to their tenants. The tenants were offered loans to enable them to purchase their holdings.

The question of self-government, or 'Home Rule' had not, however, been settled: attempts by Daniel O'Connell and Isaac Butt in the 1840s and 1870s came to little, but under the leadership of Charles Stewart Parnell in the 1880s, the Irish Parliamentary Party placed the Irish question at the centre of British politics. In 1886, the Liberal party under W.E. Gladstone came to support a limited form of self-government for Ireland.

The prospects of Home Rule galvanised the Unionists in Ireland, who were predominantly Protestant, and were a majority in the province of Ulster. Along with their allies in England who feared that Home Rule for Ireland would lead to the break-up of the Empire, Unionists set out to prevent the granting of Home Rule. Nonetheless, a Home Rule Bill was finally enacted in 1914.

Towards Independence

In an increasingly militarised atmosphere, private paramilitary armies (the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Irish Volunteers) marched and drilled, and hostilities between the two were only averted by the outbreak of the First World War and the consequent postponement of Home Rule. The war changed everything: in 1916 a republic was declared in Dublin and an armed insurrection took place. This rising, which initially enjoyed little public support, was suppressed but its supporters, capitalising on public revulsion at the execution of its leaders, and on opposition to the introduction of military conscription to Ireland in the First World War,



Monument to Charles Stewart Parnell in Dublin's O'Connell Street



In 1916 a republic was declared

were successful in the General Election of 1918, when they swept aside the Irish Parliamentary Party who had campaigned for Home Rule.

Sinn Féin ('Ourselves'), the election victors, set up the first *Dáil* (Parliament) and a war of national independence ensued. By the time an Anglo-Irish Treaty was concluded in 1921, six counties in North-East Ulster, with a roughly two-thirds Unionist majority at that time, had already been constituted as Northern Ireland. As a result of the Treaty, the remaining twenty-six counties formed the Irish Free State, which had dominion status within the British Empire. The establishment of the Free State was followed by a short civil war between those who accepted the



Members of the first Dáil

Treaty as offering effective self-government and those who held out for a full republic. Despite its brevity (from June 1922–May 1923), the Civil War was to colour attitudes and determine political allegiances for decades.

The first government of the new State was headed by W.T. Cosgrave of *Cumann na nGaedheal*, later the *Fine Gael* party. From the 1930s onwards the *Fianna Fáil* party, founded by Eamon de Valera, dominated Irish politics.

In the first two decades after Ireland achieved independence in 1922, the institutions of the State were consolidated and a tradition of political stability was established. The Constitution of 1937 and the Republic of Ireland Act 1948 severed Ireland's last formal links with Britain. Ireland remained neutral during the Second World War.

Ireland was admitted to the United Nations (UN) in 1955, and joined what is now the European Union (EU) in 1973. New economic development policies led to substantial and rapid growth. As elsewhere in Europe coalition governments have become quite common and have normally involved one of the two larger political parties.

Online

National Archives:

www.nationalarchives.ie

Documents in Irish Foreign Policy:

www.difp.ie

River Barrow, County Carlow



The island of Ireland consists of a large central lowland of limestone with a relief of hills and several coastal mountains and is situated in the extreme north-west of Europe between 51.5 and 55.5 degrees north latitude and 5.5 and 10.5 degrees west longitude. The Irish Sea to the east, which separates Ireland from Britain, is from 17.6 to 192 km wide and has a maximum depth of about 200 metres. Around the other coasts the shallow waters of the Continental Shelf are rather narrow and depths increase rapidly into the Atlantic Ocean. The mountain ridges of the south comprise old red sandstone separated by limestone river valleys. Elsewhere granite predominates, except in the north east which is covered by a basalt plateau. The central plain contains glacial deposits of clay and sand. It is interrupted by low hills and has large areas of bog and numerous lakes.

Longitude	5.5° and 10.5° west	
Latitude	51.5° and 55.5° north	
Total area	84,421 km ²	
Ireland	70,282 km ²	
Northern Ireland	14,139 km ²	
Greatest length (N-S)	486 km	
Greatest width (E-W)	275 km	
Coastline	3,172 km	
Highest mountain	Carrantuohill	1,041m
Longest river	Shannon	340 km
Largest lake	Lough Neagh	396 km ²
Highest waterfall	Powerscourt	122m

At least two general glaciations have affected the island and everywhere ice-smoothed rock, mountain lakes, glacial valleys and deposits of glacial sand, gravel and clay mark the passage of the ice. A spectacular example of the impact of glaciation on the landscape is found in the Burren in County Clare and County Galway.

Climate

Influenced by the Gulf Stream, and with the prevailing south-westerly winds coming from the Atlantic, the climate of Ireland is temperate and temperatures are fairly uniform over the whole country.

The coldest months are January and February which have mean daily air temperatures of between 4°C and 7°C while July and August are the warmest, with mean temperatures of between 14°C and 16°C. Extremes of air temperature, below -10°C or above 30°C, are extremely rare. May and June are the sunniest months, averaging five to seven hours sunshine per day.

In low-lying areas average annual rainfall is mostly between 800mm and 1200mm but in mountainous areas it may exceed 2000mm. Rainfall is normally well distributed throughout the year but about 60% of the total falls between August and January.

The Burren, County Clare



Flora and Fauna

Ireland was separated from the European mainland after the last Ice Age. As a result the island has a smaller range of flora and fauna than is found elsewhere in Europe.

Much of the Island was once covered with primeval forest. Although the original forests have been cleared over most of the country, a reforestation programme has favoured Sitka spruce, Scots and Conterta pines, larches, Norway spruce and Douglas fir. There are over 400 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) protected under the EU Habitats Directive.

In the Burren there is a region of bare carboniferous limestone



containing arctic-alpine plants which survived from the last glaciation. Ireland's bogs host a large variety of bog-moss species together with heathers and sedges. In the south west (County Cork and County Kerry), there are areas rich in plants that thrive in the mild and humid climate of the region.

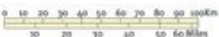
Ireland is important for its seabird colonies and migratory waterfowl. Of some 380 species of wild birds recorded in Ireland, 135 breed while on the Island. There is considerable migration of birds to Ireland in spring and autumn, while several species arrive from Greenland and Iceland in winter; 75 per cent of the world's population of the Greenland white-fronted goose winter in Ireland. The significance of this has been marked by the establishment of an internationally important wild bird reserve in County Wexford on the south-east coast.

Inland waters support colonies of swans, geese, waders, duck, tern and gulls. Game shooting is strictly controlled and State-assisted restocking programmes augment stocks of wild game birds. Among the more unusual species of bird are merlin, peregrine falcon, corncrake and chough.


Rivers and lakes contain a wide variety of fish life. Salmon, brown trout, char, pollan and eel all occur naturally and other varieties such as pike, roach and rainbow trout have been introduced from outside.

Mammals are similar to those found throughout the temperate regions of Europe. There are 31 species of which the Irish stoat and the Irish hare are of particular interest. Other animals include the red deer, fox, badger, rabbit, otter, grey seal, common seal, red squirrel, hedgehog and many bat and cetacean species. The only amphibians are a single species each of frog, toad and newt. There are no snakes in Ireland and the only reptile is the common lizard.

Responsibility for protecting and conserving Ireland's natural and



KEY

-  Heritage Sites
-  Heritage Sites open all year (check with individual club)
-  Airports
-  Ferry ports
-  Navigable Waterways
-  Non-Navigable Waterways

Heritage sites in Ireland

built heritage lies with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Office of Public Works.

Population

Ireland has been inhabited since the Stone Age. People moved westwards across the European continent for more than seven thousand years and settled in the country. Each new group of immigrants, Celts, Vikings, Normans, English, has contributed to its present population. The major centres of population are Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford. Sixty per cent of the population live in cities and towns of 1,000 people or more. A high proportion of the population is concentrated in the younger age groups.

The present population is over 4.2 million, the highest on record since 1861. As a consequence of Ireland's improved economic performance there has been a significant increase in net migration in recent years. It is estimated that over 10% of the current population are migrants, of which, the majority have come from the twelve most recent Member States to accede to the European Union (since 1 May 2004). In addition, there has been significant 'reverse emigration' of Irish immigrants returning to live in Ireland since the mid-1990s.

An specific example of this migratory pattern can be seen in the twelve months leading up to the last census day in 2006. In this period, 121,700 persons immigrated into Ireland: of these, 55,000 were Irish born with the highest numbers of non-nationals being from Poland (33,400) the UK (22,600) and Lithuania (7,400).

Online

Ordnance Survey Ireland:	www.osi.ie
Office of Public Works:	www.opw.ie
Met Éireann:	www.met.ie
Heritage Council of Ireland:	www.heritageireland.ie
The Environmental Information Service:	www.enfo.ie
Environmental Protection Agency:	www.epa.ie
Central Statistics Office:	www.cso.ie



The Irish economy has experienced extraordinary growth over the past fifteen years. Consolidating the progress made during the 1990s — characterised as the “Celtic Tiger” phenomenon — it is now one of the world’s most dynamic, open and globalised economies, with extensive external trade and investment links. Ireland has consistently topped the economic growth tables of the 30-member OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) and has close to full employment. GDP growth in 2007 was 5.3% and average income per head was approximately 145% of the EU average. All indications are that Ireland will continue to perform well in terms of GDP growth.

Ireland’s economic success is generally attributed to its highly educated and flexible workforce; its social partnership model, which involves close cooperation between government, trade unions and employers; government measures to ensure macroeconomic stability and government policies to attract foreign investment; and membership of the EU, which now provides a market of almost 500 million people.

Ireland has a consistent record of prudent fiscal policy with an average Government budget surplus of 1.6% of GDP over the past ten years. The fourth seven-year National Development Plan, which was launched by the Government in January 2007, provides for total capital investment of €100 billion (5.4% of GDP) and current expenditure of €84 billion.

Over the past five years, Irish trade has grown three times faster than total world trade, with over 80% of all manufacturing output in Ireland sold in international markets. In an Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) survey from 2006, Ireland is ranked as one of the top countries in the world in which to do business. It has developed a strong entrepreneurial culture and has one of the highest rates of new start-up companies in the world.

Ireland is a leading location for Information Communication Technology (ICT), pharmaceuticals and medical devices, and Dublin is one of the fastest growing funds management locations in the world. Ireland is also the centre for digital media in Europe with major

- Main photo: R&D facility University College Cork
- Bottom left: Ireland has a well-qualified labour force
- Bottom centre: Dell Computer factory
- Bottom right: Training session in progress

multinational companies locating their European headquarters and a range of business support activities here.

Ireland has developed as a knowledge-based economy built on innovation and technology and shaped by the emergence of strong technology-led and export-focused companies. The Government's 2006–2013 strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation emphasises the benefits of international collaboration and places research and development at the heart of Ireland's economic development. Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) contributes to enhancing research capabilities and skills in Irish Universities, particularly in biotechnology, and information and communications technology.

Ireland receives the top long-term and short-term credit ratings from all four major international credit rating agencies. These are based, in particular, on the strong public finances; the favourable demographic structure and future pension liabilities; a diversified and flexible economy that has attracted sustained foreign direct investment inflows in recent years and achieved the highest growth rate in the EU since 1995; a low debt burden; a high degree of fiscal flexibility, the business-friendly regulatory environment; low taxation levels and a highly educated workforce.

Public Finances

There is general agreement among the main political parties on the broad direction of economic and social policy. National programmes involving the Government, trade unions, employers, voluntary organisations and farming representatives acting together as 'social partners' have successfully operated over many years to bring about economic and social improvement.

National Development Plan

The National Development Plan 2007–2013, entitled *Transforming Ireland — A Better Quality of Life for All*, was launched in January 2007. The Plan is the largest and most ambitious investment programme ever proposed for Ireland. It builds on, and consolidates, the achievements of the previous National



Development Plan (2000–2006) and provides for a total investment of €183.7 billion: €54.7 billion for investment in economic infrastructure; €49.6 billion for social inclusion measures (children, people with disabilities, etc.); €33.6 billion for social infrastructure (housing, health, justice, etc.); €25.8 billion for human capital (schools, training, higher education, etc.), and €20 billion for enterprise, science and innovation.

Online

National Development Plan: www.ndp.ie

Population, Labour Force, and Employment

Reversing decades of decline, Ireland's population has been steadily increasing since the 1970s, and now stands at over 4.23 million (2007). This is the highest population figure since the census of 1861 when the population is recorded as 4.4 million. Unemployment was 4.6% in June 2007.

EU Membership

Ireland's accession to the EEC in 1973 was a decisive milestone in opening Ireland to the global economy and reducing its economic dependence on the UK. Since accession, per capita GDP in Ireland has increased from almost 60% of the EU average in 1973 to well over 100% today. Since 1973, the proportion of exports to non-UK destinations has increased from 45% to over 83% today.

Ireland and the Euro

The ease with which Ireland qualified for membership of the Euro in 1999 underlined the dramatic improvement in the country's economy and public finances. Membership of the Euro was embraced by Ireland's internationally oriented business community, which viewed it as a logical step in the further integration of European markets and as a boost to Ireland's credibility as a location for internationally mobile investment.

Monetary Policy

In May 1998, Ireland, having satisfied entry criteria covering public

finances, the exchange rate, the interest rate and inflation, qualified as one of the first round of participants to adopt the new EU currency. Along with 11 other EU Member States, Ireland now participates in Economic and Monetary Union which commenced on 1 January 1999. The Euro was introduced as the unit of currency on 1 Jan 2002.

On 1 January 1999 the Eurosystem, comprising the European Central Bank (ECB) and National Central Banks (NCBs) of the EU Member States which adopted the euro, assumed the task of formulating and implementing the single monetary policy for the euro area. The objective of the single monetary policy is price stability. In order to make the appropriate interest-rate decisions to maintain price stability, the ECB, along with all other major central banks, has a clear and coherent conceptual framework for the policy-making process. This is referred to as the monetary-policy strategy.



The harp features on the Irish euro coin

Inward Investment

Inward investment has been critically important to Ireland's economic development, providing tens of thousands of jobs, disseminating technological know-how and expertise within the wider economy, linking up with indigenous industry, boosting productivity, and underpinning export growth.

Outward Investment

Outward investment by Irish companies has increased noticeably in recent years, albeit from a very low historic base. This emerging trend is consistent with the pattern observed in other economies as they move to higher stages of economic development.

Education and Training

Education and Training is a vital component of Ireland's knowledge-based economy, and is a priority investment under the National Development Plan. Ireland enjoys one of the best education systems in the world, with approximately 1 million people in full time education.

Innovation and R&D

R+D in Ireland has expanded dramatically in recent years reflecting the Irish government's massive injection of funding into the sector. Leading global companies have found Ireland to be an excellent location for knowledge-based activities. The young Irish workforce has shown a particular aptitude for the efficient collection, interpretation and dissemination of research information.

Online

National Development Plan:	www.ndp.ie
Foras Áiseanna Saothair (National Training Authority):	www.fas.ie
Higher Education and Training Awards Council:	www.hetac.ie
Further Education and Training Awards Council:	www.fetac.ie
National Centre for Partnership and Performance:	www.ncpp.ie
National Qualifications Authority of Ireland:	www.nqai.ie
National Standards Authority of Ireland:	www.nsai.ie
Economic and Social Research Institute:	www.esri.ie
Science Foundation Ireland:	www.sfi.ie
Irish Business and Employers Confederation:	www.ibec.ie
IDA Ireland:	www.idaireland.com
Enterprise Ireland:	www.enterprise-ireland.com
Central Bank of Ireland:	www.centralbank.ie

Corporation Tax

Since 2003 Ireland's corporate tax regime has been fixed at a rate of 12.5%. This applies to all Irish corporate trading profits. A rate of 25% applies to non-trading (passive) income. Existing overseas operations, which were eligible for a 10% rate, will retain entitlement to this rate until the end of the year 2010.

E-Commerce and the New Economy

The Irish government has moved decisively to prepare Ireland for the e-commerce age. Initiatives undertaken include the liberalisation of the

telecommunications market, a substantial investment programme in broadband infrastructure and introduction of the most e-commerce friendly regulatory environment in Europe.

Ireland is acknowledged to be one of the most outward looking and open economies in the EU. It is therefore sensitive to changes in the global economy.



Promoting Ireland as an e-commerce hub

State-Sponsored Bodies

There are about 100 State-sponsored bodies in Ireland employing about 57,000 people. They are engaged in a wide variety of activities including transport, energy and the promotion of tourism, trade and industrial development.

During the 1990s the Government privatised certain sectors of the economy including steel and telecommunications. In addition, the Government has liberalised such sectors as air transportation and electricity generation.

Exports

In 2007 Ireland's exports amounted to €88.6 billion. In 2006 the principal destinations for Irish exports were: United States 18%, Great Britain 18%, Belgium 14.3%, Germany 7.5% and France 6%. The top five categories of Irish Exports for 2006 were: medical & pharmaceutical products, organic chemicals, office machines & automatic data processing machines, electrical machinery, apparatus & appliances & parts and miscellaneous manufactured articles. In 2006, exports of services were valued at €55 billion.

Imports

In 2007, Ireland's imports were valued at €62.1 billion. The principal sources of imports were Great Britain 30%, United States 11.3%, Germany 9%, China 8% and Netherlands 4.2%. The top five categories

of Irish Imports for 2006 were: office machines & automatic data processing machines, electrical machinery, apparatus & appliances & parts, road vehicles (include air-cushion vehicles), miscellaneous manufactured articles and petroleum, petroleum products & related materials. Imports of services were valued at €62 billion, Ireland's main services partners were the US, Great Britain, Germany and Italy.

General Government Balance

The Exchequer recorded a surplus of 0.5% of GDP in 2007. The projected budgetary position over the period 2008–2009 is for a General Government budget deficit of 0.9% of GDP in 2008 and a deficit of 1.1% of GDP in 2009. The debt-to-GDP ratio will be maintained among the lowest in the euro area — around 28% for the forecast period — in line with the Government's long-term priorities. The market value of the assets of the National Pensions Reserve Fund is estimated to be €21 billion at end 2007, a sum equivalent to 13% of GNP.

Industry

The Industrial sector has a highly skilled technological labour pool. Within this high technology grouping, the most active sectors currently are life sciences, medical and information technology sectors. Many of the world's leading companies have subsidiaries in Ireland which

There is strong growth in the ICT sector





IDA Ireland Advance Office Facility in Sligo

perform very successfully in comparison to those based in other EU countries.

Three agencies deal with industrial development in Ireland. Forfás provides overall policy advice and co-ordination for enterprise development and science, technology and innovation in Ireland. Enterprise Ireland helps develop Irish-based enterprise with the potential to trade internationally. IDA Ireland, has responsibility for securing new investment in manufacturing and internationally traded services. It also has responsibility to encourage existing Foreign Direct Investors to expand and develop their businesses in Ireland.

There are also a number of regional development agencies such as Shannon Development which was set up in 1959 to promote Shannon International Airport and Údarás na Gaeltachta, which is the regional authority responsible for the economic, social and cultural development of the Gaeltacht (Irish speaking parts of the country).

Foreign Direct Investment

Over 1000 overseas companies have established operations in Ireland. They are a key driver of the economy employing some 135,000 people directly and many more indirectly. They account for one quarter of GDP and over 80% of exports. The focus of IDA Ireland is to attract foreign investment that is of high value, requiring high skill levels and a sophisticated business environment.

Key areas of focus are:

- advanced manufacturing projects in the ICT, pharmaceuticals and biopharmaceuticals, medical technologies, engineering and consumer products sectors
- high value internationally traded services sectors in software, financial services, shared services and customer support activities

Shannon Development has responsibility for the Shannon Free Zone, Ireland's largest cluster of North American investments. There are 110 companies in the free zone employing 7,500 people, with total trade in the zone valued at €2.5 billion.

Irish Enterprise Sector

Enterprise Ireland client companies employ in excess of 141,091 people in Ireland (2006). Total export sales from Enterprise Ireland clients were valued at €11,779 billion in 2006. The key sectors in 2006 for Enterprise Ireland clients in order of exports were Food and Retail, (€7,849 billion), Industrial and Life Sciences, (€2,493 billion), Software and services, (€1,437 billion). The largest export markets for Enterprise Ireland Clients are Northern Europe (€6,740 billion), Southern Europe (€1,377 billion), America's (€1,299 billion), Germany, Central and Eastern Europe (€849 million), Asia (€654 million), the Rest of the World (€154 million).

Údarás na Gaeltachta supports businesses in developing new markets, technologies, products and strategic alliances through research and development. Gaeltacht companies span a range of commercial sectors, including tourism, fish processing and aquaculture, renewable energy, food, life sciences, ICT, niche manufacturing, audio visual and digital media, arts and crafts. Over 12,000 people are employed in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies.

InterTradeIreland is a North/South Implementation Body established in 1999 pursuant to the Good Friday Agreement, promotes trade and business on an all-island and cross-border basis, and works to enhance the global competitiveness of the all-island economy to the mutual benefit of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Online

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment:	www.entemp.ie
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Forfás:	www.forfas.ie
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IDA Ireland:	www.idaireland.com
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Enterprise Ireland:	www.enterprise-ireland.com
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Shannon Development:	www.shannondev.ie
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Údarás na Gaeltachta:	www.udaras.ie
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Intertrade Ireland:	www.intertradeireland.com
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Finance

Dublin's International Financial Services Centre (IFSC), which was set up by the Irish Government with EU approval in 1987, is globally recognised as a leading location for a range of internationally traded financial services, including banking, asset financing, fund management, corporate treasury management, investment management, custody and administration and specialized insurance operations.

More than 430 international operations are approved to trade in the IFSC, while a further 700 managed entities are approved to carry on business under the IFSC programme. The centre is host to half of the world's top 50 banks and to half of the top 20 insurance companies. It is expected that the International Financial Services Centre will continue to make a major contribution to Ireland and the goal of policy is to ensure that we will continue to attract new operations and provide a supportive business environment for this important sector.

Online

Department of Finance:	www.finance.gov.ie
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International Financial Services Centre:	www.ifsonline.ie
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Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General:	www.irlgov.ie/audgen
--	--

National Treasury Management Agency:	www.ntma.ie
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Services

The service sector in Ireland accounts for over half of GDP and for 65 per cent of employment. Throughout the last decade output of

services has grown strongly, largely as a result of growth in financial services, telecommunications and tourism.

Industrial Relations

Over 50 per cent of the employee labour force are organised in trade unions of which there are 50 in Ireland. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions is the national co-ordinating body for most of these. The Irish Business and Employers Confederation represents the interests of employers at national level.

The Labour Relations Commission and the Labour Court are the principal mediation bodies. Their role is to assist in the settlement of disputes.

Online

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment: www.entemp.ie

Labour Relations Commission: www.lrc.ie

Labour Court: www.labourcourt.ie

Equality Authority: www.equality.ie

Irish Congress of Trade Unions: www.ictu.ie

Irish Business and Employers Confederation: www.ibec.ie

Agriculture

The Agri-Food industry makes a significant contribution to the Irish economy. The combined agri-food and drink sector had exports of over €8 billion in 2006 and accounts for almost 9% of GDP and directly employs 166,000 people. In particular, the industry plays a major role in the indigenous sector, with approximately 50% of exports from Irish owned companies deriving from agri-food and drink companies. The linkage of the agri-food sector to the rest of the economy is exceptionally high and, given its low import content, the sector currently contributes in the order of 20% to net foreign earnings from merchandise exports.

Of the total land area of approximately 7 million hectares (17 million acres), 5 million hectares (12.32 million acres) are utilised for agricultural purposes (including forestry). Cattle-raising and dairying are



by far the most important sectors of the agricultural industry, and livestock (mainly cattle) and livestock products (principally milk), account for 76 per cent of the value of gross agricultural output. The main crops are barley, wheat, potatoes and mushrooms.

Online

Department of Agriculture and Food: www.agriculture.gov.ie

Bord Bia: www.bordbia.ie

Teagasc (Agriculture & Food Development Authority): www.teagasc.ie

Food Safety Authority of Ireland: www.fsai.ie

Fishing

The Irish seafood industry provides employment for over 15,000 people. It makes a significant contribution to the economic and social fabric of the many small communities located in mainly rural areas or small towns and villages around the 7,500 kilometres of our coastline.

Total Irish sales of seafood in 2007 on the home and export markets amounted to €803 million which represents an increase of 9% on the previous year. The main contributor to the growth in



revenue was the ongoing rapid growth of the domestic market with seafood sales to the retail sector valued at €169 million, up by 7% on 2006 and sales to food service valued at €213 million, an increase of 5%. The increase in sales was mainly driven by the growing consumer awareness of the health and nutritional benefits of seafood.

Approximately half of the increase in domestic seafood sales was met through increased imports which grew by 16% to reach €144 million in 2006. In contrast, export sales were up by a mere 2% to reach €362.2 million. This was the result of sharply opposite trends with pelagic fish exports (e.g. mackerel) falling by 27% (€78.8 million) while increased exports were recorded for all other categories, the most notable being the increase of 16% in shellfish exports (€147 million).

Online

Department of Communications,
Energy & Natural Resources:

www.dcenr.gov.ie

Bord Iascaigh Mhara:

www.bim.ie

Tourism

In 2007, overseas tourist visits to the whole island of Ireland increased by more than 4% to 9.1 million, a new record. These increases in visitor numbers, and the associated growth in tourist spending, have provided the foundations on which the tourism industry's enhanced contribution to the national economy has been built. Expenditure by visitors to Ireland, both North and South, is estimated to be worth €4.5 billion in 2007. It is estimated that the total number of people employed in the Irish tourism and catering industry in 2007 was over 230,000. The industry is Ireland's biggest indigenous employer and is a major contributor to the Irish economy. Allowing for indirect and induced effects, tourism accounted for 3.8% of GNP in 2007.

Tourism Ireland was established under the framework of the Belfast Agreement of Good Friday 1998 to co-ordinate the work of the two tourist boards on the island, Fáilte Ireland and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, who are responsible for product and enterprise development and marketing to tourism consumers within the island of Ireland.



Ireland's successful tourism industry is built around the three themes: Irish people; Irish culture and the physical beauty of the country. The people of Ireland are recognised for being friendly, charming and witty. They are attentive but relaxed and welcoming. These characteristics allow our visitors to interact easily with local people and connect with the island on a human level. Culture on the island of Ireland reflects the character of its people and the beauty of its landscape and historic sites. Visitors can vary the pace of their holiday experience, from a relaxed appreciation of the historic culture to a more active involvement in the vibrant living culture. Ireland is also celebrated as a rich tapestry of breathtaking landscapes and seascapes steeped in history creates a varied experience for the visitor, all within easy reach. It is an experience that fills the senses — an energising journey of discovery and enrichment

Online

Department of Arts, Sport & Tourism: www.arts-sport-tourism.gov.ie

Fáilte Ireland: www.failteireland.ie

Tourism Ireland: www.tourismireland.ie

Tourism Information (Domestic): www.ireland.ie

Transport

Coras Iompair Éireann (CIE) is the national statutory public transport service in Ireland. The CIE group of companies comprises a holding company and three subsidiary operating companies which provide train, bus, coach and ancillary services throughout the country. *Iarnróid Éireann* (Irish Rail) operates the nationwide mainline rail services, the Dublin Area Rapid Transport (DART) and other suburban rail services as well as rail freight services. *Bus Éireann* (Irish Bus) operates a comprehensive network of bus services outside Dublin City, including expressway inter-urban coach services; city buses in Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford; rural bus services; and international services. *Bus Átha Cliath* (Dublin Bus) operates urban bus services in the greater Dublin area. The latest addition to the country's public transport system came with the opening of the Luas lines in 2004. Luas is a Light Rail Transit (LRT) system (a public transport tram system) that operates in Dublin.

An integrated transport system for Dublin, to include seven new Luas projects, two Metro lines, an underground station at St. Stephen's Green integrating all services and the Western Rail Corridor are among the investments outlined in Transport 21, the Government's

Intercity rail service train



Dublin Area Rapid Transport (DART)



€34.4 billion transport investment plan.

There is a significant investment programme underway upgrading the national roads system. More than €16 billion is being spent improving the inter-urban motorway network. This is undertaken by the National Roads Authority.

The majority of passengers visiting Ireland use one of the main airports — Dublin, Shannon and Cork. There are also a number of regional airports throughout the country. Dublin Airport is Ireland's busiest airport and is also amongst the ten busiest airports in Europe. Dublin Airport manages an average of 60,000 passengers per day, rising to 80,000 during the peak season, and more than 600 aircrafts movements every day. The Dublin Airport Authority is investing €2 billion in new and improved facilities in the airport.

Online

Department of Transport:	www.transport.ie
Irish Aviation Authority:	www.iaa.ie
Commission for Aviation Regulation:	www.aviationreg.ie
Irish Ferries:	www.irishferries.ie
Iarnród Éireann:	www.irishrail.ie
Coras Iompair Éireann:	www.cie.ie
Bus Átha Cliath:	www.dublinbus.ie
Bus Éireann:	www.buseireann.ie
Dublin Airport Authority:	www.dublinairportauthority.com
Aer Lingus:	www.aerlingus.com
Ryanair:	www.ryanair.com
National Roads Authority:	www.nra.ie
Transport 21:	www.transport21.ie
Dublin Airport:	www.dublinairport.com

Energy

The Government's Energy Policy Framework for the period 2007–2020 was published in March 2007. The policy aims to deliver a

sustainable energy future for Ireland. Although Ireland faces similar energy challenges to those being confronted worldwide, the Irish situation is made more acute by our small energy market, peripherality and limited indigenous fuel resources. Sustained economic growth and population growth also add to the challenges for Irish energy policy. There are however major opportunities to be realised in harnessing the full potential of Ireland's renewable and bioenergy resources.

The National Development Plan 2007–2013 will see some €8.5 billion in investment in energy, funded in part by the Exchequer, by the Semi-State Energy Bodies and from other non-public sources.

While Ireland is totally dependent on imports for its oil supply, the proportion of primary energy derived from oil has been reduced significantly in the last decade in line with EU policy.

Ireland has a largely stand-alone electricity grid. An electricity interconnector with Northern Ireland was re-commissioned in 1995 and is used to optimise peak demand management. Electricity demand has continued to rise, however, and a major task for the electricity industry is to increase generation resources in line with electricity demand.

There has been close cooperation with Northern Ireland on energy issues over the past few years. A key outcome was the joint publication of the All-island Energy Market Development Framework in November 2004. The Framework sets out the commitment of both Governments to achieving a single energy market.

The Electricity Supply Board (ESB) is the State-owned generator and distributor of electricity. From 2000, under an EU Directive, the electricity market is open to competition. The Commission for Electricity Regulation, established in 1999, licences the generation and supply of electricity.

Natural gas from Irish offshore fields is making an important contribution towards energy requirements. *Bord Gáis Éireann* (the Gas Supply Board) is a State-owned company responsible for the supply, transmission and distribution of natural gas. It operates transmission lines bringing gas from Kinsale Head, off the coast of Cork, and from the North Sea gas fields through a sub-sea interconnector pipeline. Among new pipelines being added is a major east/west gas pipeline to Galway.

Peat development in Ireland is undertaken by a State enterprise, *Bórd na Móna* (Peat Development Board), which has been a world leader in

exploitation techniques. Ireland has one of the world's highest levels of peat output.

Mining and Quarrying

Ireland is a leading producer of zinc and lead. There are three underground mines, Navan, Co. Meath, Lisheen, Co. Tipperary, and Galmoy, Co. Kilkenny.

The three mines together account for approximately 40% of Western European zinc metal, and 30% of its lead, all of which is exported as concentrates. Ireland is also a significant producer of gypsum, from an open-cast mine at Knocknacran, Co. Monaghan. The gypsum is used in Ireland's building industry, with some being exported.

The Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources is responsible for policy and regulation of mineral exploration and mining. The Department is also charged with promotion of exploration and development of Ireland's minerals. On a day-to-day basis, these responsibilities are dealt with by the Department's Exploration and Mining Division (EMD). EMD maintain two websites, one of which is aimed at industry (www.minex.ie) and the other is for the general public (www.emd.ie).

Ireland also has a significant quarrying industry, producing sand, gravel and aggregate for the construction sector; and ground limestone for agriculture. Quarrying is regulated by local authorities.

Telecommunications

The Communications Regulator (ComReg) is the statutory body responsible for the regulation of the electronic communications sector (telecommunications, radio communications and broadcasting transmission) and the postal sector.

Electronic communications in Ireland are among the most advanced and sophisticated in Europe. Major providers of telecommunications services include Eircom, BT, Vodafone, O2, Meteor and 3 Ireland. Eircom, the principal provider of fixed line telecommunication services was formerly a State-owned company, Telecom Éireann. In line with EU policy the telecommunications market in Ireland was fully liberalised in

1998 and Telecom Éireann was privatised in 1999. The organisation which manages the roll out of broadband on behalf of the State in Ireland's regional towns and cities is E-Net. There is also a State-run telecommunications network, HEAnet dedicated to linking the third level institutions.

The Irish Government, by a combination of imaginative legislation, high-quality infrastructure and favourable tax treatment, is promoting Ireland as an e-commerce hub. The Electronic Commerce Act, which came into force in 2000, signalled a flexible approach to regulation and created equivalence in law between electronic documents, contracts, signatures and seals and their paper-based equivalents.

Ireland has major international fibre-optic connectivity. As part of its policy of regionalisation, the Government has spent €65 million providing high speed broadband connectivity to 26 principal towns around the country. A further 90+ towns are currently being prepared for phase two of this project.

The Government is also supportive of the creation of a North/South digital corridor and the provision of satellite-based broadband services aimed at remote areas of the country. There is also a commitment to ensure that every primary and secondary school in the country will have broadband connectivity.

Online

Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources:	www.dcenr.gov.ie
Electricity Supply Board:	www.esb.ie
Bord Gáis:	www.bordgais.ie
Bord na Móna:	www.bnm.ie
Sustainable Energy Ireland:	www.irish-energy.ie
Commission for Energy Regulation:	www.cer.ie
Commission for Communications Regulations:	www.comreg.ie
E-Net:	www.enet.ie
HEAnet:	www.heanet.ie

Newspapers

Newspapers have been published in Ireland for over 300 years. The main morning daily broadsheet papers are *The Irish Independent*, *The Irish Times* and *The Irish Examiner*. There are also two evening newspapers, *The Evening Herald* and *The Evening Echo* and six Sunday newspapers, *The Sunday Tribune*, *The Sunday Independent*, *The Sunday World*, *The Sunday Business Post*, *Irish Daily Mail on Sunday* and *The Star on Sunday*. There are two Irish language weekly newspapers: *Lá* and *Foinse*.

There are also about 60 local newspapers usually published weekly and a wide variety of magazines dealing with current affairs, economic issues and leisure interests. British newspapers and magazines circulate widely in Ireland and some titles publish separate Irish editions.

In 2007 the Press Council of Ireland was established by the Industry itself and in the same year the Government established the Office of Press Ombudsman. Their main objectives are:

- to provide the public with an independent forum for resolving complaints against the press;
- to resolve all complaints quickly, amicably and free of charge;
- to maintain the high standards of Irish journalism and journalistic ethics;
- to defend the freedom of the press and the freedom of the public to be informed.

Online

The Irish Times:	www.ireland.com
Irish Independent:	www.independent.ie
Irish Examiner:	www.irishexaminer.ie
Sunday Business Post:	www.thepost.ie
The Sunday Times:	www.sunday-times.co.uk
Sunday Independent:	www.independent.ie
The Sunday Tribune:	www.tribune.ie
Evening Echo:	www.eecho.ie
Foinse:	www.foinse.ie
Press Council of Ireland (and Press Ombudsman):	www.presscouncil.ie

Radio and Television

The National radio and television service is operated by *Radio Telefís Éireann* (RTÉ), the public broadcasting company which transmits on two television and five radio channels. RTÉ derives its revenue from licence fees and the sale of advertising time. In addition to the wide availability of British radio and television programming, satellite broadcasts are achieving an increasing audience.

Irish speakers are served by a dedicated radio channel, *Radio na Gaeltachta* (operated by RTÉ) and by TG4, an independent Irish language television channel.

The Radio and Television Act 1988 established the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (formally the Independent Radio and Television Commission), which has responsibility for licensing and overseeing the operation of independent radio and television broadcasting. In recent years, quite a number of independent regional radio stations and community radio initiatives have emerged all over the country and have gained a substantial audience. There are two national independent radio stations, Today FM and Newstalk, and a national independent commercial television station, TV3. Both Today FM and TV3 were launched in 1998. Newstalk was launched nationally in September 2006.

Online

Radio Teilifís Éireann:	www.rte.ie
TG4:	www.tg4.ie
TV3:	www.tv3.ie
Today FM:	www.todayfm.com
2 FM:	www.2fm.ie
Radio 1:	www.rte.ie/radio1
Newstalk:	www.newstalk.ie
Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI):	www.bci.ie

Award winning offices for RTÉ





Education

Education in Ireland is compulsory from age 6 to 16 or until students have completed three years of second level education. However, most children enrol in first-level (primary) school before age 6. The average age for starting school is 4 years. Many aspects of the administration of the Irish education system are centralised in the Department of Education & Science. Public expenditure on education accounts for around 16 per cent of Government current spending and approximately 5 per cent of GNP.

First-level (Primary) Education

The primary education sector serves some 470,000 pupils. There are over 3,200 schools at first-level. The great majority of these receive capital funding from the State, supplemented by local contributions. Primary education emphasises a child-centred approach with a curriculum related to the child's needs and interests.

Second-level (Post Primary) Education

The second-level sector comprises secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools. There are over 360,000 students in this sector attending over 750 schools.

Almost 60 per cent of students at second-level attend secondary schools. These schools are privately owned and managed. Most are managed by religious orders and the rest by boards of governors or by individuals. The State meets over 90 per cent of the cost of the teachers' salaries. The vast majority of secondary schools belong to the free education scheme and receive allowances and capitation grants from the State.

Vocational schools, educating just over a quarter of second-level students, are administered by Vocational Education Committees. The State provides some 90 per cent of their costs. The balance is generated by the Committees themselves. Community and comprehensive schools, educating 14 per cent of second-level students, receive individual budgets from the State.

Second-level education consists of a three-year Junior Cycle followed by a two- or three-year Senior Cycle. In the Senior Cycle there is an



Primary education is child-centred

optional Transition Year Programme. During the final two years of Senior Cycle students take one of three programmes — the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme or the Leaving Certificate Applied.

Online

Department of Education and Science::

www.education.ie

Third-level Education

The third-level education sector consists of universities, technological colleges and colleges of education. All of these are substantially funded by the State and are autonomous and self-governing. In recent years, several independent private colleges have opened offering mainly business-related courses.

There are more than 140,000 students in full time third-level education. Almost half of Ireland's young people proceed from second to third level and some 50 per cent of these take degree level programmes.

There are four universities, the University of Dublin (Trinity College),



Trinity College Dublin

the National University of Ireland (NUI), the University of Limerick and Dublin City University.

The NUI has four constituent colleges, NUI Dublin, NUI Cork, NUI Galway and NUI Maynooth. The Royal College of Surgeons, the National College of Art and Design, the Institute of Public Administration and the Milltown Institute of Theology and Philosophy are also recognised colleges of the NUI.

Institutes of Technology (I3) are located around the country offering education and training, full-time and part-time, for trade and industry in the area of business studies, engineering and technology, and science and paramedicine.

The Dublin Institute of Technology is the country's largest third-level institution with some 15,000 students. It has constituent colleges specialising in technology, catering, marketing and design, commerce and music.

Fourth Level Education

In 2006, the Government published its Strategy for Science Technology

and Innovation. The strategy sets out a vision and roadmap for the coherent development of research, technological development and innovation with a view to supporting Ireland's continuing development as a knowledge economy.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have a critical role to play in 4th Level Ireland. The vast bulk of research is carried out in these institutions. The last ten years have seen very significant increases in funding for research being carried out in HEIs, much of it coming through the Higher Education Authority's Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTL) and major research initiatives funded by Science Foundation Ireland. Government research support is set to continue to increase under the National Development Plan, 2007–2013.

Online

University of Dublin:	www.tcd.ie
National University of Ireland:	www.nui.ie
University College Cork:	www.ucc.ie
University College Dublin:	www.ucd.ie
National University of Ireland — Galway:	www.nuigalway.ie
National University of Ireland — Maynooth:	www.nuim.ie
University of Limerick:	www.ul.ie
Dublin City University:	www.dcu.ie
Dublin Institute of Technology:	www.dit.ie
Athlone Institute of Technology:	www.ait.ie
Blanchardstown Institute of Technology:	www.itb.ie
Carlow Institute of Technology:	www.itcarlow.ie
Cork Institute of Technology:	www.cit.ie
Dundalk Institute of Technology:	www.dkit.ie
Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology:	www.iadt.ie
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology:	www.gmit.ie
Letterkenny Institute of Technology:	www.lyit.ie
Limerick Institute of Technology:	www.lit.ie

Institute of Technology Sligo:	www.itsligo.ie
Institute of Technology Tallaght:	www.it-tallaght.ie
Institute of Technology Tralee:	www.ittralee.ie
Waterford Institute of Technology:	www.wit.ie
The Royal College of Surgeons:	www.rcsi.ie
National College of Art and Design:	www.ncad.ie
Institute of Public Administration:	www.ipa.ie
Milltown Institute:	www.milltown-institute.ie
Queens University Belfast:	www.qub.ac.uk
Higher Education Authority:	www.hea.ie
The Open University in Ireland:	www.open.ac.uk/ireland

Health Services

Public expenditure on health accounts for around 24 per cent of Government current spending and approximately 8% per cent of GNP. The expenditure is allocated to hospitals, community health services, community welfare services, community protection services, psychiatric services and services for the handicapped.

The health services in Ireland are centrally directed by the Department of Health and Children. The provision of Health and Personal Social Services for everyone living in Ireland is the responsibility of the Health Service Executive (HSE) under the Health Act, 2004. The objective of the Executive is to use the resources available to it in the most beneficial, effective and efficient manner to improve, promote and protect the health and welfare of the public.

The HSE manages services through a structure designed to put patients and clients at the centre of the organisation. It has three clearly defined interdependent areas — *Health and Personal Social Services*, *Support Services* and *Reform & Innovation*. All of the services provided by the HSE to the public are delivered through four Administrative Areas — Dublin Mid- Leinster, Dublin North-East, West, and South.

The participation of voluntary bodies in the provision of services is encouraged and many voluntary organisations receive grants from the

State. The health services are financed out of central taxation.

Those with low incomes and persons aged 70 years and over receive medical services free of charge. The rest of the population can avail of the public hospital services at a relatively low charge. They also have to pay certain charges, such as for visits to the family doctor.

Patients in public hospitals may opt to be treated privately. There are a number of private hospitals, some 14 per cent of the total, which essentially serve private patients. There is a system of health insurance to help meet the costs of medical treatment.

In 2006, the birth rate was 15.2 per 1,000 people, based on a total of 64,237 births registered during the year. Over 99 per cent of births take place in hospitals. The death rate for 2006 was 6.5 per 1,000 people based on a total of 27,479 deaths registered.

Online

Department of Health and Children:	www.doh.ie
Health Service Executive (HSE):	www.hse.ie
An Bord Altranais:	www.nursingboard.ie
BioResearch Ireland:	www.irishscientist.ie
BreastCheck:	www.breastcheck.ie
Crisis Pregnancy Agency:	www.crisispregnancy.ie
The Drug Treatment Centre Board:	www.addictionireland.ie
The Health Insurance Authority:	www.hia.ie
Health Research Board:	www.hrb.ie
Irish Blood Transfusion Service:	www.ibts.ie
National Cancer Registry Board:	www.ncri.ie
National Disability Authority:	www.nda.ie
Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland:	www.pharmaceuticalsociety.ie
Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland:	www.rpii.ie
Health Information Quality Authority:	www.hiqua.ie



Dialysis Unit, St Vincent's Hospital, Dublin

Social Welfare

The Social Welfare system covers all of the internationally recognised forms of social protection. Incorporating a mix of both social insurance and social assistance programmes, it provides financial support to people in certain situations such as unemployment, illness, old age or widowhood.

Other features of the system include supports for people seeking employment, in-work benefits and family support for people at work on low pay, free or reduced-cost dental and optical care, and a range of secondary benefits such as free travel for pensioners and financial support towards the cost of fuel, TV licences and telephone rental charges.

Spending on social welfare accounts for approximately 28% of gross current Government expenditure (about 9% of GNP) and benefits more than 1.5 million people.

Online

Department of Social and Family Affairs:

www.welfare.ie

Department of Health and Children:

www.doh.ie



The consolidation of peace in Northern Ireland and the promotion of partnership and cooperation between both traditions on the island of Ireland is a key policy priority for the Irish Government.

This work involves sustained contact with the Northern Ireland Executive, the British Government, with the political parties, with all sections of society in Northern Ireland and with a range of international partners. These collective efforts, which are still ongoing, have transformed the social, political and economic landscape of Northern Ireland, particularly in the years since the Good Friday Agreement (see below) was signed in 1998.

Northern Ireland is now a far more peaceful, prosperous and stable society than when the first steps towards peace were taken in the 1980s and 1990s. Many advances have been made in delivering progress in areas such as equality, human rights, policing and community relations. In recognition of the potential for North/South synergies, all-island co-operation has intensified. East/West relations have also been enhanced.

Restoration of the power-sharing institutions established under the Good Friday Agreement on 8 May 2007 represented a critical step forward, not only in creating effective government for Northern Ireland, but in seeking to build a common future for all its people.

Historical Background

The existing political division in Ireland dates from the passing of the Government of Ireland Act 1920 by the British Government. The Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed in 1921 and after centuries of British rule, 26 of the 32 counties of Ireland gained independence. The remaining 6 counties formed Northern Ireland, which continued to be governed within the United Kingdom. However, while the United Kingdom Parliament at Westminster continued to exercise sovereignty, power on a variety of matters was devolved to a local Parliament and Government established initially in Belfast City Hall in 1921 and later moved to the parliament building in Stormont in 1932.

From 1921 to 1972, although Northern Ireland elected members to the Westminster parliament, the devolved Government in Belfast operated with virtual autonomy from London on local matters. Power

remained exclusively in the hands of the Unionist party which drew its support from the majority community in the area which favoured union with Britain. Nationalists had in practice no role in government and they suffered discrimination at local level in many areas, including voting rights, housing and employment.

In 1969 non-violent campaigners for civil rights met with a hostile and repressive response from the Stormont authorities, ushering in a period of sustained political crisis. This gave rise to civil unrest and the revival of violent activity by paramilitary organisations representing elements within both communities.

In a deteriorating security situation the local Northern Ireland Parliament and Government were prorogued in 1972 and the British Government assumed direct responsibility for all aspects of the government of Northern Ireland. With the exception of one brief period in 1974 when a local executive was established on a power-sharing basis under the Sunningdale Agreement, Northern Ireland was until December 1999 governed under a system of direct rule under the authority of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who is a member of the British Cabinet.

The search for a political settlement: 1980s and 1990s

From the early 1980s onwards, the British and Irish Governments began to co-operate more closely in an effort to achieve a widely acceptable and durable political settlement of the Northern Ireland problem. This effort involved both the successive establishment of a number of structures and mechanisms for dialogue and negotiation, and a growing convergence on the fundamental constitutional and other principles which should underpin a settlement.

In November 1985, the Irish and British Governments signed the **Anglo-Irish Agreement**. The Agreement enabled the Irish Government to put forward views and proposals on many aspects of Northern Ireland affairs, and through its structures the two Governments intensified their work to find a solution to the Northern Ireland problem.

In 1991/92, the two Governments convened **round-table talks** involving the main constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland



Taoiseach Garret FitzGerald and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher sign the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985



David Trimble (left) and John Hume (right) accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, December 1998

(the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), and the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland (APNI)). While some common ground was identified, overall agreement could not be reached.

On 15 December 1993, the then Taoiseach, Mr Albert Reynolds TD, and the British Prime Minister, Mr John Major, issued a **Joint Declaration** which outlined a charter for peace and reconciliation in Ireland. It set out the basic principles necessary to underpin the political process and established the principles of self-determination and consent in relation to the Constitutional status of Northern Ireland. The Declaration also sought to offer those associated with paramilitary violence a route into the political process provided they established a commitment to exclusively peaceful means and the democratic process.

On 31 August 1994, the IRA announced a "complete cessation of military operations". This announcement was followed on 13 October 1994 by a similar statement from the Combined Loyalist Military Command. Following the ceasefires, the two Governments engaged in direct political dialogue with Sinn Féin and the two loyalist parties, the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) and the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP). Following the ceasefires and the publication in February 1995

of **A New Framework for Agreement** (known as the Framework Document), in which the Governments set out their shared understanding of the possible outcome of comprehensive negotiations, intensive efforts were made to secure a way forward into comprehensive and inclusive talks.

The question of the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons acted as a block on progress and, in December 1995, the two Governments established an International Body, under the chairmanship of United States Senator George Mitchell, to provide an independent assessment of the issue. In its report of 24 January 1996 the International Body recommended that all parties participating in negotiations should commit themselves to six principles of democracy and non-violence, including the total and verifiable decommissioning of all paramilitary weapons.

When on 9 February 1996 the IRA cease-fire broke-down, both Governments vowed to continue the search for political agreement and expressed the hope that a restoration of the cease-fire would allow for the resumption of political dialogue with Sinn Féin.

Multi-Party Talks 1996

Multi-party talks involving the two Governments and Northern Ireland political parties (the UUP, DUP, SDLP, Alliance Party, PUP, UDP, United Kingdom Unionist Party (UKUP), Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) and Labour, but excluding Sinn Féin, in the absence of an IRA cease-fire) finally began on 10 June 1996.

The talks were chaired by Senator Mitchell, assisted by former Finnish Prime Minister Mr Harri Holkeri and retired Canadian General John de Chastelain. For the first year, after the adoption of rules of procedure in July 1996, they made little progress, as the decommissioning issue continued to dominate. On 20 July 1997, the IRA announced a resumption of its cease-fire, opening the way for the entry of Sinn Féin to the talks on 9 September. Two of the unionist parties, the DUP and the UKUP, then left the talks. However, the largest unionist party, the UUP, continued to participate.

Substantive negotiations eventually began on 24 September 1997. As the talks progressed the independent chairmen worked with the two



Taoiseach Bertie Ahern TD and British Prime Minister Tony Blair at Farmleigh, Dublin on 26 January 2006

Governments and the parties to identify areas of broad agreement and isolate areas of remaining difficulty. In the final and intensive negotiations the Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahern TD, and the British Prime Minister, Mr Tony Blair led their Governments' delegations.

Good Friday Agreement 1998

On Friday, 10 April 1998 a comprehensive political agreement was approved at a plenary session of the talks. The two Governments signed a new British-Irish Agreement immediately thereafter committing them to give effect to the provisions of this multi-party agreement, in particular those relating to constitutional change and the creation of new institutions.

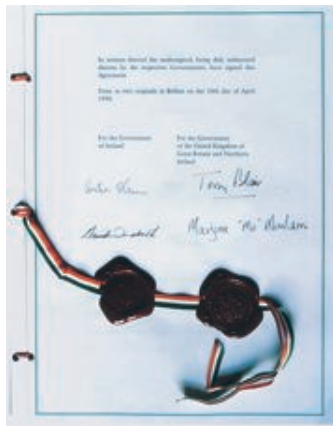
The Good Friday Agreement was explicitly recognised by participants in the multi-party negotiations as a historic opportunity for a new beginning for relationships within Northern Ireland, between North and South and between Britain and Ireland. It commits the participants to the "achievement of reconciliation, tolerance, and mutual trust, and to the protection and vindication of the human rights of all,"

The Agreement provided for the establishment of new political institutions, reflecting the three strands of relationships involved:

- A legislative **Assembly and Executive** within Northern Ireland to exercise partnership government based on equality
- **North/South Ministerial Council** and all-island implementation bodies to develop co-operation and action within the island of Ireland
- a **British-Irish Council** to promote mutually beneficial East/West relationships and as a forum for cooperation between the various sovereign and devolved administrations in Britain and Ireland.

It also included measures to uphold the protection of **human rights and equality** and to deal with the consequences of conflict. In addition, it mapped the way forward with major new initiatives in the crucial areas of **policing and justice**. In regard to security issues, the Agreement included a commitment by all parties to work with the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD) to achieve the **decommissioning of paramilitary weapons**. For its part, the British Government committed itself to achieving, as early as possible, a return to **normal security arrangements** in Northern Ireland.

The Agreement also dealt with the special **constitutional position** of Northern Ireland, outlining an agreed position, based on the principles of self-determination and consent.



The Good Friday Agreement



Inaugural North/South Ministerial Council meeting, Armagh, 13 December 1999

In the referenda held on 22 May 1998, the people of Ireland, both North and South, overwhelmingly endorsed the Good Friday Agreement. In Northern Ireland, 71.1 per cent of the people voted to approve the Agreement. In the Republic, 94.4 per cent of the people voted to allow the Government become party to the Agreement. The combined Yes vote in both parts of Ireland was 85 per cent. This was the first occasion since 1918 on which all the people in Ireland had voted together to decide their political future.

The Good Friday Agreement — Template for Peace

The Good Friday Agreement acts as the template for cooperation between the British and Irish Governments in relation to Northern Ireland. Both Governments are committed in all circumstances to ensure that it is implemented to the maximum possible extent for the benefit of all communities.

Since 1998, full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement has been the Government's priority. Much progress has been made in delivering on commitments made across such important areas as human rights, equality, community relations, including the establishment of Human Rights Commissions in both parts of the island, and the Equality Commission in Northern Ireland. In the area of policing, new

accountability structures have included the establishment of the office of the Police Ombudsman; the Policing Board and the District Policing Partnerships. The **Police Service of Northern Ireland** (PSNI) came into being in November 2001, replacing the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Progress in relation to security issues has also been steady. Following the IRA statement of July 2005, committing itself to exclusively peaceful means, the British Government initiated its planned security normalisation programme which had been agreed with the Government as part of the Joint Declaration of April 2003. In the context of a continuing enabling environment, this committed the British Government to a number of measures, including the removal of army watchtowers, the vacation and closure of all but 14 army bases and the reduction in troop levels from over 13,000 to 5,000. These normalisation measures were completed on 31 July 2007.

Elections to the first Northern Ireland Assembly took place on 25 June 1998, with power first devolved to the new Assembly and Executive on 2 December 1999. However, disagreements between the parties, principally over the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons, led to the operation of the Assembly being interrupted on a number of occasions over the next two years. On 14 October 2002, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Dr. John Reid, made an order suspending the Executive and Assembly, following allegations of intelligence gathering in Stormont.

Rebuilding confidence and Restoring Momentum

In an effort to restore momentum towards full implementation of the Agreement, the Governments published a Joint Declaration on 1 May 2003, which identified areas where progress could be made. However, a period of intensive negotiations between the parties and the two Governments did not resolve all outstanding difficulties at that time. Subsequent Assembly elections, held in November 2003, resulted in the DUP and Sinn Féin becoming the largest parties on the unionist and nationalist side respectively.

A year of further intense negotiations brought all sides close to agreement, but on 8 December 2004, the Governments announced



(From left to right) Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Michael McDowell TD, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Brian Cowen TD, Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern TD, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Paul Murphy at Farmleigh, Dublin on 26 January 2006

that, while almost all outstanding issues had been agreed with the parties, differences over the process to be used to verify the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons remained unresolved.

In 2005 and 2006 the context for political engagement improved greatly. The announcement on 28 July 2005 that the IRA had ended its armed campaign and the confirmation by the Independent Decommissioning Body in September 2005 that IRA decommissioning had been completed led to intensified political contacts between the Governments and the parties and renewed efforts to find a way forward.

In 2006, those efforts culminated in Scotland in the publication of the St Andrews Agreement on 13 October, following talks hosted by the Irish and British Governments with the political parties.

Underpinning the Good Friday Agreement, the St. Andrews Agreement set out a clear way forward for all parties to commit to the full operation of stable power-sharing government in Northern Ireland, and to full support for policing and the criminal justice institutions. Major progress in that regard was made in the early months of 2007, with all-party support for policing and the criminal justice institutions secured in January and Assembly elections in March



North South Ministerial Council Plenary, Armagh 17 July 2007

resulting in a clear popular mandate for power-sharing.

Restoration of the Institutions — 8 May 2007

These developments allowed restoration of the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement — in suspension since 2002 — to take place on 8 May 2007. On that day, Dr Ian Paisley, DUP Leader; and Mr Martin McGuinness of Sinn Féin were appointed as First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland. Peter Robinson subsequently replaced Dr. Ian Paisley as First Minister and leader of the DUP in June 2008.

With restoration of the devolved institutions, the **North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC)** could once again meet and the North/South Implementation Bodies function fully. The fifth Plenary meeting of the NSMC took place in Armagh on 17 July 2007. The Northern Ireland delegation, led by the First Minister, Dr Ian Paisley and the deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness, and the Irish Government delegation, led by the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, acknowledged the significance of the occasion, the first meeting of the Plenary since 2002. They welcomed the opportunity to meet in the NSMC to consult on and promote mutually beneficial co-operation on a range of issues and to take a number of decisions on the Council's

work. Since that time, Ministers have continued to review key developments in the NSMC through ongoing sectoral meetings , where they have the opportunity to engage in broad discussion on a range of issues of common interest and concern, including child protection, tourism, road safety and infrastructure. The first Plenary meeting of the **British-Irish Council (BIC)** following restoration took place in Belfast on 16 July 2007.

All-Island Partnership & Co-operation

The Irish Government is committed to promoting partnership and deepening economic, social and cultural relations between both parts of the island of Ireland. The then Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, and the DUP's Dr. Ian Paisley underlined the commitment to building relations on the island in a spirit of friendship and mutual understanding at a significant meeting at Farmleigh House in Dublin on 4 April 2007, and through ongoing engagement since restoration took place on 8 May 2007.

Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern greets Ian Paisley, First Minister of Northern Ireland at Farmleigh, Dublin, April, 2007



In recognition of the synergies that can be gained through all-island co-operation across the economy, infrastructure and spatial planning, the border region and improved co-operation on cross-border public services such as health and education, particular focus has been placed in recent years on developing co-operation in these areas. In October 2006, a Comprehensive Study on the All-Island Economy was launched, which sets out the economic rationale for North/South collaboration, as well as concrete proposals for economic initiatives.

All-island co-operation is also a horizontal theme of the Government's National Development Plan for the period 2007-2013. It sets out, for the first time, proposals for Irish Government investment in North/South projects and initiatives for mutual benefit. These include joint investment in new strategic projects to benefit North and South; and the opening up of access to existing development funds on an all-island basis, and/or the introduction of new, agreed joint funding measures. Key measures undertaken to date include a major roads investment programme, the restoration of the Ulster Canal from Clones to Lough Erne and the introduction of a single electricity market for the island.

British-Irish Relations and the Peace Process

Over the last thirty years, the context in which the Irish Government's objectives in relation to the peace process in Northern Ireland are pursued has been transformed. The British-Irish relationship is multi-faceted, influenced by historical connections, geographical proximity and strong economic links. There is a vast network of individual connections between the two islands. Many Irish-born people live and work in Britain. The British-Irish relationship is evolving towards an enhanced degree of understanding and a greater recognition of shared interest at almost every level, as reflected in the historic address of the Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern, to the Joint Houses of Parliament in Westminster on 15 May 2007.

International Support for the Peace Process

The peace process in Northern Ireland has always benefited from the widespread support of the international community, including our EU



British Prime Minister Gordon Brown MP, Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Micheal Martin TD

partners, the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and others. The focus of international support has included both political support for the evolving peace process and practical assistance in the areas of economic regeneration and cross-community reconciliation, including through the **International Fund for Ireland** and the **EU's Programmes for Peace and Reconciliation** in Northern Ireland and the six border counties of the Republic. The Irish Government has committed to engage productively with the international community in sharing its experiences of the peace process and to work with others where this would prove helpful.

Representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly, British and European Parliaments and Local Government

Under the Good Friday Agreement, the **Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive** exercises authority over broad areas of

social and economic policy. The Northern Ireland Assembly comprises 108 members across 18 constituencies, elected by proportional representation on the basis of the single transferable vote.

The composition of the power-sharing Executive is determined by the results of the Assembly elections, the most recent of which were held on 7 March 2007 under the terms of the St Andrews Agreement. The number of seats won by each party was as follows (n = nationalist, u = unionist, o = other):

DUP (u)	36
Sinn Féin (n)	28
UUP (u)	18
SDLP (n)	16
Alliance (o)	7
Green (o)	1
PUP (u)	1
UKUP (u)	0
OTH(o)	1

The election results above resulted in 4 Ministerial posts in the Executive for the DUP, 3 for Sinn Féin, 2 for the UUP, and one for the SDLP.

In addition, Northern Ireland returns 18 members to the United Kingdom parliament at Westminster. Following the 2005 Westminster elections, party representation is nine DUP, one UUP, five Sinn Féin and three SDLP. Northern Ireland also elects three Members of the European Parliament.

Reform of **Local Government** in Northern Ireland is currently under consideration by the Northern Ireland Executive, as part of an overall Review of Public Administration. On 31 March 2008, the Minister for the Environment, Arlene Foster, outlined changes that will reduce the number of councils from 26 to 11 by 2011. The new councils will have



Schoolchildren from Ballymena taking part in an anti-sectarianism project, 'Ballymena Learning Together', which receives funding from the Reconciliation Fund

increased responsibilities, including aspects of planning, rural development, urban regeneration and community development.

Population

The 2006 mid-year population estimate for Northern Ireland was 1,742,000. This estimate is based on the most recent (2001) census, when the population of Northern Ireland was recorded at 1,685,267.

According to the census findings in 2001, the breakdown of religion was: Catholic 40.26%, Presbyterian Church of Ireland 20.69%, Church of Ireland 15.3%, Methodist Church of Ireland, 3.51%, Other Christian (including Christian related) 6.07%, Other religions and philosophies 0.30%, No religion/religion not stated 13.88%. The next census will take place in 2011.

Source: Northern Ireland Statistics website: www.nisra.gov.uk

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Online

Department of Foreign Affairs:	www.dfa.ie
Northern Ireland Office:	www.nio.gov.uk
The Northern Ireland Assembly:	www.ni-assembly.gov.uk
The Northern Ireland Executive:	www.northernireland.gov.uk
Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister:	www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk
North South Ministerial Council	www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org
British Irish Council	www.britishirishcouncil.org
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission:	www.nihrc.org
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland:	www.equalityni.org
Northern Ireland Statistics:	www.nisra.gov.uk
Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland:	www.osni.gov.uk
International Fund for Ireland	www.internationalfundforireland.com
Special EU Programmes Body	www.seupb.org
Police Service of Northern Ireland:	www.psni.police.uk
Northern Ireland Policing Board	www.nipolicingboard.org.uk
Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland:	www.policeombudsman.org
Alliance Party:	www.allianceparty.org
Democratic Unionist Party:	www.dup.org.uk
Progressive Unionist Party:	www.pup-ni.org.uk
Sinn Féin:	www.sinnfein.ie
Social Democratic Labour Party:	www.sdip.ie
Ulster Unionist Party:	www.uup.org
North- South Bodies	
Intertrade Ireland	www.intertradeireland.com
Waterways Ireland	www.waterwaysireland.org
Food Safety Promotion Board	www.safefood.eu
Special European Union Programmes Body	www.seupb.org
Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission	www.loughs-agency.org
Foras Na Gaeilge	www.forasnagaeilge.ie
The Ulster Scots Agency and	www.ulsterscotsagency.com



Taoiseach Brian Cowan, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Micheal Martin together with First Minister Ian Paisley and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness Northern Ireland United States Investment Conference 8 May 2008



Foreign Policy

The Constitution of Ireland affirms Ireland's strong commitment to the ideal of peace and friendly cooperation amongst nations founded on international justice and morality. Ireland's foreign policy is based on this conviction.

As a small country in a changing world, Ireland remains firmly committed to collective approaches to international relations and security based on the primacy of the Charter of the United Nations. Key principles underlying this commitment are respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law. Ireland seeks to pursue these core objectives in cooperation with regional and bilateral partners and through its membership of international organisations, in particular its membership of the United Nations and of the European Union.

United Nations

Ireland joined the United Nations (UN) on 14 December 1955. Within the UN, Ireland has sought to promote effective international action on global issues such as disarmament, peace-keeping, human rights and development. Ireland's membership of the UN Security Council in 2001–2002 reinforced its commitment to working with the wider UN membership for international peace and security. This commitment is reflected in the continuous participation in UN peace keeping operations by Irish Defence and Police Forces since 1958. Irish personnel are currently serving in a number of UN peace support operations in the Middle East, Africa and Europe. Our commitment to the UN is also reflected in the increasing contributions Ireland is making to UN Funds and Programmes. The then Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dermot Ahern TD was asked by the UN Secretary General to be one of his Envoys for UN reform in the lead up to the UN World Summit in September 2005, which reaffirmed the



United Nations building, New York

Millennium Development Goals and helped to ensure that the UN is better equipped to meet today's threats and challenges. Ireland is also a strong supporter of the International Criminal Court, established by the international community through the adoption of the Rome Statute in 1998.

Online

Department of Foreign Affairs:

www.dfa.ie

European Union Membership

Ireland joined the European Economic Community (EEC) on 1 January 1973 and has participated actively in the evolution of what is now the *European Union* (EU). EU membership is pivotal to Government policy. It is a central framework within which the Government pursues its foreign policy objectives. Ireland's membership of the European Union is rooted in an understanding that the Union is the cornerstone of political and economic stability in Europe.

Membership gives Irish exporters full access to the European single market, and this has contributed to Ireland's economic success. EU involvement enables Ireland's views and interests to be reflected in the policies of the Union which exercises considerable influence in world affairs. Ireland's participation in world affairs enhances its capacity to pursue its traditional policy of promoting a stable, peaceful and prosperous international environment with structures based on the rule of law, respect for human rights and representative government.

Ireland has held the six-month rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union on six occasions, in 1975, 1979, 1984, 1990, 1996 and 2004. Ireland's sixth EU Presidency ran from 1 January to 30 June 2004. This presidency was widely praised internationally and saw the accession of ten new Member States to the European Union: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

On 1 January 2007, Bulgaria and Romania became the latest States to accede to the EU, increasing the total number of Member States to 27.

EU Common Foreign and Security Policy

Ireland's voice in the world and the pursuit of Ireland's foreign policy is greatly enhanced through its participation in the formulation and implementation of the European Union's common foreign and security policy (CFSP). As a community of shared values, the EU is uniquely placed to play a role in support of international peace and stability.

In today's globalised and increasingly interdependent world, Ireland and its EU partners work together to promote international peace and security and co-operative and mutually beneficial relations with neighbouring states and regions. Core principles that have always inspired Ireland's foreign policy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law, are also central to the pursuit of the CFSP. Another important element of the CFSP is the Union's developing capabilities in the areas of conflict prevention, peacekeeping and crisis management under the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter. Ireland has played an active role in the development of the ESDP and will continue to contribute constructively to this process in accordance with our own foreign policy priorities and traditions.

The EU has played a special role in support of peace, reconstruction and reconciliation in the Western Balkans and this is a continuing priority for Ireland and the Union as a whole. Following the 2004 enlargement, relations with Russia and with the Union's new neighbours — Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova — have become more important for the European Union, which is also developing closer relations with the Caucasus and the countries of the southern Mediterranean. In tandem with these developments, Ireland's links to these areas are growing.

Cooperation between Ireland and its EU partners is also very important in key international fora such as the UN, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe.

In its bilateral relations, Ireland has sought to build mutually beneficial relationships with a broad range of countries, reflecting the varied and deep connections which have been built up over many years with different parts of the world. These relationships have, in part,

contributed to our recent economic progress. However, economic considerations are only one aspect of Ireland's relations with other countries.

A particular focus has been relations with the countries of Africa, reflecting a longstanding tradition and commitment to development cooperation and to the pursuit of peace and stability, good governance and respect for human rights in Africa. We seek to achieve these goals through working with African partners, and through membership of international organisations, particularly the EU and the UN. Ireland has also sought to deepen its relations with the countries of Asia and Latin America through the developing trade, business and cultural links, and through cooperation with regional organisations and at the UN.

The search for a peaceful resolution to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians and for stability in the wider Middle East is also a key concern for Ireland, mindful of our experience of our own peace process in Northern Ireland. In this regard we value the role played by

Taoiseach Bertie Ahern T.D. addressing the United States Joint Houses of Congress, Washington DC, 30 April 2008



the European Union as a member of the Quartet alongside the United States, the UN and Russia. Ireland has also traditionally attached considerable importance to disarmament and non-proliferation, including of Weapons of Mass Destruction. This is a concern which continues to motivate our approach to broader questions of international security including the threat posed by international terrorism and other non-State actors. A more recent concern is to reach agreement on a global approach to environmental protection and sustainable development, a challenge which faces the wider international community.

Ireland enjoys close links with the United States based on ties of friendship and cooperation developed through a shared history of emigration and an increasingly strong economic relationship. In the context of the wider transatlantic relationship, Ireland is committed to improving cooperation between the EU and the US and between the EU and Canada with a focus on enhancing international peace and stability.

Online

Department of Foreign Affairs:	www.dfa.ie
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Irish Aid:	www.irishaid.gov.ie
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European Commission:	www.europa.eu.int
- in Ireland:	www.euireland.ie

European Parliament:	www.europarl.eu.int
- in Ireland:	www.europarl.ie

EU Gateway:	www.europa.eu
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Council of the European Union:	http://consilium.europa.eu
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Court of Justice of the European Communities:	www.curia.europa.eu
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The European Ombudsman:	www.ombudsman.europa.eu
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European Central Bank:	www.ecb.eu
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EU Common Foreign and Security Policy:	www.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/cfsp/intro/
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Irish Aid

Irish Aid is the Government of Ireland's official programme of assistance to developing countries. The Irish Aid programme is administered by the Department of Foreign Affairs. Ireland has had an official development assistance programme since 1974. It has grown steadily over the years from modest beginnings to an estimated budget of €914 million for total official development assistance (ODA) in 2008. The Government is committed to reaching the United Nations target of spending 0.7% of GNP on ODA in 2012.

Ireland's development cooperation policy is an integral part of Ireland's wider foreign policy. The Irish Aid programme reflects our longstanding commitment to human rights and fairness in international relations.

Responsibility for Irish foreign policy, including assistance to developing countries lies in the first instance with the Minister for Foreign Affairs. However, particular responsibility for policy on Overseas Development is assigned to a Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs.

White Paper on Irish Aid

On 18th September 2006 the Government published Ireland's first ever White Paper on Irish Aid. A statement of Government policy, the White Paper places the cause of development at the heart of Ireland's foreign policy.

A pupil at the Irish Aid-supported Mbwade Primary School, Tanzania.



*Minister of State, Peter Power
TD at Africa Day in Dublin
25 May 2008*



The White Paper reflects the views of many people who contributed to a consultation process around Ireland. It will guide the work of the Irish Aid programme as it grows over the coming years. The White Paper is available on the Department's and Irish Aid's websites.

Poverty Focus

Irish Aid has as its absolute priority the reduction of poverty, inequality and exclusion in developing countries. All of Irish Aid's policies and activities are gauged against their contribution in this respect and against the progress they achieve towards the Millennium Development Goals.

The Declaration which was adopted at the UN Millennium Summit in 2000 included eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Goals are specific time-bound measurable targets, to be achieved by 2015. The MDGs commit the international community to:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
- Achieve universal primary education;
- Promote gender equality and empower women;
- Reduce child mortality;
- Improve maternal health;
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
- Ensure environmental sustainability;
- Develop a global partnership for development.

Geographic Focus

Since its inception in 1974, Ireland's development assistance programme has had a strong geographic focus on Sub-Saharan Africa. Under the bilateral part of its programme, Irish Aid operates intensive and wide-ranging country programmes in seven countries in Africa, namely; Lesotho, Mozambique, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Zambia, Malawi and Uganda. These are termed "Programme Countries". There are two programme countries in Asia, Timor Leste and Vietnam.

Beyond our Programme Countries, Irish Aid supports development programmes with different multilateral and NGO partners in over thirty of the world's poorest countries each year.



Minister of State for Overseas Development, Peter Power, sees the benefits of new fishing farming techniques introduced to Khulumgira Village in Dedza Village, Malawi

Untied Aid

Ireland's development assistance has always been completely untied, that is to say, it is not conditional in any way on the use of Irish goods or services. It is Government policy that funding should remain untied, as tied aid is less effective in its impact, can lead to a proliferation of different standards and technologies in developing countries and can be abused to provide hidden export subsidies.

Partnership

Partnership is a fundamental principle guiding Irish Aid's approach. Irish Aid works in close partnership with recipient countries, with other donors and multilateral organisations and with non-governmental organisations and missionaries. Partnership with the recipient countries is vital if the beneficiaries of Irish Aid are to have ownership of their own development.

Coordination with other donors, international organisations and NGOs and missionaries, is an increasingly important part of the international development effort and offers the benefits of shared information, analysis and experience, and the opportunity to maximise the impact of our collective efforts.

Effectiveness

Irish Aid is strongly committed to ensuring aid effectiveness, based on the principles of partnership, support for locally owned strategies, better coordination and policy coherence. Irish Aid makes continuous efforts to improve reporting and monitoring and to promote a results-based culture. The formulation of Programme Country Strategies, the implementation and delivery of programmes, the various grant schemes, the evaluation and audit function and internal organisation are all informed by the need to maximise effectiveness.

Accountability

The management and expenditure of an expanding budget is a significant responsibility for Irish Aid. Like most public expenditure, the programme's budget is voted expenditure, authorised by a vote of the Dáil each year, and must be managed in accordance with the public financial procedures governing the use of State resources. In addition to the requirements of public financial procedures, rigorous systems are required to ensure full accountability and value for money for activities under all headings of the programme. An Annual Report on Irish Aid, including detailed accounts of expenditure, has been published since 1978. The Annual Report is laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas on publication.

For more information on Irish Aid please go to: www.irishaid.gov.ie

The Irish Abroad

The global spread of our Diaspora is very considerable. For a small nation, it is practically unparalleled. More than one million Irish citizens are currently living abroad, and it is estimated that as many as 70 million people worldwide can claim Irish descent. Our largest emigrant communities have consistently lived in Britain and the United States;



Emigration memorial, Cobh, County Cork

Irish citizens have also been an influential presence in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, and Southern Africa for very many decades. While the precise number of Irish citizens resident around the world is not known, the enormous contribution they have made to their host countries and to Ireland is well documented.

The Irish abroad have integrated well into their adopted communities, but have never cut their links with home. Many have retained a strong sense of their Irish heritage, which they continue to assert through involvement in Irish community associations and participation in Irish sporting and cultural activities. Increasingly, people born abroad of Irish descent are also seeking to express the Irish dimension of their identity, a factor which has contributed to the global renaissance in Irish language studies, history, music and dance in recent years.

Although emigration from Ireland has reduced substantially over the past decade, the Irish abroad continue to be vibrant and active communities. Through the contributions they make to the countries in which they have settled, and through their continuing links with Ireland, they act as an important channel for promoting a positive image of Ireland abroad.

The high priority and value that the Government attaches to the Diaspora is reflected in the substantial funding it provides to support Irish community, cultural and heritage projects across the world. This year, more than €15 million has been set aside for the support of projects in Britain, the United States, Australia, Argentina, Canada, Southern Africa, New Zealand and elsewhere. Supporting a wider range of initiatives across a greater geographic range than ever before, the Government is strengthening the connection between our Diaspora and home, and actively recognizing the tremendous contributions the Irish abroad continue to make, both to Ireland and to their adopted countries.



JAMES
JOYCE
1882-1941

Ireland's Culture

In today's increasingly homogenous world contemporary Irish culture is reflective of a progressively pluralist, multicultural society. Generated by the slow, complex fusion of the traditions of the coloniser and the colonised, of British and Gaelic peoples, it is a rich weave of foreign and native influences, in which modern and traditional energies are in vibrant tension.

The traditional lore preserved by the early Irish poets has left a colourful heritage of mythical and historical stories. Modern writers in turn have drawn on these stories to enrich their own work. Irish folklore also draws on international motifs and forms such as wonder tales and the love songs of the troubadours.

Among the better known stories are those of the legendary heroes such as Fionn Mac Cumhaill who gained wisdom as a boy by tasting the 'salmon of knowledge', Balor, who killed his grandfather and whose horrific eye destroyed all on which it gazed, and Cú Chulainn, hero of the epic poem the *Táin Bó Cúailgne* (The Cattle Raid of Cooley).

Sculpture depicting the death of Cú Chulainn, hero of the epic poem the Táin Bó Cúailgne



Glendalough, County Wicklow



Much lore also centres on the patron saints of various localities. These saints appear in legend as miracle workers who used their sacred powers to banish monsters, cure illnesses and provide food for the people in time of need. The most celebrated of these are the national saint, Patrick, Colm Cille and Saint Brigid, who as protectress of farming and livestock, preserves many of the attributes of an earth goddess.

Ireland is famous for its fairy-lore which is connected to early Celtic beliefs of the dead living on as a dazzling community in their burial chambers. Many stories are told of humans being brought into fairy *raths* (ancient earthwork structures). The wailing of a special female spirit, the *bean sí*, heralds a death.

A wide range of beliefs and practices are associated with death and burial. The 'waking' of the dead was an important social ritual which involved praying, singing, storytelling and games to pay tribute to the one who had died.

The indigenous festivals of the Irish calendar such as *Lá Fhéile Bríde* (Saint Brigid's feast — 1 February), *Lúnasa* (August) and *Oíche Shamhna* (Hallowe'en) all had their own special forms of amusements and preserved vestiges of earlier rituals.

The Irish Language

Irish is the State's first official language. It is one of the Celtic family of languages and is closely related to Scots Gaelic, Welsh and Breton.

Irish road signs



Most people spoke Irish until the early nineteenth century but by 1891 over 85 per cent spoke English only. The latest figures available show that 43 per cent of adults say they have a knowledge of Irish.

The State actively encourages the use of Irish. Today it is widely spoken in areas known as the *Gaeltacht*, situated mainly along the western seaboard. The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs has responsibility for promoting the cultural, social and economic welfare of the *Gaeltacht* through *Údarás na Gaeltachta* (*Gaeltacht Authority*), a statutory board under its aegis, which serves as a development authority for *Gaeltacht* areas with some of its members being elected by the people of the *Gaeltacht*. The Irish Language Agency (*Foras na Gaeilge*) of the Language Body (*An Foras Teanga*), one of the six all-island bodies established following the Good Friday Agreement, has responsibility for the promotion and encouragement of the use of Irish as a vernacular throughout the island of Ireland. Irish is a core subject in primary and secondary schools and a growing number of schools offer tuition exclusively through Irish (*Gaelscoileanna*). There is a national radio service (*Raidió na Gaeltachta*) and an Irish language television service (*TG4*). In addition, there are two Irish Language weekly newspapers: *Lá* and *Foinse*. On 1 January 2007, the Irish language became the 23rd official language of the European Union.

Literature in Irish

Written literature in Old Irish dates from the sixth century. Work surviving from that period includes prose sagas, historical and legal material, commentaries on biblical texts and lyrical and devotional poetry. During the early modern period (1250–1650) secular schools trained poets (*filidh*) to compose elaborate verse often in praise of their patrons. Fenian (Ossianic) literature was popular at this time and continued to influence writers in English through to the nineteenth century. The works centre on the legendary hero Fionn Mac Cumhaill, his son Oisín and their followers, the *Fianna*. When the Gaelic order ended in the seventeenth century these poets lost their patrons and were displaced. At this point, Irish prose writers began to preserve a record of Gaelic civilisation. Through the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries, members of the clergy, schoolteachers, artisans and some colourful poets continued to write in Irish. One of the best known poets of this time is Brian Merriman (1747–1805) author of the frequently translated *Cúirt an Mheán Oíche* (Midnight Court).

In the twentieth century writers such as Patrick Pearse (1879–1916) and Pádraic Ó Conaire (1883–1928) opened Irish literature to European influences. Distinguished writers and poets of the modern era include Liam Ó Flaithearta (1896–1984), Máirtín Ó Cadhain (1906–70), Seosamh Mac Grianna (1901–90), Máirtín Ó Direáin (1910–88), Seán Ó Ríordáin (1916–77), Máire Mhac an tSaoi (b. 1922), Seán Ó Tuama (b. 1926) and Michael Hartnett (1941–99). Some wrote in English and Irish often translating the work of their peers as well as early texts. Although few wrote for the stage, among those who did were Douglas Hyde (1860–1949), the first president of Ireland, Brendan Behan (1923–64), Máiréad Ní Ghráda (1899–1971) and Cristóir Ó Floinn (b. 1927).

Over a hundred new titles in Irish are published every year, including books for children. Foremost among these contemporary writers are Liam Ó Muirthile (b. 1950), Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill (b. 1952), Áine Ní Ghlinn (b. 1955), Cathal Ó Searcaigh (b. 1956), Biddy Jenkinson (b. 1949) and Colm Breathnach (b. 1961).

Literature in English

Writing in English has flourished in Ireland since the eighteenth century. Among the first generation of these writers were the satirist Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), author of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), the political essayist Edmund Burke (1729–97) and the dramatists Oliver Goldsmith (1728–74) and Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751–1816).

Building on that tradition of brilliant wit, Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) and George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) wrote major works for the London stage. Shaw won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1925. Through the nineteenth century a growing interest in Ireland's ancient Celtic culture influenced Irish writers, most significantly William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) whose work inspired the modern renaissance in Irish writing. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1923. With his friends Lady Gregory (1852–1932) and Edward Martyn



Sculpture of Patrick Kavanagh, Mespil Road, Dublin

(1859–1924) he established an Irish National Theatre (the Abbey Theatre) to create an identifiably Irish literature in English. Some of the theatre's early works created a storm of controversy but are now firm favourites in the repertoire, for example John Millington Synge's (1871–1909) work, *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) and Seán O'Casey's (1880–1964) *The Plough and the Stars* (1926).

James Joyce (1882–1941), no admirer of the Yeatsian literary revival, left Ireland in the early years of the twentieth century settling ultimately in Paris. His pioneering modernist novel, *Ulysses* (1922) grafts the street life of his native Dublin onto the plot of Homer's *Odyssey* to chronicle a single day in the lives of its protagonists Leopold and Molly Bloom and Stephen Dedalus. Joyce's parodic playfulness inspired the work of Brian O'Nolan (Flann O'Brien) (1911–66), who also wrote in Irish. Another Dublin exile in Paris, Samuel Beckett (1906–89) wrote in a minimalist vein, often in French. His play, *Waiting for Godot* (1953) has become a twentieth century classic of absurdism. He received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1969.

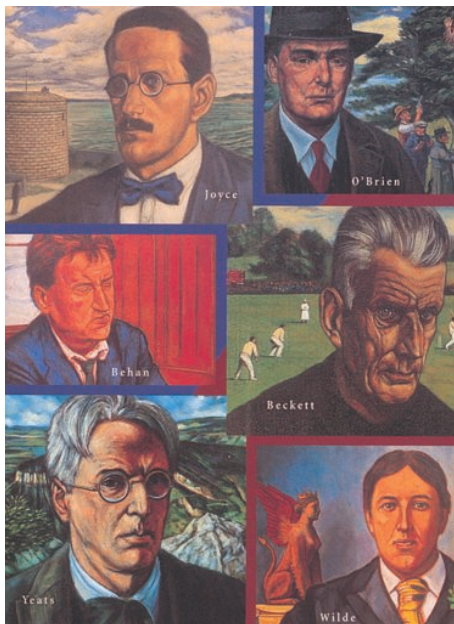


Illustration showing some of Ireland's best known writers: James Joyce, Flann O'Brien, Brendan Behan, Samuel Beckett, W.B. Yeats & Oscar Wilde

French authors provided a model for short story writers Frank O'Connor (1903–66) and Seán Ó Faoláin (1900–91) who blended continental realism with the native oral tradition to create the modern Irish short story. The form expanded in Illustration showing some of Ireland's best known writers: James Joyce, Flann O'Brien, Brendan Behan, Samuel Beckett, W.B. Yeats &

Oscar Wilde the hands of Liam O'Flaherty (1896–1984), Mary Lavin (1912–96), John McGahern (1934–2006), William Trevor (b. 1928) and Bernard MacLaverty (b. 1942).

The generation of poets after Yeats included very different talents in Patrick Kavanagh (1904–67) and Louis MacNeice (1907–63). Kavanagh's example as a poet of rural realism inspired Seamus Heaney (b. 1939) whose vision of the redemptive power of poetry earned him a Nobel Prize for literature in 1995. Among his contemporaries,

Thomas Kinsella (b. 1928), John Montague (b. 1929), Michael Longley (b. 1939) and Derek Mahon (b. 1941) have explored the complexities of modern Ireland in work covering historical, political and existential themes. Women poets, Eavan Boland (b. 1945), Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin (b. 1942), Medbh McGuckian (b. 1950) and Paula Meehan (b. 1955) challenge the traditional male domination of Irish literature.

Likewise, in fiction, women have been to the fore. Writers such as Somerville (1858–1949) and Ross (1862–1915), Elizabeth Bowen (1899–1973) and Molly Keane (1905–96) were born into and chronicled the fading world of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy. This world provides the setting too for many of the novels of Jennifer Johnston (b. 1930) and John Banville (b. 1945).

The establishment of the new state gave writers a new focus on the Catholic bourgeoisie, including Kate O'Brien (1897–1974), Edna O'Brien (b. 1930) and Colm Tóibín (b. 1955). The novels of John McGahern focus on the difficulties and beauty of life in rural Ireland and the writing of small-town life by Pat McCabe (b. 1955) sustains the familiar note of black comedy in Irish writing. The relative darkness of these novelists' work is absent from the romances of Maeve Binchy, Deirdre Purcell and Marian Keyes.

In recent years, several internationally renowned Irish writers have won the prestigious Booker prize. Recent winners include Anne Enright (b. 1962) in 2007, John Banville (b. 1945) in 2005 and Roddy Doyle (b. 1958) in 1993, join Iris Murdoch (1919–99) who won the prize in 1978.

For all its experimental beginnings, Irish drama is resolutely realist. Its major exponents today are Brian Friel (b. 1929), author of *Dancing at Lughnasa*, Tom Kilroy (b. 1934), Tom Murphy (b. 1935), Frank McGuinness (b. 1953), Sebastian Barry (b. 1955), Marina Carr (b. 1965), Martin McDonagh (b. 1971) and Conor McPherson (b. 1971). In their work, lines of satire and dark comedy cross with a lyrical sensibility to produce a disturbing vision of contemporary Ireland.

Irish theatre companies such as the Abbey, the Druid and the Gate regularly tour their productions to international venues and host the work of visiting theatre companies to Ireland.

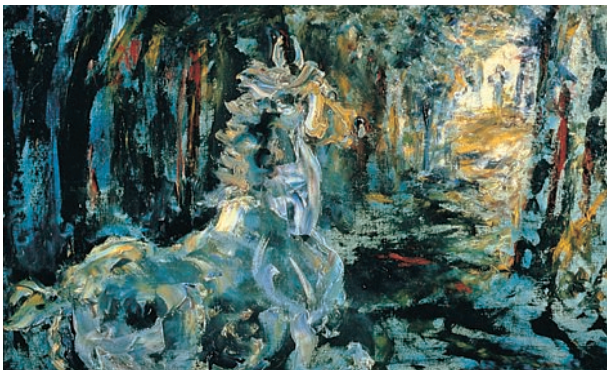
Art

The earliest Irish art consists of carvings on megalithic monuments dating from 3500 B.C. Celtic art reached its apogee in the manuscripts of the gospels such as the books of Durrow and Kells. These feature interlaced animal and geometric forms in bright primary colours. After the ninth century Irish art absorbed Viking, Romanesque and Gothic influences producing, for example, richly carved stone High Crosses.

From the mid-seventeenth century decorative arts such as goldsmithery, plasterwork and glass flourished in conjunction with the large-scale public buildings of the time. After the Act of Union (1801) many artists moved to London but those who remained in Ireland established organisations which today continue to support artists such as The Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA) (founded in 1823) which presents an annual exhibition of contemporary Irish painters and sculptors. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Irish painters looked to the French Impressionists for a new idiom. These include William Leech (1881–1968), Walter Osborne (1859–1903), John Lavery (1856–1941) and Roderic O'Connor (1860–1940). Crossing from Impressionism to Expressionism, Jack B. Yeats (1871–1957) towers over his contemporaries much as his brother, the poet W.B. Yeats was pre-eminent among his peers.

Younger artists who trained under modernists in Paris include Evie Hone (1894–1955), Mainie Jellett (1897–1944) and Mary Swanzy (1882–1978). In 1943 a group of younger artists founded the Irish

For the Road by Jack B. Yeats



Exhibition of Living Art as a reaction to the conventionality of the RHA. These artists, working in an abstract expressionist mode, include Louis le Brocqy (b. 1916), Norah McGuinness (1901–80) and Patrick Scott (b. 1921). Close to them too are Tony O'Malley (1913–2003), Camille Souter (b. 1929) and Barrie Cooke (b. 1931) who experiment within the tradition of landscape painting and often use tropical and desert settings for their work. A strong new expressionist movement emerged in the late twentieth century including Brian Maguire (b. 1951), Eithne Jordan (b. 1954), Michael Mulcahy (b. 1952), Michael Cullen (b. 1946), Dorothy Cross (b. 1956) and Alice Maher (b. 1956). Sculpture in the nineteenth century was heroic and monumental as exemplified by the statues of Oliver Goldsmith and Edmund Burke by John Henry Foley (1819–1974) outside Trinity College, Dublin. This tradition continued into the twentieth century with the works of Oisín Kelly (1915–81), Seamus Murphy (1907–74) and Hilary Heron (1923–77) pioneering the use of new casting techniques and promoting the concept of an Irish vernacular sculpture. Contemporary sculpture is more abstract and witty as can be seen in the diverse work of John Behan (b. 1932), Michael Warren (b. 1950), Edward Delaney (b. 1930), Eilís O'Connell (b. 1953), and Kathy Prendergast (b. 1958).

Online

Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism: www.arts-sport-tourism.gov.ie

Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs: www.pobail.ie

Culture Ireland: www.cultureireland.gov.ie

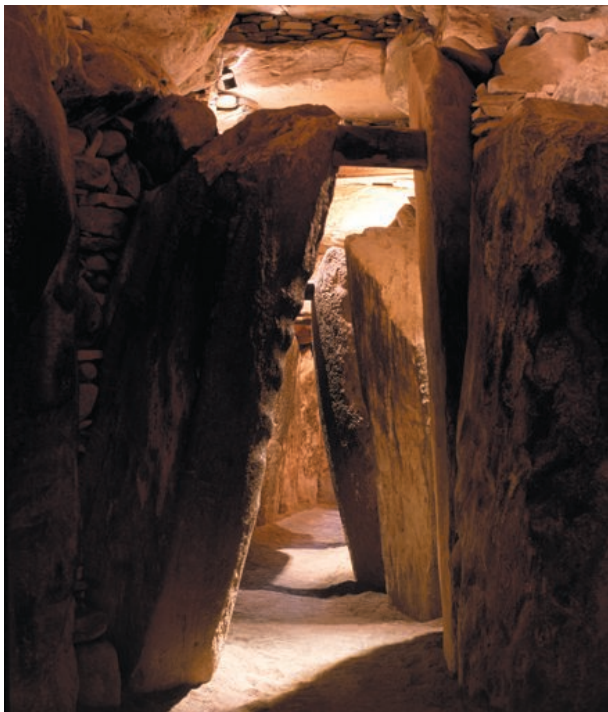
Údarás na Gaeltachta: www.udaras.ie

The Arts Council: www.artscouncil.ie

Crafts Council of Ireland: www.ccoi.ie

Architecture

The earliest examples of architecture visible in Ireland today are megalithic tombs (3500–2000 B.C.). These include dolmens (three or more standing stones supporting one or two capstones) and passage



Newgrange, County Meath

graves such as Newgrange. Stone Age techniques survived into the twelfth century and are still visible in the beehive structure of early churches and monasteries such as those on Skellig Michael and Gallarus Oratory in County Kerry. During the Iron Age (after 500 B.C.) large circular stone forts were built, usually on hilltops such as Dun Aengus on the Aran Islands.

The Round Tower is almost exclusive to Ireland and is found in many parts of the country. Built from the tenth to the twelfth centuries on monastic sites, the most notable being at Clonmacnoise in County Offaly, round towers were frequently more than 30 metres high. Their primary purpose seems to have been to serve as bell towers although the raised level of the doorway would suggest they may also have had defensive uses. After this period, Romanesque architecture with its intricate and ornate carved stonework influenced the shape of Irish churches, the finest examples being Cormac's Chapel on the Rock of Cashel in County Tipperary and Clonfert Cathedral in County Galway. The arrival of the Anglo-Normans heralded the introduction of the early Gothic style of architecture, with the two Dublin cathedrals, Christ Church and Saint Patrick's, being the most notable. The Normans built substantial castles with large rectangular keeps, many of which, like Trim in County Meath and Carrickfergus in County Antrim, still figure on the landscape. The fifteenth century castle at Cahir in County Tipperary is the most impressive of the surviving feudal strongholds.

Classical buildings date from the late seventeenth century. At the turn of the eighteenth century Palladian mansions were emulating Italian palazzos, but by the end of the century, this style had given way

The Custom House, Dublin



to neo-classicism and Dublin became an outstanding example of Georgian architecture. Key buildings from this period include the Custom House and the Four Courts in Dublin, with their distinctive copper domes, designed by James Gandon (1743–1823). By the nineteenth century Gothic revivalism was in vogue influencing the design of churches such as Saint Finn Barre's Cathedral (1867) in Cork and adapted to domestic architecture in the construction of Ashford Castle (c.1870), County Mayo.

Preservation and revival of old buildings became increasingly important towards the end of the last century with major projects such as the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, now the home of the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA), the Custom House, Dublin Castle and the Casino at Marino, Dublin, being fine examples of architectural restoration. Temple Bar, the Historic Area Restoration Project (HARP) around Smithfield and the docklands where the Irish Financial Services Centre (IFSC) is located, are three notable urban development initiatives in Dublin. Over the twentieth century Irish cities have expanded rapidly and the emphasis today is on innovative high density housing.

Music

Music has always been an important part of Irish culture, from the traditional accompaniment to festivals and funerals in the form of playing and ballad singing, to Irish dancing which is very much alive in Irish communities around the world. The harp was the dominant instrument in early historical times. One of the earliest Irish composers whose work survives is Turlough O'Carolan (1670–1738), the blind harpist and one of the last of the ancient bardic tradition.

There is also a classical tradition in the forms pioneered by other European composers. Eighteenth century Dublin was an important musical centre and Handel chose to premiere his *Messiah* there in 1742. John Field

The 'Brian Boru' harp dates from the 14th century



(1782–1837), creator of the nocturne, influenced composers such as Chopin and Glinka, and himself taught music in Moscow, where he is buried. Around the turn of the twentieth century two composers, Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924) and Hamilton Harty (1879–1941), created Irish symphonies drawing on native songs. In the twentieth century traditional Irish music inspired modern composers such as Seán Ó Riada (1931–71), A.J. Potter (1918–80), Seoirse Bodley (b. 1933) and the crossover artists Shaun Davey (b. 1948), Ronan Guilfoyle (b. 1958) and Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin (b. 1950).

In the 1930s and 1940s Brian Boydell (1917–2000), Frederick May (1911–85) and Aloys Fleischmann (1910–92) brought a progressive continental European dimension to Irish art music. This continues in the work of Raymond Deane (b. 1953) who studied in Germany, and Gerald Barry (b. 1952) whose operas include *The Intelligence Park*, and John Buckley (b. 1951). Young classical composers include Grainne Mulvey (b. 1966), Ian Wilson (b. 1964), Benjamin Dwyer (b. 1965) and Elaine Agnew (b. 1967).

Traditional Irish music is now popular in many countries through the influence of groups as diverse as Clannad, the Chieftains, Altan, Dervish, Lunasa and Anuna, all of whom perform in a modern context without compromising the integrity of the original sound. Reflecting this versatility is the phenomenon of *Riverdance*, with music composed

by Bill Whelan, combining the best of Irish song, music and dance.

Siamsa Tíre, based in Tralee, County Kerry, is a world-renowned folk dance company while *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* play a prominent part in the development and preservation of Irish traditional music and dance. On the jazz scene guitarist Louis Stewart has played with leading international musicians. Popular bands such as U2, Ash, Snow

Siamsa Tíre, folk dance company



Patrol and Westlife top the charts at home and abroad, as do individual singers Van Morrison, Sinéad O'Connor, Damien Rice and Enya.

There are three full-time professional orchestras and three main opera companies performing in Ireland. There is also a wealth of individual classical musical talent such as the well known pianists John O'Connor; and the up and coming Finghin Collins. Well established on the international concert circuit are Bernadette Greevy, Ann Murray and Suzanne Murphy.

Film

Films have been made in and about Ireland since the Lumière Brothers filmed in Sackville (now O'Connell) Street in 1897. In 1910 the American, Sidney Olcott, filmed *The Lad from Old Ireland* in New York and Kerry, the first film ever made on two continents. Ireland has since played host to many international directors — Alfred Hitchcock, John Ford, Francis Ford Coppola, John Huston and Stephen Spielberg.

Throughout the last century Irish film makers were prolific in their production of amateur films, newsreels, documentaries and informational films. It was not until the 1970s however that a new wave of indigenously produced fiction films began to provide a striking alternative to foreign produced representations of Ireland.

The Irish Film Centre, Dublin



Irish film makers Bob Quinn, Joe Comerford, Cathal Black, Pat Murphy and Thaddeus O'Sullivan produced work that dealt with previously unexplored issues of culture, class, gender and nationality. Their work and that of subsequent producers, directors and screen writers is facilitated by the Irish Film Board who fund production and distribution of feature films, shorts, animated films and Irish language productions.

Irish films have enjoyed international acclaim such as *Michael Collins* (Neil Jordan 1996), *I Went Down* (Paddy Breathnach 1997), *The General* (John Boorman 1998), *Nora* (Pat Murphy 2000), *About Adam* (Gerry Stembridge 2001), *When Brendan met Trudy* (Kieron J. Walsh 2001) and *Disco Pigs* (Kirsten Sheridan 2001).

Annual film festivals in Dublin, Cork, Galway and Belfast showcase Irish and international films while a year-round venue for art house cinema is provided at the Irish Film Centre in Dublin, the Kino in Cork and the Town Hall in Galway.

Online

The National Theatre Society:	www.abbeytheatre.ie
National Concert Hall:	www.nch.ie
National Archives:	www.nationalarchives.ie
Irish Museum of Modern Art:	www.modernart.ie
National Gallery of Ireland:	www.nationalgallery.ie
National Library of Ireland:	www.nli.ie
National Museum of Ireland:	www.museum.ie
Chester Beatty Library:	www.cbl.ie
Irish Research Council for the Humanities & Social Studies:	www.irchss.ie
An Chomhairle Leabharlanna:	www.librarycouncil.ie
Bord Scannán na hÉireann:	www.filmboard.ie

Sport

Among the most popular sports are Ireland's traditional games, Gaelic football, hurling and camogie, which are played almost exclusively in



The traditional games of hurling (left) and Gaelic football (right)

Ireland and in Irish communities abroad. Games in the All-Ireland hurling and football championships attract large attendances throughout the summer months culminating in the finals, the highlight of Ireland's sporting year, which are held in Croke Park in Dublin.

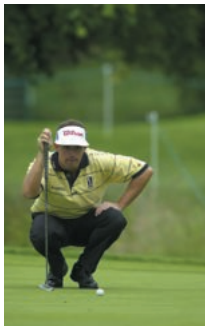
Soccer is popular at all ages from school to senior level in domestic competitions with many players performing with distinction in clubs in Britain. The Irish International team, which plays as the Republic of Ireland, has over the past number of years enjoyed some success and is well supported by enthusiastic and friendly fans.

Ireland-England rugby match





The Irish bloodstock industry is considered one of the finest in the world



Padraig Harrington, The British Open Champion of 2007

Rugby football is popular at club and schools level with the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) fielding teams in the annual Six Nations championship. Irish rugby players have participated in the British and Irish Lions tours as players, coaches and managers.

Ireland has a strong reputation for field sports such as shooting, fishing and also for equestrian events, show jumping and horse racing. The Irish bloodstock industry is considered one of the finest in the world. As Ireland has over 3,000 kilometres of coastline and numerous inland waterways, sailing and boating are long-established sports. A wide range of marine leisure activities such as fishing, water-skiing, canoeing, wind-surfing, diving and swimming are also pursued.

Over 400 golf courses offer facilities through the country. All-Ireland teams compete in international amateur golfing competitions with the major Irish tournaments on the international professional circuit being the Irish Open and the Smurfit European Open.

The Ryder Cup was held in Ireland in 2006, with top Irish golfers Pádraig Harrington, Darren Clarke and Paul McGinley contributing to the European team's victory over the United States. Harrington later went on to win the British Open Championship, one of golf's four "Majors", in Carnoustie, Scotland in July 2007.



Ireland's first swimming gold medallist Laura Jane Dunne gets a kiss from her coach

Ireland has a history of successfully hosting prestigious sporting events and hosted the Special Olympics in June 2003. This was the largest sporting event ever to take place in Ireland. Over 7,000 special athletes from 160 countries came to Ireland to participate in this unique sporting achievement.

Online

Irish Sports Council:	www.irishsportsCouncil.ie
Football Association of Ireland:	www.fai.ie
Irish Rugby Football Union:	www.irfu.ie
Gaelic Association of Ireland:	www.gaa.ie
Horse Racing Ireland:	www.horseracingireland.ie
Golfing Union of Ireland:	www.gui.ie
Special Olympics Ireland:	www.specialolympics.ie
Olympic Council of Ireland:	www.olympicsport.ie

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A

Abbey Theatre:	www.abbeytheatre.ie
Aer Lingus:	www.aerlingus.com
Appeal Commissioner:	www.appealcommissioners.ie
Arramara Teo:	www.aramara.ie
The Arts Council:	www.artscouncil.ie
Ask Ireland:	www.ask-ireland.com
Athletic Association of Ireland:	www.athleticsireland.ie
Office of the Attorney General:	www.attorneygeneral.ie

B

BioResearch Ireland:	www.irishscientist.ie
An Bord Altranais:	www.nursingboard.ie
Bord Bia:	www.bordbia.ie
Bord Gáis:	www.bordgais.ie
Bord Glas:	www.bordglas.ie
Bord Iascaigh Mhara:	www.bim.ie
Bord na Móna:	www.bnm.ie
An Bord Pinsean:	www.pensionsboard.ie
An Bord Pleanála:	www.pleanala.ie
Bord Scannán na hÉireann:	www.filmboard.ie
BreastCheck:	www.breastcheck.ie
Bus Átha Cliath:	www.dublinbus.ie
Bus Éireann:	www.buseireann.ie

C

Central Bank Of Ireland:	www.centralbank.ie
Central Fisheries Board:	www.cfb.ie
Central Statistics Office:	www.cso.ie
Chester Beatty Library:	www.cbl.ie
An Chomhairle Leabharlanna:	www.librarycouncil.ie

INDEX OF USEFUL WEBSITES

COFORD:	www.coford.ie
Combat Poverty Agency:	www.combatpoverty.ie
Comhairle:	www.comhairle.ie
Commissioner for Irish Lights:	www.cil.ie
Commission for Aviation Regulation:	www.aviationreg.ie
Commission for Communications Regulation:	www.comreg.ie
Commission for Energy Regulation:	www.cer.ie
Competition Authority:	www.tca.ie
Coras Iompair Éireann:	www.cie.ie
Council of the European Union:	http://ue.eu.int
Court of Justice of the European Communities:	www.curia.europa.eu
Crafts Council of Ireland:	www.ccoi.ie
Crisis Pregnancy Agency:	www.crisispregnancy.ie

D

Government Departments

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food:	www.agriculture.ie
Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism:	www.arts-sport-tourism.gov.ie
Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources:	www.dcmnr.gov.ie
Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs:	www.pobail.ie
Department of Defence:	www.defence.ie
Department of Education and Science:	www.irlgov.ie/educ
Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment:	www.entemp.ie
Department of the Environment & Local Government:	www.environ.ie
Department of Finance:	www.finance.gov.ie
Department of Foreign Affairs:	www.dfa.ie
Department of Health and Children:	www.doh.ie
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform:	www.justice.ie
Department of Social and Family Affairs:	www.welfare.ie
Department of the Taoiseach:	www.irlgov.ie/taoiseach

INDEX OF USEFUL WEBSITES

Department of Transport:	www.transport.ie
Director of Public Prosecutions:	www.dppireland.ie
Documents in Irish Foreign Policy:	www.difp.ie
Drug Treatment Board:	www.addictionireland.ie
Dublin Dental Hospital Board:	www.tcd.ie/dental_school
Dublin Port Company:	www.dublinport.ie
Dublin Docklands Development Authority:	www.dublindocklands.ie

E

Electricity Supply Board:	www.esb.ie
Embark Initiative:	www.embark.ie
Enterprise Ireland:	www.enterprise-ireland.com
Environmental Information Service:	www.enfo.ie
Equality Authority:	www.equality.ie
European Central Bank:	www.ecb.int
European Commission:	www.europa.eu.int
– in Ireland:	http://ec.europa.eu/Ireland/
EU Common Foreign and Security Policy:	www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/cfsp
European Ombudsman:	www.ombudsman.europa.eu
European Parliament:	www.europarl.ie
– in Ireland:	www.euriparl.ie

F

Fáilte Ireland:	www.failteireland.ie
Fianna Fáil:	www.fiannafail.ie
Fine Gael:	www.finegael.ie
Foinse:	www.foinse.ie
Food Safety Authority of Ireland:	www.fsai.ie
Football Association of Ireland:	www.fai.ie
Foras Áiseanna Saothair:	www.fas.ie

INDEX OF USEFUL WEBSITES

Forfás:	www.forfas.ie
Further Education and Training Awards Council:	www.fetac.ie

G

Gaelic Athletic Association:	www.gaa.ie
Garda Síochána (Irish Police):	www.garda.ie
Golfing Union of Ireland:	www.gui.ie
Government of Ireland:	www.irlgov.ie
Green Party:	www.greenparty.ie

H

Health & Safety Authority:	www.hsa.ie
Health Insurance Authority:	www.hia.ie
Health Research Board:	www.hrb.ie
Heritage Council of Ireland:	www.heritageireland.ie
Higher Education and Training Council:	www.hetac.ie
Horse Racing Ireland:	www.hri.ie
Housing Finance Agency:	www.hfa.ie

I

Iarnród Éireann:	www.irishrail.ie
IDA Ireland:	www.idaireland.ie
Ireland Travel:	www.ireland.travel.ie
Irish Aviation Authority:	www.iaa.ie
Irish Blood Transfusion Service:	www.ibts.ie
Irish Business and Employers Confederation:	www.ibec.ie
Irish Congress of Trade Unions:	www.ictu.ie
Irish Courts Service:	www.courts.ie
Irish Defence Forces:	www.military.ie
Irish Examiner:	www.irishexaminer.ie
Irish Ferries:	www.irishferries.ie

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Irish Greyhound Board:	www.igb.ie
Irish Independent:	www.unison.ie
Irish Museum of Modern Art:	www.modernart.ie
Irish National Stud Company Limited:	www.irish-national-stud.ie
Irish Research Council for the Humanities & Social Studies:	www.irchss.ie
Irish Rugby Football Union:	www.irishrugby.ie
Irish Sports Council:	www.irishsportsCouncil.ie
Irish Times:	www.ireland.com
Irish Water Safety:	www.iws.ie
ITÉ:	www.ite.ie

J

K

L

Labour:	www.labour.ie
Labour Relations Commission:	www.lrc.ie
Law Reform Commission:	www.lawreform.ie

M

Marine Institute:	www.marine.ie
Met Éireann:	www.met.ie

N

National Archives:	www.nationalarchives.ie
National Building Agency:	www.nationalbuildingagency.com
National Cancer Registry Board:	www.ncri.ie
National Centre for Partnership and Performance:	www.ncpp.ie
National Concert Hall:	www.nch.ie

INDEX OF USEFUL WEBSITES

National Council on Ageing and Older People:	www.ncaop.ie
National Crime Council:	www.crimecouncil.ie
National Development Plan:	www.ndp.ie
National Disability Authority:	www.nda.ie
National Economic and Social Council:	www.nesc.ie
National Economic and Social Forum:	www.nesf.ie
National Gallery of Ireland:	www.nationalgallery.ie
National Library of Ireland:	www.nli.ie
National Lottery:	www.lotto.ie
National Microelectronics Applications Centre:	www.mac.ie
National Museum of Ireland:	www.museum.ie
National Qualifications Authority of Ireland:	www.nqai.ie
National Roads Authority:	www.nra.ie
National Social Work Qualifications Board:	www.nswqb.ie
National Standards Authority of Ireland:	www.nsai.ie
National Treasury Management Agency:	www.ntma.ie

●

Office of Civil Service & Local Appointments Commissioner:	www.publicjobs.ie
Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General:	www.audgen.gov.ie
Office of the Data Protection Commissioner:	www.dataprivacy.ie
Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement:	www.odce.ie
Office of the Information Commissioner:	www.oic.gov.ie
Office of the Ombudsman:	www.ombudsman.ie
Office of Public Works:	www.opw.ie
Office of the Revenue Commissioners:	www.revenue.ie
Office of Tobacco Control:	www.otc.ie
Olympic Council of Ireland	www.olympicsport.ie
Ordnance Survey Ireland:	www.osi.ie

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P

Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland:	www.pharmaceuticalsociety.ie
An Post:	www.anpost.ie
The Postgraduate Medical and Dental Board:	www.pgmdb.ie
Progressive Democrats:	www.progressivedemocrats.ie

Q

R

Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland:	www.rpii.ie
Radio One	www.ret.ie/radio1
Radio Teilifís Éireann:	www.rte.ie
Railway Procurement Agency:	www.luas.ie
Referendum Commission:	www.refcom.ie
Reach Unit:	www.reach.ie
Ryanair:	www.ryanair.com

S

Science Foundation Ireland:	www.sfi.ie
SDS:	www.sds.ie
Shannon Free Airport Development:	www.shannondev.ie
Sinn Féin:	www.sinnfein.ie
Special Olympics Ireland	www.specialolympics.ie
Standards in Public Office Commission:	www.sipo.ie
Sunday Business Post:	www.thepost.ie
Sunday Independent:	www.unison.ie
Sunday Times:	www.sunday-times.co.uk
The Sunday Tribune:	www.tribune.ie
Sustainable Energy Ireland:	www.sei.ie
St Patricks Day Festival	www.stpatricksday.ie

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Teagasc:	www.teagasc.ie
Temple Bar Properties Limited:	www.templebar.ie
TG4:	www.tg4.ie
The Abbey Theatre:	www.abbeytheatre.ie
Today FM:	www.todayfm.com
Tourism Ireland:	www.tourismireland.com
TV3:	www.tv3.ie
2 FM:	www.2fm.ie

U

Údaras na Gaeltachta:	www.udas.ie
United Nations:	www.un.org

V

Veterinary Council:	www.vci.ie
Visit Dublin:	www.visitdublin.ie

W

Western Development Commission:	www.wdc.ie
The Worker's Party:	www.workers-party.org

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