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# Republic of Ireland

## Absolventská práce

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# 1. Ireland

- Ireland is an island country in north-western Europe. The modern sovereign state occupies about five-sixths of the island of Ireland, which was partitioned on 3 May 1921. It is a parliamentary democracy and a republic. It is bordered by Northern Ireland to the north east, the Irish Sea to the east, St. George's Channel to the south-east, the Celtic Sea to the south and by the Atlantic Ocean to the west and north. The name of the state is "Ireland", while the description the *Republic of Ireland* is sometimes used when there is a need to differentiate the state from the island.
- On 29 December 1937 Ireland became the successor-state to the Irish Free State, itself established on 6 December 1922. In 1949, Ireland became a republic and left the British Commonwealth. It had already ceased to participate in that organisation.
- Ireland was one of the poorest countries in Western Europe and had high emigration but in contrast to many other states in the period remained financially solvent as a result of low government expenditure. The protectionist economy was opened in the late 1950s and Ireland joined the European Community (now the European Union) in 1973. An economic crisis led Ireland to start large-scale economic reforms in the late 1980s. Ireland reduced taxation and regulation dramatically compared to other EU countries.
- Ireland is ranked as the 32nd economic power in the world, and despite the reduced economic growth in 2008, Ireland today has the sixth highest gross domestic product per capita and the eighth highest per capita considering purchasing power parity, and has the fifth highest Human Development Index rank in the world. The country also boasts the highest quality of life in the world, ranking first in the Economist Intelligence Unit's Quality-of-life index. Ireland was ranked sixth on the Global Peace Index. Ireland also has high rankings for its education system, political freedom and civil rights, press freedom and



## 2. History

- Ireland is the successor-state to the Dominion called the Irish Free State. That Dominion came into being when all of the island of Ireland seceded from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland on 6 December 1922. However, the following day the Parliament of Northern Ireland exercised its right under the Anglo-Irish Treaty to opt back into the United Kingdom. This action followed four attempts to introduce devolved autonomous government over the whole island of Ireland (in 1886, 1893, 1914 and 1920) and the Partition of Ireland. The Irish Free State was abolished when Ireland was formally established on 29 December 1937, the day the Constitution of Ireland came into force.
- Irish independence from Britain in 1922 was preceded by the War of Independence and the Easter Rising of 1916, when Irish volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army took over sites in Dublin and Galway under terms expressed in the *Proclamation of the Irish Republic*. The seven signatories of this proclamation, Patrick Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh, Thomas Clarke, Sean MacDiarmada, Joseph Plunkett, Eamonn Ceannt and James Connolly, were executed, along with nine others, and thousands were interned precipitating the Irish War of Independence.

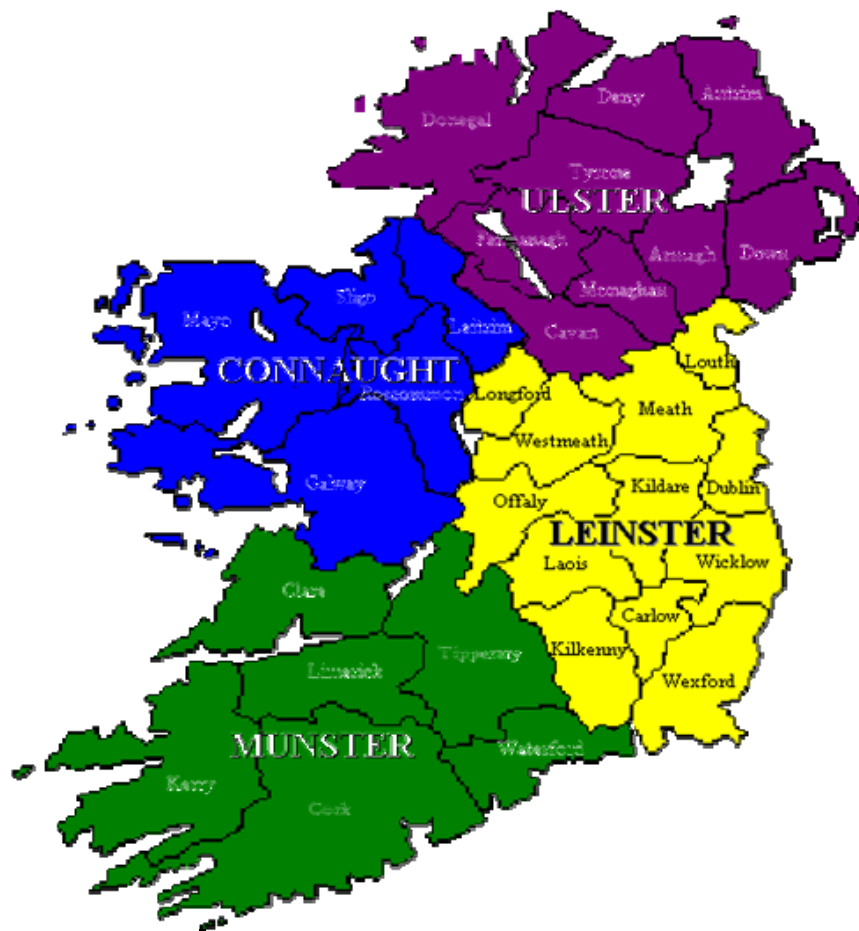
### 3. Politics

- Ireland is a republic, with a parliamentary system of government. The President of Ireland, who serves as head of state, is elected for a seven-year term and can be re-elected only once. The president is largely a figurehead but can still carry out certain constitutional powers and functions, aided by the Council of State, an advisory body. The *Taoiseach* (prime minister), is appointed by the president on the nomination of parliament. Most Taoisigh have been the leader of the political party which wins the most seats in the national elections. It has become normal for coalitions to form a government, and there has not been a single-party government since 1989.
- The bicameral parliament, the *Oireachtas*, consists of the President of Ireland, a Senate, *Seanad Éireann*, being the upper House, and a House of Representatives, *Dáil Éireann*, being the lower House. The *Seanad* is composed of sixty members; eleven nominated by the *Taoiseach*, six elected by two universities, and 43 elected by public representatives from panels of candidates established on a vocational basis. The *Dáil* has 166 members, *Teachtaí Dála*, elected to represent multi-seat constituencies under the system of proportional representation by means of the Single Transferable Vote. Under the constitution, parliamentary elections must be held at least every seven years, though a lower limit may be set by statute law. The current statutory maximum term is five years.
- The Government is constitutionally limited to fifteen members. No more than two members of the Government can be selected from the *Seanad*, and the *Taoiseach*, *Tánaiste* (deputy prime minister) and Minister for Finance *must* be members of the *Dáil*. The current government consists of a coalition of three parties; Fianna Fáil under *Taoiseach* Brian Cowen, the Green Party under leader John Gormley and the Progressive Democrats under Senator Ciarán Cannon. The last general election to the *Dáil* took place on 24 May 2007, after it was called by the *Taoiseach* on 29 April.

- The main opposition in the current Dáil consists of Fine Gael under Enda Kenny, the Labour Party under Eamon Gilmore and Sinn Féin. A number of independent deputies also sit in Dáil Éireann though less in number than before the 2007 election
  
- Ireland joined the European Union in 1973 but has chosen to remain outside the Schengen Area. Citizens of the UK can freely enter Ireland without a passport thanks to the Common Travel Area, but some form of identification is required at airports and seaports. Ireland has voted against a number of European treaties. On 12 June 2008, Ireland voted in a referendum which rejected the Lisbon treaty. This has caused much controversy within the EU and may affect the future of the Union.

## 4. Counties

- The state of Ireland consists of twenty-six traditional counties which are still used in cultural and sporting contexts, and for postal purposes. These are, however, no longer always coterminous with administrative divisions. Several traditional counties have been restructured into new administrative divisions. County Dublin was divided into three separate administrative counties in the 1990s and County Tipperary was divided into two in the 1890s. This gives a present-day total of twenty-nine administrative counties and five cities. The five cities — Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, and Waterford — are administered separately from the remainder of their respective counties. Five boroughs — Clonmel, Drogheda, Kilkenny, Sligo and Wexford — have a level of autonomy within the county. While Kilkenny is a borough, it has retained the legal right to be referred to as a city.
- Dáil constituencies are required by statute to follow county boundaries, as far as possible. Hence counties with greater populations have multiple constituencies (e.g. Limerick East/West) and some constituencies consist of more than one county (e.g. Sligo-North Leitrim), but by and large, the actual county boundaries are not crossed.
- The counties are grouped together into regions for statistical purposes.





## **5. Agriculture**

- Almost 81% of the total area of Ireland is devoted to pasture and cropland. The agricultural enterprise producing the most income is animal husbandry. In the late 1980s livestock included some 5.6 million cattle, 4.3 million sheep, 960,000 hogs, and 55,000 horses. Poultry production is also important. The principal field crops are wheat, barley, oats, and potatoes. Among other important crops are hay, turnips, and sugar beets. The best farmlands are found in the east and southeast.

### **5.1. Forestry and Fishing**

- The government of Ireland has undertaken extensive schemes of reforestation in an effort to reduce the country's dependence on timber imports and to provide raw material for new paper mills and related industries. In the late 1980s forestland occupied nearly 5% of Ireland's total area; the annual output of roundwood was 1.2 million cu m (42.3 million cu ft).

The fishing industry, which has traditionally been underdeveloped, is expanding; the annual catch in the late 1980s was some 247,400 metric tons. Deep-sea catches include herring, cod, mackerel, whiting, and plaice. Crustaceans, particularly lobsters, crawfish, and prawns, and such mollusks as oysters and periwinkles, are plentiful in coastal waters and form the bulk of the country's seafood exports. The inland rivers and lakes provide excellent fishing for salmon, trout, eel, and several varieties of coarse fish.

## **5. Culture**

### **5.1. Literature**

- James Joyce published his most famous work *Ulysses*, an interpretation of the Odyssey set in Dublin, in 1922. Edith Somerville continued writing after the death of her partner Martin Ross in 1915. Dublin's Annie M.P. Smithson was one of several authors catering for fans of romantic fiction in the 1920s and 1930s. After the war popular novels were published by, among others, Brian O'Nolan, who published as Flann O'Brien, Elizabeth Bowen, Kate O'Brien. In the last few decades of the 20th century Edna O'Brien, John McGahern, Maeve Binchy, Joseph O'Connor, Roddy Doyle, Colm Tóibín and John Banville came to the fore as novelists.
- Patricia Lynch (1898–1972) was a prolific children's author, while recently Eoin Colfer has been particularly successful in this genre.
- In the genre of the short story, a form favoured by Irish writers, Seán Ó Faoláin, Frank O'Connor and William Trevor are prominent.
- Poets include W.B. Yeats, Patrick Kavanagh, Seamus Heaney (Nobel Literature laureate), Thomas McCarthy and Dermot Bolger.
- Prominent writers in the Irish language are Pádraic Ó Conaire, Máirtín Ó Cadhain, Séamus Ó Grianna and Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill.

### **5.2. Music**

- Irish harpers were known throughout Europe as early as the 12th century. The most celebrated of these was the blind harper Torlogh O'Carolan, or Carolan (1670-1738), who composed about 200 songs on varied themes, many of which were published in Dublin in 1720. About the same time, an annual folk festival called the feis was instituted, devoted to the preservation and encouragement of harping. Irish folk music ranges from lullabies to drinking songs, and many variations and nuances of tempo, rhythm, and tonality are used. At the Belfast Harpers' Festival in 1792, Edward Bunting (1773-1843) made a collection of traditional Irish songs and melodies, which he published in 1796. Thomas Moore, the great Irish poet, made extensive use of Bunting's work in his well-known Irish Melodies, first published in 1807. Classical forms of music were not widely known in Ireland until the 18th century. Pianist John Field was the first Irish composer to win international renown, with his nocturnes. Michael William Balfe (1808-70) is well known for his opera *The Bohemian Girl*. Among the most prominent of Irish performing artists was the concert and operatic tenor John McCormack.

- Ireland is known for its traditional music and song, in origin going back hundreds of years but still played throughout the country. Among the best-known modern performers are groups such as The Chieftains, Clannad and Altan, singers such as Christy Moore, ensembles such as Anúna and Celtic Woman and cross-over artists such as singers Enya and Sinéad O'Connor. Built upon this tradition is the dance company Riverdance.
- Ireland has produced internationally influential artists in other musical genres such as rock, pop, jazz and blues including The Pogues, U2, Westlife, Chris de Burgh, Thin Lizzy, The Corrs, The Cranberries, Blues guitarist Rory Gallagher and Academy Award winner Glen Hansard of The Frames.
- There are a number of classical music ensembles around the country, such as the RTÉ Performing Groups, and opera lovers are catered for with the annual Wexford Opera Festival.

### **5.3. Cultural Institutions**

- The most important Irish libraries and museums are in Dublin. The National Library of Ireland, with more than 500,000 volumes, is the largest public library in the country. [Trinity College Library](#), founded in 1601, contains about 2.8 million volumes, including the Book of Kells. Together with exhibits in the fields of art, industry, and natural history, and representative collections of Irish silver, glass, textiles and lace, the National Museum houses outstanding specimens of the remarkable metal craftsmanship of the early Christian period in Ireland, including the Tara Brooch, the Ardagh Chalice, and the Moylough Bell Shrine (all dating from the 8th century), as well as the Lismore Crozier and the Cross of Cong (both 12th century). The National Gallery in Dublin has an admirable collection of paintings of all schools. Most cities have public libraries and small museums. Interest in the theatre is strong in Ireland. The famed Abbey Theatre and the Gale Theatre, both in Dublin, receive government grants. The Arts Council, a body appointed by the prime minister, gives grants to arts organisations and publishers; the Gael-Linn promotes the Irish language and culture.

### **5.4. Art**

- From the 5th to the 9th century the Irish monasteries produced artworks of world renown, primarily in the form of illuminated manuscripts. The greatest such work is the Book of Kells, which has some of the most beautiful calligraphy of the Middle Ages (see Celts: Art). Native art seems to have disappeared during the period of English domination, but after the 17th century a number of Irish painters and sculptors achieved fame. The Irish painters George Barret (1732-84), James Barry (1741-1806), and Nathaniel Hone (1718-84) were cofounders, with Sir Joshua Reynolds, of the Royal Academy in 1768. James Arthur O'Connor (1791-1812) was a noted landscape artist of his period, and Daniel Maclise (1806-70) painted the magnificent frescoes in the Royal Gallery of the House of Lords. Notable among Irish painters of the 19th century were Nathaniel Hone, Jr. (1831-1917), and Walter F. Osborne (1859-1903). More recently, the expressionist painter Jack B. Yeats (1871-1957), the cubist painter Mainie Jellett (1897-1944), and the stained-glass artist Evie Hone (1894-1955) have achieved widespread recognition and acclaim for their work.

## **6. Sports**

### **6.1. Sports - Gaelic Football**

- Gaelic Football, is a type of football played principally in Ireland, where it originated and where it became popular in the 16th century. At that time a team consisted of all the able-bodied men of a town or parish; the number of players on each team ranged from 25 to 100. Frequently the game started at a point midway between two towns or parishes and ended when one team had driven the ball across a boundary line into its opponent's town or parish. The rules of the modern game were promulgated in 1884 by the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA); that body still controls and regulates the sport.
- Fifteen players constitute a team in Gaelic football. The players may kick, punt, or punch the ball; or they may "hop" or dribble it, that is, keep bouncing it while advancing. Throwing or carrying the ball is not allowed. At each end of the field is a goal consisting of two vertical posts and a horizontal crossbar; behind the goal, under the crossbar, is a net. Kicking or punching the ball over the crossbar counts one point; punching or kicking it into the net counts three points. The game is popular in Ireland today and is also played in large cities in Canada and the United States, principally in New York City, which has a club that competes in Ireland's National League.

### **6.1. Sports – Curling**

- Hurling, traditional Irish field sport in which a ball, called a sliothar, is caught on a hurley, or stick, and carried or hurled to the goal. Irish mythology has tales of the warrior Cuchulainn and other legendary heroes who were expert hurlers. The rules of play were standardized in 1884 when the Gaelic Athletic Association was founded. Today the game is almost entirely restricted to the Republic of Ireland, where the All-Ireland championship competition has been held since 1887.
- Regulation hurling is played by two 15-member teams on a field measuring 82 m (90 yd) in width and 137 m (150 yd) in length. The hurley is a narrow-shafted stick about 1 m (3.5 ft) long, ending in a curved blade about 8 cm (3 in) wide. The slitter has a cork center and a leather cover; it is between 23 and 25 cm (9 and 10 in) in circumference, and weighs between 100 and 130 g (3.5 to 4.5 oz). The goals at each end of the field are formed by two posts, which are usually 6 m (21 ft) high, set 6 m (21 ft) apart, and connected 2 m (8 ft) above the ground by a crossbar. A net extending back of the goal is attached to the crossbar and lower goal posts.
- The object of hurling is to catch the slitter on the blade of the hurley, carry it, and then hurl it into the goal. The slitter may be picked off the ground only with the hurley; the player may pick the slitter off the hurley with his hand, provided he does not throw it or run with it. Three points are scored when the slitter is hurled into the net and one point when the slitter is hurled over the crossbar between the goal posts.
- Although hurling, the fastest of all team sports, is a rough game, serious injuries are rare.