IRELAND (Eire)

The Republic of Ireland is a country in Western Europe, located on an island in the North Atlantic Ocean and sharing a land border only with Northern Ireland, which occupies one-sixth of the island of Ireland but is part of the UK. The modern Irish state originated in 1921, when 26 of Ireland’s counties gained independence from the UK, establishing the contemporary state of Ireland. Rooted in unresolved issues of this split with the six northern counties that stayed part of the UK, Ireland and Northern Ireland engaged in decades of violent conflict. In 1998, it was resolved through the Good Friday Agreement.

Ireland is a member of the European Union and the eurozone. Its government operates under a parliamentary republic and is currently led by President Michael D. Higgins of the Labor Party and the appointed prime minister, Enda Kenny.

QUICK FACTS
Area: 70,273 sq. km (slightly larger than West Virginia)
Capital: Dublin (506,211)
Languages: English, Irish (Gaelic)
GDP Per Capita: $69,400
Head of State: President Michael D. Higgins
Head of Government: Prime Minister Enda Kenny

EDUCATION
Education is compulsory for children in Ireland from ages 6-16, or until three years of second-level education are completed. The education system consist of primary-, second-, and third-level education as well as higher education. As of 2013, Ireland spends 5.3% of its GDP on education.

RELIGION
Ireland is a predominantly Roman Catholic country, with 84.7% identifying as such. Moreover, 2.7% belong to the Church of Ireland, another 2.7% to other Christian denominations, 1.1% identify as Muslim, 3.2% as other or unspecified, and 5.7% as not religiously affiliated. Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the Irish constitution and the state is further prohibited from endorsing any particular religion. In the conflict between Ireland and Northern Ireland, religion played an important factor as the predominantly Catholic Ireland clashed with the mainly Protestant Northern Ireland.

ETHNICITY & DEMOGRAPHICS
The biggest ethnic group in Ireland, as of 2011, are the Irish with 84.5%, followed by other whites with 9.8%, Asians with 1.9%, blacks with 1.4%, mixed and other with 0.9%, and unspecified with 1.6%.
Ireland’s birth rate outweighs its death rate by more than twice the amount, a trend that has been going on for the last 50 years. This has made Ireland demographically one of the youngest populations in the European Union. Additionally, it has a positive net migration rate, leading to a population growth rate of 1.2% in 2016.
Ireland is a small, modern, trade-dependent economy. After the global financial crisis of 2008 and the subsequent collapse of its domestic property market and construction industry, economic activity dropped sharply in Ireland. The economy is recovering today, fueled by large and growing foreign direct investment and loan packages from the EU and the IMF. Ireland’s loose tax residency requirements made it a common destination for international firms seeking to avoid taxation, such as Facebook, Google, PayPal, and Intel. Amid growing international pressure, the Irish government has promised to close some loopholes in its tax laws to reduce this trend.

In 1973, Ireland joined the European Union and in 1999, it became one of the initial members of the eurozone, introducing the euro as its currency. However, it is not part of the border-free Schengen area. Eleven of the seats in the European Parliament are occupied by Ireland, and it has held the revolving presidency of the Council of the EU seven times between 1975 and 2013.

IRISH IN THE USA
At the latest during the 1845 Potato Blight, but even as early as 1820, a magnitude of Irish people left their homeland for the United States. Between 1820 and 1930, an estimated 4.5 million Irish arrived in the US. Today, roughly 33.3 million people identify as Irish Americans. The most of them reside in the Northeast, with Boston being a hot spot for people of Irish heritage.

IRISH (GAEIC) WORDS
Hi .................................................. Haigh
Bye .................................................. Slán
Good morning ..................... Maidin mhaith
Yes ..............................................................yes
No .............................................................. no
Please ...................................... Le do thoil
Thank you ......................... go raibh maith agat
How are you? ...................... Conas tá tú?
I do not understand ............ Ní féidir liom a thuiscint
I understand .......................... Tuigim
What is your name?........... Cad is ainm duit?
My name is .............................. Is ainm dom…
Where are you from? .......... Ait a bhfuil tú as?
Do you speak English?......... an bhfuil Béarla agat?

USEFUL LINKS
http://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries/ireland_en
http://www.ireland.ie/en