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U.S. Country Commercial Guides

IRELAND

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U.S. Department of Commerce | International Trade Administration

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Doing Business in Ireland

Market Overview

The United States and Ireland enjoy a close cultural affinity and longstanding political, economic, and commercial relations. The strong U.S.-Ireland commercial (trade and investment) relationship, worth $ 732.3 billion in 2019, is significant by international standards and is particularly impressive relative to the country's population of almost five million people.

With a GDP of $389 billion in 2019, Ireland is one of the most open, FDI and export-driven economies in the world. On the back of a recovering economy, Ireland remains a wealthy country and a net exporting nation with a per capita GDP in 2019 of $78,984. Second to managing the 2020 public health pandemic, economic recovery, job retention and job creation are priorities for the Irish government. The unemployment rate before the pandemic had reached a record low of 4.8 percent in February 2020, and subsequently was inflated by pandemic-related unemployment, reaching 28.2 percent in March 2020. The underlying true unemployment rate remains at 5 percent as of August 2020.

Buoyed by a revitalized domestic economy and a strong export sector, Ireland's GDP increased by 5.5 percent in 2019, reinforcing its position as one of the best performing economies in the EU for the past six years. Ireland's economy had been expected to grow again in 2020, but with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and economic lockdown from March to June, it is now forecast to contract by at least 7.4 percent in 2020.

Future economic growth is further complicated by the growing shadow of the United Kingdom's full exit from the EU on December 31, 2020, with Ireland being the country most impacted by its departure. The full impact on Ireland's economy will depend on any deal negotiated by the EU and UK on trade terms into the future. Increasing uncertainty remains the biggest challenge for both Irish business and U.S. companies operating in Ireland.

In 2019, U.S. exports of goods to Ireland exceeded $9 billion and included chemicals and pharmaceuticals, computers and electronic products, aircraft and transportation equipment, power generation technology, medical devices, electrical equipment and travel and tourism. The statistics for services from 2019 record the value of US service exports to Ireland at $57.5 billion.

The over-sized U.S.-Ireland investment relationship is particularly noteworthy. The total stock of U.S. investment in Ireland was $354.9 billion in 2019. There are over 700 U.S. firms in Ireland which currently employ 160,000 people representing 20 percent of total employment in the country.

Conversely, in 2019, Ireland's total investment stock in the U.S. was valued at $225.5 billion, maintaining its ranking of the 9th largest source of FDI into the U.S. Over 550 Irish firms employ more than 110,000 people across all 50 states, representing investment in the agri-food/nutrition, construction, healthcare, ICT and professional and engineering services sectors.

U.S. Embassy Dublin works closely with local partners including the American Chamber of Commerce, Irish Exporters Association, Irish Business & Employers Confederation, Enterprise Ireland and other Irish government and national agencies together with local business associations to advance the U.S.-Irish economic relationship and forge joint prosperity on both sides of the Atlantic.

Top reasons why U.S. companies should consider exporting to Ireland:

U.S. companies can take advantage of the fact that Ireland is the only European market that is a member of the EU, a member of the Eurozone, and English speaking. In addition to the advantage of a common language, access to educated and well-connected business partners is relatively easy in a pro-business environment, and any engagement with the legal system is in English. Ireland was ranked in the top ten of countries in the world across competitiveness, economic performance and business efficiency by the IMD.

Ireland is an excellent test market for American SMEs looking to export for the first time into Europe. Ireland's strategic geographical location also positions the country as a gateway to Europe with access to a wider market of 742 million people.

Ireland has, for the past number of years, been the fastest growing economy in Europe. Notwithstanding the public health pandemic crisis and its global economic effect, Ireland's underlying economy has the resilience to rebound which in time will fuel increased demand for U.S. products and services. However, growth will be tempered if a final EU – UK Brexit trade deal cannot be brokered.

Ireland's high receptiveness for U.S. products and services creates a fertile market for American brands across sectors. U.S. goods and technologies are perceived to be of high quality and U.S. companies receive positive support from local partners, helping to further export goals for Ireland and the European marketplace.

Market Challenges

In June 2016, the United Kingdom voted to leave the EU. Whatever shape a new EU-UK trading relationship takes, Ireland is expected to be the country most impacted by 'Brexit' as the UK is its largest trading partner in Europe and shares a land border with Northern Ireland. Any negative effects on the Irish economy are likely to have an adverse impact on the demand for U.S. products and services. Irish companies are being strongly encouraged to expand their export strategies to reach a more diverse range of markets. Additional government supports are being put in place for SMEs to expand their export strategies. Irish SMEs who have been greatly impacted by the public health pandemic are also receiving packages of assistance from the government.

Against the backdrop of a proposed common consolidated corporate tax base (CCCTB) in the EU and a potential digital sales tax, Ireland remains steadfast with its commitment to a 12.5 percent corporate tax rate and therefore an attractive investment destination for international companies with a global reach. Any threat to Ireland's ability to set its own tax rate could negatively affect its ability to continue to attract large flows of FDI. This in turn would have a knock-on effect on economic growth and the future demand for products and services.

Project Ireland 2040 outlines the Irish government's plan to provide for regional development and to improve the State's infrastructure. The plan is based on the premise that one million extra people will be living in Ireland in 25 years' time. While there are calls from industry groups for an increase in capital spending, suppliers continue to face significant price pressures at current levels when doing business with the public sector. Strong competition from Irish and European suppliers dictates that U.S. exporters must offer a combination of innovative and high-quality products at competitive prices.

Market Opportunities

- The short-term outlook for the Irish economy is a little uncertain given the severity of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on government finances and higher than expected unemployment levels. Employment is expected to recover in the medium to long term however, and given time, the pandemic-driven unemployment rate will fall.
- As a member of the Eurozone, Ireland is considered by many U.S. companies to be a natural location for distribution throughout the EU and the true gateway for access to 742 million consumers. Ireland is also a logical springboard for sales and support beyond Europe with several U.S. multinationals designating their Irish operations as their EMEA headquarters.
- Opportunities exist for innovative U.S. companies to enter into collaborative agreements with Irish companies particularly across Cybersecurity, ICT/Software, Digital Services, IOT/AI, Smart/Safer Cities, Smart Energy/Renewables/Storage; Healthcare/Medical Devices, Digital Health Solutions and Safety/Security Technologies.

- Strong household internet access (91%) and smartphone usage (90%) are driving Irish online retailing activity. Mobile commerce is becoming especially strong with consumers particularly willing to make purchases via their smartphones. The public restrictions put in place to mitigate the pandemic has resulted in increased online retailing. Many companies have pivoted to online sales and increased digitalization is creating new opportunities for ICT software, IOT and Digital and Automation Solutions.

Market Entry Strategy

- As a small, open economy with a strong reliance on international trade, the introduction of products and services into the Irish market is relatively uncomplicated. Standard international marketing and distribution practices are widely applied in the Irish business community.
- American companies can benefit from the ease of doing business, a common language and flexible business relationships as well as a strong rule of law. U.S. business practices are well-known and understood in Ireland. The adoption of digitalization and e-commerce is strong and increasing across the public (government) and private (business) sectors of the economy.
- U.S. companies are advised to appoint an experienced local partner or representative to service the Irish market. U.S. companies' business interests in Europe are also well served by Irish partners, who possess knowledge of EU directives, regulations, and distribution channels, allowing them to expand their business quickly and efficiently throughout the broader EU marketplace.
- U.S. companies are increasingly seeking strategic Irish partners for contract manufacturing, joint venture, technology transfer, licensing, logistics, and value-added service agreements for the Irish and European marketplace. U.S. companies should take the time to visit Ireland frequently to develop long-term relationships with local Irish business partners. During the period of the public health pandemic, firms should utilize video conferencing solutions to remain connected with their Irish partners.

Leading Sectors for U.S. Exports and Investment

Healthcare

This is a best prospect industry sector for this country.

Overview

Ireland has a dual healthcare system, consisting of both private and public healthcare options. The public healthcare system is regulated by the Irish government's Health Service Executive (HSE). Ireland's initial 2020 health budget was €17.4 billion. This represented a 6.3% increase of over €1 billion on 2019 levels. The onset of the public health pandemic quickly saw an additional €2 billion allocated to the healthcare budget. The government also negotiated a deal with the private hospital sector to lease the bed capacity at all 19 private hospitals for the 3-month period between April and June to ensure the country could respond to the emergency.

The public healthcare system comprises 10,952 in-patient beds and 2,290 daybeds distributed across the 48 public hospitals which are currently organized within seven Hospital Groups. Before the public health pandemic, these public hospitals were already working near full capacity with extensive waiting lists. Despite Ireland's 25% higher per capita spend on health than the OECD average, the number of beds per 1,000 population is considerably less than the OECD average. The smaller private hospital sector has an estimated bed capacity of 1,900 inpatient beds, 600-day beds as well as 47 Intensive Care Units and 54 High Dependency Unit beds across its 19 hospitals. This includes nearly 1,000 single bed inpatient rooms.

There are about 3,000 general practitioners (MDs) in Ireland, working in group practices, primary care centers, single practices and health centers around the country. The Irish healthcare system maintains a strong affinity with the U.S. as many of its doctors and consultant specialists are trained at leading U.S. healthcare facilities and strong relationships exist between American and Irish universities and hospitals.

In 2017, a parliamentary Committee on the Future of Healthcare published the *Sláintecare* Report which outlines a ten-year roadmap to deliver a complete reform of Ireland's healthcare system to include a universal single-tier health, universal fee GP care and social care system by 2028.

Leading Sub-Sectors

In June 2020, the newly formed Irish government committed to accelerating the implementation of Sláintecare and due to the public health pandemic, several reforms have been fast-tracked and others are being re-assessed including the establishment of six new regional health areas; enhancement of capacity-access particularly for bed and critical care; expansion of primary and community care through services available in the home (telemedicine and e-prescribing are key elements); increased capacity across all aspects of care through new infrastructure and equipment; investment in modern eHealth solutions and increased use of assistive technologies in line with Project Ireland 2040 and the eHealth strategy. Citing learnings from the public health pandemic, the HSE CEO has indicated that their big priority is the development of community-based healthcare to ease pressure on the public hospital system.

Sub-sectors for U.S. suppliers include:

- eHealth/Digital Health/ICT solutions
- Telehealth & Telemedicine
- Chronic disease management
- Palliative care
- Ambulance care
- General medicine
- Home & community-based care solutions and assisted-living products

- Diagnostic equipment, imaging and surgical systems
- Women's health services
- Mental health services

Opportunities

By 2040 the population of Ireland is expected to grow by over 1 million to 5.7 million people. Population health is forecast to have decreasing mortality rates and increasing life expectancies. This rapidly growing and ageing population will create an exponential demand for increased healthcare services with a focus on acute hospitals, primary care and geriatric services for older persons care.

Whilst Ireland's investment in Digital Health is lower than most other EU countries, funding has increased from €85m in 2019 to €95m in 2020 and is forecast to increase to €120m in 2021. The public health pandemic has highlighted the importance of developing and adopting digital solutions and the need for an acceleration in the digitalization process within the healthcare sector. Projects focused on an Electronic Health Record system for the new Children's Hospital, the National Share Care Record, e-prescribing, telehealth solutions, an Individual Health Identifier (IHI), efficient clinical systems and improved information architecture are being prioritized. The digital response to the pandemic, particularly for clinical management (rapid diagnosis and risk prediction), has been a significantly successful undertaking across the health services sector. Innovative digital health solutions in healthcare will continue to be required and are expected to be an essential part of the future Irish health landscape.

Additional capital investment projects and programs along with significant reform initiatives are planned for the health sector and are outlined in Ireland's *National Development Plan 2018-2027*. These include the construction of new hospitals and additional capacity to existing facilities in areas such as maternity, oncology, mental health, primary and residential care, nursing homes, acute care, rehabilitation and disability. The Irish government will announce a revised National Economic Plan in October 2020 as part of its efforts to reboot the Irish economy. U.S. Commercial Service Ireland will monitor this plan for new opportunities for American exporters and service providers across the Irish healthcare sector.

Opportunities exist for medical equipment that saves time and resources while also effecting cost savings in this price sensitive market. A new trend is emerging with increased demand for high quality American-made products to counteract cheaper less reliable imports from other nations. Ireland is also an advocate of preventative medicine focusing on breast, cervical, bowel and diabetic retina screening/checks and opportunities exist for a wide range of equipment across these healthcare disciplines.

All public sector contracting authorities advertise procurement opportunities and award notices on the eTenders Procurement website, the Irish Government's electronic tendering platform. Directions for use of this site are outlined at www.etenders.gov.ie . Interested U.S. suppliers should register as a Supplier Company especially as electronic tendering will be a European requirement in the next few years.

Web Resources

Department of Health - www.health.gov.ie

Health Service Executive (HSE) - www.hse.ie

eHealth Ireland – www.ehealthireland.ie

Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) - www.hpra.ie

Irish Medical & Surgical Trade Association - www.imsta.ie

Irish Medical Devices Association - www.irishmedtechassoc.ie

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Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

This is a best prospect industry sector for this country.

Overview

According to Technology Ireland, Ireland's $40 billion digital economy accounts for 13% of GDP. Over 1,000 digital companies operate in Ireland including major U.S. firms such as Apple, Cisco, Facebook, Google, HPE, IBM, Intel, Microsoft, Facebook and Twitter. There is also a very significant SME community of digital technology companies encompassing both international and indigenous firms. Prior to 2020, the Irish ICT market was in a strong growth phase with demand in the $4.8 billion market growing by over 5% annually. The EU's 2020 Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) ranks Ireland 6th out of the 27 EU Member States. Ireland is an active member of the EU Digital-Nine – a group of countries that seek to be front runners in the European Digital Single Market.

Leading Sub-Sectors

IT, Software and Computer and Cloud Services

The medium outlook for the Irish IT market remains positive. Digital transformation continues to be one of the core economic policy issues in Ireland. The government is implementing its digital government initiative across the public sector while also providing funding for SMEs to develop better online and eCommerce presence. While the public health pandemic has hindered previously anticipated strong growth in 2020, the digital sector is expected to play a significant role in driving Ireland's economic recovery. End user demand for cloud computing [encompassing Software-as-a-Service (SaaS), Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS), and Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS)] is expected to underpin future market demand. The rise in cloud adoption comes as Irish businesses are anticipating significant growth in data volumes. This growth in data has led to Irish enterprises spending $1.4 million annually on data storage, processing and handling in recent years.

There are 60 datacenters operating in Ireland with Hyperscale (Amazon, Facebook, Google, Microsoft), being the dominant datacenter type accounting for 77% of capacity. The colocation wholesale market has grown from almost zero to 13% in the past 3 years. Further datacentres are planned in both the hyperscale and colocation segments with Host in Ireland forecasting investment of over $7 billion in the next five years.

Annual expenditure in enterprise software is about €258 million and is driven by document and content management solutions, business intelligence and analytics, database, web servers, and enterprise portals. Expenditure on network storage software is around €62 million while the security software market is estimated at €124 million. Spending on software in the healthcare sector is circa €95 million.

IOT /Smart Cities

Demand for Internet-of-Things (IOT) technology and services in Ireland is increasing particularly around applications within the healthcare, energy, transport, public sector and manufacturing industries. Ireland's three principal cities – Dublin, Cork and Limerick – have led the emergence of IOT/smart city projects in recent years. To date, all smart city initiatives have been built on top of legacy infrastructure and many decades of social and economic programs, rather than creating new smart city districts. However, green-field initiatives are emerging in all three cities which have strong vision-oriented smart city strategies: Smart Dublin, Cork Smart Gateway and Digital Limerick. The All Ireland Smart Cities Forum is endeavouring to foster the development of similar strategies in other cities and regions of the country. The public health pandemic has provided increased momentum to smart city initiatives in 2020 as local government leaders seek to capitalize on the benefits of emerging digital technologies to provide a positive sustainable impact for their citizens. Leading U.S. ICT firms have played strong roles in the evolution of local smart cities projects. Irish interest in learning about new and emerging smart cities initiatives originating in the United States underscores opportunities for emerging U.S. SMEs going forward.

Opportunities

The Irish ICT market is open and highly competitive with many international suppliers offering new and innovative digital products and services. U.S. vendors have a strong competitive presence in the market. Irish distributors, systems integrators and value-added resellers (VARs) are continually seeking to identify and source the latest innovative digital products and services especially from the U.S. The market offers excellent opportunities for U.S. firms including SMEs with innovative and leading-edge digital technologies. Sector-specific opportunities exist across the ERP, Financial, Healthcare, Energy, and Telecom segments together with Cloud Computing, Data Analytics & Big Data and Smart Cities. End user segments encompass organizations ranging from SMEs to large corporations and the public sector.

Ireland's Industry 4.0 strategy launched in December 2019 sets out the key ambitions for helping the manufacturing sector embrace digital technologies while an updated national digital strategy and a new artificial intelligence strategy will be announced by late 2020. In addition, plans are underway across local government authorities to launch local digital strategies for municipal regions.

Regulatory arrangements for the ICT sector are largely driven by the European Commission's Digital Single Market (DSM) which is fostering initiatives on free flow of data; cybersecurity; e-Privacy; setting ICT standards; and intellectual property. U.S. suppliers need to be particularly cognizant of data privacy issues outlined in the Data Protection section of the Chapter on Selling U.S. Products and Services.

Web Resources

Technology Ireland: https://www.technology-ireland.ie

Host in Ireland: http://hostinireland.com

TechCentral: http://www.techcentral.ie

Silicon Republic: http://www.siliconrepublic.com

Public Procurement Portal (eTenders): http://www.etenders.gov.ie

For more information about Ireland's ICT and digital services sector, please contact:

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Energy – PowerGen & Smart Grids

This is a best prospect industry sector for this country.

Overview

The Irish electricity market has been fully liberalized since February 2005 in line with the European Union (EU) energy framework. The $2.6 billion Irish market for electrical power generation equipment is very receptive to U.S. technology. In the face of strong international competition, U.S. companies have achieved success in supplying technology, equipment, and systems to Irish power generation operators. Since 2011, ESB Networks has been undertaking a smart networks initiative around renewable energy integration in conjunction with the U.S.-based Electrical Power Research Institute (EPRI).

According to EirGrid's All-Island Generation Capacity Statement 2019-2028 fully dispatchable plant capacity in Ireland was 7,598 MW in 2019. Dispatchable capacity is forecast to decline in the near term with the decommissioning of several older generating stations that will fail to meet environmental targets on emissions related to the EU's Industrial Emissions Directive 2010/75/EU. Total wind generation capacity is over 4,100MW. There is presently over 1,000 MVA of demand capacity that is contracted to the 60 datacenters based in Ireland. The typical load drawn by these customers is approximately 50% of their contracted Maximum Input Capacity. This is expected to rise as these customers build out to their full potential. Demand from datacenters is forecast to account for 31% of all energy demand by 2027.

Leading Sub-Sectors

Sub-sectors offering good potential for U.S. suppliers of innovative and leading-edge solutions include:

- Communication and data management software
- Grid optimization and automation technologies
- Demand response and control systems
- Smart meters and advanced metering infrastructure
- Energy management for distributed generation and storage
- Cyber security software and services
- Consumer engagement platforms and services

Opportunities

Ireland's largest energy company, ESB, has ongoing investment plans for upgrading its power generation assets, transmission, and distribution networks through 2027. Planned network transmission projects by EirGrid (Ireland's TSO) together with investments in generation capacity by independent power producers will also offer potential market opportunities. As the Irish government's Climate Action Plan requires that 70% of electricity be generated from renewable sources by 2030, some 10GW of additional renewable generation will need to be developed over the next decade. This presents both logistical and technical challenges for the TSO. Ireland currently has only 65 percent of renewable power connected to the grid which, by 2030, must increase to 95 percent. At the same time, the TSO must ensure that the electricity system remains stable and supply secure. Both the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) have taken the lead in advancing key components of Ireland's smart grid strategy. They are being actively supported by the Irish energy community [companies, energy research centers and academia] as well as by Ireland's enterprise development agencies (IDA Ireland & Enterprise Ireland).

Web Resources

Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment (DCCAE): http://www.dccae.gov.ie

Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU): https://www.cru.ie

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI): http://www.seai.ie

Electricity Supply Board (ESB): http://www.esb.ie

Electric Ireland: https://www.electricireland.ie

ESB Networks: https://www.esbnetworks.ie/

EirGrid: http://www.eirgridgroup.com

Public Procurement Portal (eTenders): http://www.etenders.gov.ie

For more information about Ireland's powergen and smart grid sector, please contact:

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Cybersecurity

This is a best prospect industry sector for this country.

Overview

The $300 million Irish market for cybersecurity solutions and services is extremely vibrant and U.S. vendors have a strong presence. Reported economic crime and fraud in Ireland has increased significantly in recent years and cybercrime is considered the most disruptive economic crime facing the business community going forward. With its large $40 billion digital economy, Ireland is increasingly encountering cybersecurity threats that have led to a strong upsurge in spending on cyber security in both the public and private sectors. The strong growth in remote working during the public health pandemic has placed significant additional pressure on the security of corporate IT systems in Ireland especially since many remote workers have been utilizing personal devices while working remotely.

Following the successful September 2018 transposition of the EU's Network Information Services (NIS) Directive into Irish law, the Irish government published its National Cyber Security Strategy in December 2019. In addition, Ireland's CS-IRT (Cyber Security Incident Response Team) - the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) - has received increased funding in recent budgets that will facilitate the provision of suitable expertise for businesses and individuals, as well as rapid response to major incidents.

Leading Sub-Sectors

The main end user segments include large enterprises, public sector, small-to-medium enterprises (SMES) and the home consumer. Ireland's $14 billion digital economy comprises of 100,000 digital companies including major U.S. firms and a growing SME community. Ireland also has 60 datacenters with Hyperscale (Amazon, Facebook, Google, Microsoft), being the dominant datacenter type accounting for 77% of capacity. Further datacenters are planned in both the hyperscale and colocation segments. The life sciences, public healthcare and financial services sectors are also strong end-user sub-segments. The Government is implementing its digital transformation agenda to move more public services online, thereby increasing the need for the data of citizens to be protected. There is also heightened awareness around cybercrime among home consumers since the onset of the public health pandemic.

EU legislation around data privacy and cybersecurity is a key driving force within the sector. Both the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Network Information Services (NIS) Directive are driving spending on cybersecurity as companies, digital service providers, critical infrastructure providers and the public-sector seek to comply with these regulations. Companies that suffer data breaches and cyber incidents in the future will be liable for heavy penalties that could amount to as much as 4 percent of a company's global revenues.

Opportunities

The 2018 PwC Ireland Economic Crime Report revealed that almost 50% of Irish organizations suffered an economic crime or fraud since 2016. This growing threat of cyber-attacks is driving increased spending on security solutions. Opportunities exist to provide cybersecurity solutions and services to large corporations, SMEs and public-sector organizations. The most significant opportunities are to be found in organizations for which IT security is mission critical, e.g. major financial institutions, utilities and government departments. To date, U.S. cybersecurity firms have been playing a leading role in the Irish market and Irish distributors, systems integrators and value-added resellers (VARs) are continually seeking to identify and source the latest innovative cybersecurity solutions from the U.S.

Preparedness for cybercrime in Ireland is increasing with many companies performing cyber-attack vulnerability risk assessments. However, while extremely vigilant in the search for fraud, Irish organizations have been slow to invest in technologies related to fraud prevention, detection and authentication. Most economic crimes in Ireland are detected through corporate controls including fraud risk assessments, suspicious transaction reporting and corporate security. No frauds were detected via data analytic techniques.

Web Resources

Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment (DCCAE): https://dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Internet-Policy/Pages/default.aspx

National Cyber Security Center: https://www.ncsc.gov.ie/

PWC Ireland Economic Crime Report 2018 – https://www.pwc.ie/publications/2018/economic-crime-survey-2018.pdf

Network Information Services (NIS) Directive: https://dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Internet-Policy/cyber-security/network-and-information-systems-directive/Pages/default.aspx

TechCentral: http://www.techcentral.ie

Silicon Republic: http://www.siliconrepublic.com

Public Procurement Portal (eTenders): http://www.etenders.gov.ie

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Energy – Renewables

This is a best prospect industry sector for this country.

Overview

Ireland has made significant advances in the past decade to transition its electricity sector to low-carbon, renewable energy. Because Ireland imports approximately 90% of its primary energy requirements, renewable energy has been attracting substantial attention across the commercial and political spectrum. At present, some 4,100 MW of renewable generation have executed connection-offer contracts with EirGrid, (Ireland's National Grid), and ESB Networks under the grid connection program. Onshore wind is the principal renewable technology at present with the Irish Wind Energy Association reporting 250 wind farms in operation. Ireland's grid currently operates with 65% of renewable power. This is forecast to increase in the coming decade as Ireland endeavors to meet its new renewable target of 70% by 2030 and EirGrid's 5-year strategy (2020-2025) is shaped by climate change and the transition of the electricity sector to low-carbon, renewable energy.

Ireland's current energy policy is framed by the Climate Action Plan published in June 2019. This plan outlines the intention to: (1) deliver an 'early and complete' phase-out of coal- and peat-fired electricity generation; (2) increase electricity generated from renewable sources to 70% by 2030, (encompassing 3.5GW of offshore renewable energy, 1.5GW of grid-scale solar energy and 8.2GW increased onshore wind capacity); and (3) have 15% of electricity demand by renewable sources contracted under 'Corporate Power Purchase Agreements (CPPAs)'. This policy will be updated in late 2020 when the Irish government outlines plans to achieve its stated goals of an average 7% per annum reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions between 2021 and 2030 (equating to a 51% reduction over the decade), and to attaining net zero emissions by 2050.

Leading Sub-Sectors

Onshore/Offshore Wind

To date, onshore wind is the leading renewable technology deployed with the Irish Wind Energy Association reporting 250 wind farms in operation and accounting for about 4,100 MW of renewable generation. In July 2020, 19 onshore wind projects corresponding to 1,469.34 GWh of wind power generation secured provisional approval to sign contracts under Ireland's latest Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) program. Large energy users particularly in the energy-intensive datacenter sector are increasingly signing Corporate Power Purchase Agreements (CPPAs) with onside wind farms. To date, Hyperscale segment operators Amazon, Facebook, Google and Microsoft have finalized CPPAs.

Ireland currently has one operational offshore wind project - the 25.2-MW Arklow Bank Wind Park Phase 1, which is owned and operated by GE Energy. The project was co-developed in 2004 by Airtricity (now SSE Renewables) and GE Energy as a demonstrator project and remains the first and only operational offshore wind farm in Ireland. SSE Renewables has plans for a second phase of development at Arklow Bank involving a 520-MW offshore wind farm. Ireland is fast-tracking the development of its offshore wind sector in line with its 2019 Climate Action Plan. In May 2020, the government announced 'Relevant Projects' status for seven (7) offshore renewable energy projects. The offshore wind projects have been in varying stages of planning and development in recent years and being granted 'Relevant Projects' status will enable fast-tracking to construction and implementation.

Energy Storage

Activity around energy storage projects has increased significantly in recent years. Ireland's gas utility Ervia announced plans for an off-shore Carbon Capture and Storage project in Cork in late 2019. Ervia is partnering with Netherlands-based Gasunie and Norway's Equinor on the project which has received Project of Common Interest status from the European Commission. Proposals for the development of small-scale battery storage projects involving technologies from South Korea, Denmark, and Germany were announced during 2019. The nascent solar power generation (29MW capacity) also experienced activity with the entry of several Nordic players providing impetus to a sector that hopes to install 1.5GW by 2030. The €3mn AdD HyStor hybrid flywheel energy project is moving to the commercial development trial. Led by Irish company Schwungrad Energie, it is being developed in association with German companies Adaptive Balancing Power and Freqcon and the University of Sheffield (UK). In July 2020, 63 solar projects corresponding to 767.32 GWh of solar energy secured provisional approval to sign contracts under Ireland's new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) program.

Green Hydrogen

Ireland is the early stages of developing its green hydrogen sector in line with EU Green Hydrogen strategy announced in July 2020 as part of the EU's Green Deal program. The UCD Energy Institute has published a strategy paper on Ireland's need for a national hydrogen strategy. The U.S. Commercial Service Ireland will be monitoring the energy policy announcement by the Irish government later this year to identify opportunities across Ireland's emerging green hydrogen projects over the next decade.

Opportunities

Future opportunities in Ireland's renewables sector will be driven by the late 2020 climate policy announcement where the new government outlines the plans to achieve its stated goals of an average 7% per annum reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions between 2021 and 2030 (equating to a 51% reduction over the decade) and to attaining net zero emissions by 2050. Led by a minister from the Green Party, the policy will build upon the 2019 Climate Action Plan that outlined (1) phase-out of coal- and peat-fired electricity generation; (2) increased renewable electricity projects encompassing 3.5GW of offshore renewable energy, 1.5GW of grid-scale solar energy and 8.2GW increased onshore wind capacity; and (3) increased demand for renewable projects by way of Corporate Power Purchase Agreements (CPPAs). Offshore wind projects will emerge as major drivers in the next five years with 'floating wind' plans along Ireland's western coast representing key developmental opportunities. The IWEA has published a comprehensive analysis of Ireland's potential offshore wind energy supply chain that highlights measures needed to underpin the sector's planned development. The evolution of Ireland's green hydrogen sector should provide market potential. Finally, sustainable energy developments being fostered by Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland will also offer sales prospects going forward.

Web Resources

Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment (DCCAE): http://www.dccae.gov.ie

Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU): https://www.cru.ie

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI): http://www.seai.ie

Irish Wind Energy Association (IWEA): https://iwea.com/

EirGrid: http://www.eirgridgroup.com

Ervia: http://www.ervia.ie/

ESB Networks: https://www.esbnetworks.ie/

Gas Networks Ireland: https://www.gasnetworks.ie

MaREI, the SFI Research Centre for Energy, Climate and Marine: https://www.marei.ie/

UCD Energy Institute: https://energyinstitute.ucd.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/UCD-Energy-Institute-The-need-for-a-Hydrogen-Strategy-for-Ireland.pdf

Public Procurement Portal (eTenders): http://www.etenders.gov.ie

For more information about Ireland’s Renewables sector, please contact:

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Safety and Security

This is a best prospect industry sector for this country.

Overview

Industry sources record market demand for products and services in the Irish safety and security market at $0.6 billion. Demand is currently strongest in the public, commercial, and industrial segments with law enforcement and local operations of large multinational companies underpinning demand. It is a very competitive market with strong international competition. The market continues to benefit from the focus on security and counter terrorism at a global and regional EU level to guard against the increased threat of crime and the general demand for security products and services.

The threat from terrorism to Ireland is relatively low overall compared with European countries. While the threat to national infrastructure would be characterized at the lower end of the scale, the Irish government and its security agencies remain vigilant and strategies for counterterrorism, homeland security and critical infrastructure protection are in place. With its large digital economy, Ireland is increasingly facing cybersecurity threats. This has led to an upsurge in spending on cyber security – both public and private sector. The Government is also implementing its digital transformation agenda to move more services online.

Leading Sub-Sectors

Access Control and Identity Management

The presence of 1,000 multinational companies (MNCs) in Ireland including 700 U.S. firms with significant critical operational facilities across the country has driven demand for access control solutions. Most MNCs deploy solutions that are mandated at a corporate level. Local firms across manufacturing, agri-business, financial services and the public-sector are increasingly deploying access control solutions.

Screening and Detection

The need for increased security at Ireland's international airports and other high-profile national locations continues to drive the demand for better and more sophisticated screening solutions from which U.S. companies offering advanced technologies in these sub-sectors can benefit. Ireland's three main airports have recently started to upgrade their baggage handling systems to comply with the EU's new explosive detection requirements that come into effect from 2020. U.S. vendors have secured the contracts to provide the relevant technology for these upgrade projects.

Opportunities

The need to secure critical national infrastructure going forward will create opportunities for a range of products and services such as security screening, biometric, connectivity, crowd management, physical protection of assets, intelligent surveillance, and anti-drone systems. Products and technologies offering opportunities include security and building automation, access control, digital CCTV and surveillance systems, biometrics and internet security. Irish suppliers and end users are very receptive to U.S. technology and products however, innovative, leading-edge and competitively priced products are critical for market success.

Web Resources

Irish Security Industry Association: http://www.isia.ie

The Private Security Authority of Ireland: https://www.psa.gov.ie

ASIS International Ireland Chapter: https://www.asis.ie/

TechCentral: http://www.techcentral.ie

Silicon Republic: http://www.siliconrepublic.com

Public Procurement Portal (eTenders): http://www.etenders.gov.ie

Frost & Sullivan: https://ww2.frost.com/research/

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Agricultural Sector

This is a best prospect industry sector for this country.

Overview

Agricultural production is a key driver of the Irish economy. A major livestock producer, Ireland has very limited horticultural and grain production on account of its topography and climate. Ireland manufactures many derivatives and value-added products from its livestock base. However, much of its beef and dairy products are exported. Ireland imports around 80 percent of its animal feed, food and beverage needs. Besides receiving a considerable proportion of its goods from the UK, Ireland imports from EU countries such as Netherlands (beer, cut flowers), France (beer, wine), and Italy (wine, non-alcoholic beverages). Major third country trading partners are Chile (wine, apples), Argentina (wine, animal feed), and New Zealand (wine, bovine semen). Ireland is a key destination for animal feed ingredient imports from the United States. However, the United States is currently not a major direct supplier of food and beverage products. Ireland receives many U.S. products including wine, fresh and dried fruit, and confectionery via the UK. Import demand is forecast to decline by two percent in 2020, owing to trade impacts from the public health pandemic.

Agricultural Food, Feed, and Beverage Trade

	2017	2018	2019	2020 forecast
Total Local Production	16,200	15,530	16,300	16,000
Total Exports	14,690	15,015	15,170	15,000
Total Imports	9,687	10,768	10,413	10,250
Imports from the U.S.	307.2	383.9	327.6	320.0
Total Market Size	11,197	11,283	11,543	11,250
Exchange Rates	1USD = 0.88 Eur	1USD = 0.85 Eur	1USD = 0.89 Eur	1USD = 0.91

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)
Units: $ millions
Source: This table covers Chapters 1 – 23 of the Harmonized Schedule Codes
Total Local Production – Estimated from Bord Bia Export Performance & Prospects 2019-2020
Total Exports and Imports – Ireland's National Statistical Office
Imports from the United States - U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census figures: Exports to Ireland

Leading Sub-Sectors

The most important category for U.S. agricultural exports to Ireland is lightly processed or bulk commodity products destined to be incorporated into rations for Ireland's livestock industry. As Ireland has very limited capacity to produce grains for animal feed it must import significant quantities. The trade is highly dependent on global prices and local harvest success. It really depends on whether Irish farmers have their own feedstock for animals in any given year or whether there is a need to import. It is also dependent on whether the European Union approval system for genetically engineered crops has kept pace with what is planted in the United States. If the United States plants a variety of soy or corn not yet approved for food/feed in the EU, trade in derivatives of these products ceases.

In 2019, over 50 percent of agricultural and food imports into Ireland from the United States were animal feed ingredients. The lines below show Ireland's import values from the United States and other main suppliers for calendar year 2019:

- Distillers Dried Grains: United States ($66 million); Canada ($18 million); Sweden ($10 million)
- Other animal feed, including Corn Gluten Feed: Argentina ($44 million); United States ($11 million); UK ($7 million)
- Soybean meal: Argentina ($136 million); Canada ($25 million); United States ($24 million); UK ($18 million)

In addition, connected to its livestock dominance, Ireland imports around $2-3 million worth of bovine semen every year. The United States currently has over 20 percent market share of this trade, and likely more since product is also likely routed via the UK.

Live horses for the high-end racing industry are $25-30 million per year in exports from the United States.

Edible Fats & Oils, Vegetable Saps & Extracts, Essential Oils, Whey, Peptones/Other Proteins, Flavorings and Enzymes are imported to support Ireland's manufacturing sector with ingredients not readily available in Ireland.

Some grocery items such as sauces, chips, cookies, confectionery are imported directly, as well as fresh produce/nuts not produced in Ireland such as sweet potatoes, almonds, grapes and walnuts.

Opportunities

Opportunities exist in all sectors. However, research is needed to identify routes to market and main players.

Sectors showing total import growth in the last three years include: Animal Feed, Sugar Confectionery, Consumer-Oriented Groceries, and Alcoholic Drinks.

Outside of public health pandemic-related measures, foodservice, on-the-go and fast-food sectors represent the fastest growing areas. Healthy, clean label ingredients are also required for ready meals, snacking solutions and breakfast cereals.

Web Resources

Foreign Agricultural Service, U.S. Embassy, London: https://uk.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/government-agencies/foreign-agricultural-service/

Foreign Agricultural Serivce: https://www.fas.usda.gov

Board Bia: https://www.bordbia.ie

Irish government Department of Agriculture: https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/

Food Safety Authority of Ireland: https://www.fsai.ie/

Irish Grain and Feed Association: https://www.igfa.ie/

Customs, Regulations and Standards

Trade Barriers

For information on existing trade barriers, please see the National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers published by USTR.

Information on agricultural trade barriers in Europe can be found at the following website: Foreign Agricultural Service.

To report existing or new trade barriers and get assistance in removing them, contact either the Trade Compliance Center or the U.S. Mission to the European Union.

Import Tariffs

Ireland has been a member of the European Union (EU) since January 1, 1973. The EU is a customs union with free trade currently among 27 Member States. Free trade is also permitted between EU member states and the four members of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) through multiple agreements. Taxes such as the value-added tax (VAT) and excise taxes are levied in the country of final destination. The EU also has a common agricultural policy, joint transportation policy, and free movement of goods and capital within member states.

On January 31, 2020, the UK officially left the EU and is now classified as a non-EU country, just like the United States. Under its Withdrawal Agreement, the UK entered a transition period from February 1, 2020 until December 31, 2020. During this transition period the UK will, for the purposes of the movement of goods, services, and people, continue to operate like a full EU Member State. Negotiations regarding a future EU/UK trade agreement are ongoing with both sides stating the goal of having an agreement in place by January 1, 2021. The European Commission has published a series of Readiness Notices for consideration by EU-based businesses ahead of January 2021.

The EU levies a common tariff on imports coming from non-EU countries such as the United States. When products enter the EU, they need to be declared to customs according to their classification in the Combined Nomenclature (CN). The CN document is updated and published every year, and the latest version can be found on the European Commission's website. U.S. exports to the European Union enjoy an average tariff of just three percent.

U.S. exporters should consult "The Integrated Tariff of the Community", referred to as TARIC (Tarif Intégré de la Communauté), to identify the various rules which apply to specific products being imported into the customs territory of the EU. To determine if a license is required for a particular product, check the TARIC. The TARIC can be searched by country of origin, Harmonized System (HS) Code, and product description on the interactive website of the Directorate-General for Taxation and the Customs Union. The online TARIC is updated daily.

Key Link: TARIC

Ireland applies EU tariffs (customs duties) which are based on the international Harmonized System (HS) of product classification. Duty rates on manufactured goods from the United States generally range from 5-8% and are usually based on the c.i.f. value of the goods at the port of entry. The c.i.f. value is the price of the goods (usually the sales price) plus packing costs, insurance, and freight charges to the port of entry. See: Irish Revenue, Tax and Customs

Most raw materials enter duty free or at low rates. In accordance with EU regulations, agricultural and food items are often subject to import levies that vary depending on world market prices. The rates are based on the composition of foods and in particular some packaged foodstuffs can be affected.

Valued-added tax (VAT) is charged on the sale of goods and services within Ireland. Unlike customs duty, which is the same for all EU member countries, VAT is established by the tax authorities of each country.

- In Ireland, the standard VAT rate is 23%. However, because of the public health pandemic, the Irish government has announced a temporary reduction in this standard VAT rate to 21%. This lower rate will be effective on September 1, 2020 until February 28, 2021.
- At each stage of the manufacturing and distribution chain, the seller adds the appropriate amount of VAT (tax on the amount of value that the seller added to the product, plus the amount of VAT passed on to the seller by the supplier) to the sales price.
- The tax is always quoted separately on the invoice. This process repeats itself at each stage until the product is sold to the final consumer, who bears the full burden of the tax.
- Every second month, all firms based in Ireland who are registered for VAT purposes subtract the VAT paid on the purchases of goods and services from the VAT collected on sales and remit the balance to the Irish government.
- For imports into Ireland, the VAT is levied at the same rate as for domestic products or transactions. The basis on which the VAT is charged on imports is the c.i.f. value at the port of entry, plus any duty, excise taxes, levies, or other charges (excluding the VAT) collected by customs at the time of importation. This total represents the value of the import when it clears customs.
- The importer is liable for payment of customs duties, VAT, and any other charges at the time of clearing the goods through customs.
- Temporary imports that will be re-exported are not subject to the VAT. The importer may have to post a temporary bond for the amount of the customs duty and taxes as security, which will be canceled when the goods are taken out of the country.
- Digitally-delivered goods and services such as software, music, film, games, and distant learning programs that are consumed within the EU are subject to VAT irrespective of whether they came from EU or non-EU based suppliers.

Excise taxes are levied on a limited number of products such as gasoline and diesel fuel, spirits, beer, wine, bottled water, cider, tobacco, motor vehicles, and liquid petroleum gas. The excise rates vary, depending on the products. The tax is imposed whether the goods are manufactured in Ireland or imported from EU or non-EU countries.

- Duties on excise goods imported from non-EU countries may be collected at the point of importation or when the goods are subsequently removed from a bonded warehouse.
- Excise tax is in addition to any customs duty or VAT. For trade within the EU, the duties are collected in the Member State of consumption. Special arrangements operate to allow excise goods to move duty free between the Member States and to collect the duty in the country of consumption.
- Firms wishing to manufacture goods subject to excise tax in Ireland must first obtain a license from the Office of the Revenue Commissioners. Premises may be approved to receive and store certain excise goods without payment of duty. This approval allows the deferral of duty on goods while they are being worked on or stored. Authorization may be obtained to import goods without the payment of tax to undergo processing and re-exportation.

Import Requirements and Documentation

The Single Administrative Document

The official model for written declarations to customs is the Single Administrative Document (SAD). Goods brought into the EU customs territory are, from the time of their entry, subject to customs supervision until customs formalities are completed. Goods are covered by a Summary Declaration which is filed once the items have been presented to customs officials. The customs authorities may, however, allow a period for filing the Declaration which cannot be extended beyond the first working day following the day on which the goods are presented to customs.

The Summary Declaration is filed by:

- the person who brought the goods into the customs territory of the Community or by any person who assumes responsibility for carriage of the goods following such entry; or
- the person in whose name the person referred to above acted.

The Summary Declaration can be made on a form provided by the customs authorities. However, customs authorities may also allow the use of any commercial or official document that contains the specific information required to identify the goods. The SAD serves as the EU importer's declaration. It encompasses both customs duties and VAT and is valid in all EU member states. The declaration is made by whoever is clearing the goods, normally the importer of record or his/her agent.

European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries including Norway, Iceland, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein also use the SAD. Information on import/export forms is contained in Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2454/93, which lays down provisions for the implementation of the Community Customs Code (Articles 205 through 221). Articles 222 through 224 provide for computerized customs declarations and Articles 225 through 229 provide for oral declarations.

More information on the SAD can be found at: The Single Administrative Document (SAD) Index

The Union Customs Code

The Union Customs Code (UCC) was adopted in 2013 and its substantive provisions went into effect on 1 May 2016. It has replaced the Community Customs Code (CCC). In addition to the UCC, the European Commission published delegated and implementing regulations on the actual procedural changes.

Import Requirements

Prior to signing a long-term contract or sending a shipment of considerable value, a U.S. exporter may wish to first obtain an official ruling on Irish customs classification, duty, and taxes.

- Requests can be sent to The Office of the Revenue Commissioners. The request should describe the product, the material from which it is made, and other details needed by customs authorities to classify the product correctly.

While customs will not provide a binding decision, the advance ruling usually will be accepted if the goods are found to correspond exactly to the sample or description provided.

- Shipments to Ireland require one copy each of the bill of lading (or air waybill) and the commercial invoice for customs clearance.
- Although no special format is necessary for the commercial invoice, it is advisable to include the following: date and place of shipment; firm’s name and address of the seller and the buyer; method of shipping; number, kind, and markings of the packages and their numerical order; description of the goods using the usual commercial description according to kind, quality, grade, and the weight (gross and net, in metric units) along with any factors increasing or decreasing the value; agreed price of goods; unit cost; total cost; f.o.b. (free on board); factory plus shipping; insurance charges; delivery and payment terms; and the signature of a responsible official of the shipper’s firm.
- Bills of lading should bear the name of the party to be notified. The consignee needs the original bill of landing in order to take possession of the goods.
- Certificates of Origin are not required for goods of U.S. origin. Products, which U.S. companies’ import and then re-export to Ireland, require a Certificate of Origin or other documentation that clearly proves their origin. Should Ireland maintain a quota on a product made in a foreign country, the U.S. exporter cannot re-export this product to Ireland.
- Ireland participates in the International Convention to Facilitate the Importation of Commercial Samples and Advertising Materials. Samples of negligible value imported to promote sales are accorded duty-free

and tax-free treatment. Prior authorization is not required. To determine whether the samples are of negligible value, their value is compared with that of a commercial shipment of the same product.

- In obtaining duty-free status, it may be necessary for samples to be rendered useless for future sale by marking, perforating, cutting, or other means.
- Imported samples of commercial value may be granted a temporary entry and exemption from customs charges. A security is required in the amount of duty and tax chargeable, plus 10%.
- Samples may remain in the country for up to one year. Samples cannot be sold, put to their normal use (except for demonstration purposes), or utilized in any manner of remuneration.
- Goods imported as samples may be imported only in quantities constituting a sample according to normal commercial usage.

Economic Operator Registration and Identification (EORI)

Since July 2009, all companies established outside of the EU are required to have an EORI number if they wish to lodge a customs declaration or an Entry/Exit Summary declaration. All U.S. companies should use this number for their customs clearances. An EORI number must be formally requested from the customs authorities of the specific member state to which the company first exports. Member state customs authorities may request additional documents to be submitted alongside a formal request for an EORI number. Once a company has received an EORI number, it can use it for exports to any of the 28 EU Member States. There is no single format for the EORI number. Once an operator holds an EORI number s/he can request the Authorized Economic Operator (AEO: see below under "MRA") status, which can give quicker access to certain simplified customs procedures.

More information about the EORI number can be found at Economic Operator Identification and Registration

U.S. - EU Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA)

Since 1997, the U.S. and the EU have had an agreement on customs cooperation and mutual assistance in customs matters. Please see: MRA Index

In 2012 the United States and the EU signed a Decision recognizing the compatibility of AEO (Authorized Economic Operator) and C-TPAT (Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism), thereby facilitating faster and more secure trade between U.S. and EU operators. The World Customs Organization (WCO) SAFE Framework of Standards provides the global standard for AEO. AEO certification is issued by a national customs authority and is recognized by all Member States' customs agencies. As of April 17, 2017, an AEO can consist of two different types of authorization: "customs simplification" or "security and safety." The former allows for an AEO to benefit from simplification related to customs legislation, while the latter allows for facilitation through security and safety procedures. Shipping to a trader with AEO status could facilitate an exporter's trade as its benefits include expedited processing of shipments, reduced theft/losses, reduced data requirements, lower inspection costs, and enhanced loyalty and recognition. Under the revised Union Customs Code, in order for an operator to make use of certain customs simplifications, the authorization of AEO becomes mandatory.

The United States and the EU recognize each other's security certified operators and will take the respective membership status of certified trusted traders favorably into account to the extent possible. The favorable treatment provided by the Decision will result in lower costs, simplified procedures and greater predictability for transatlantic business activities. It officially recognizes the compatibility of AEO and C-TPAT programs, thereby facilitating faster and more secure trade between U.S. and EU operators. The Decision was originally signed in May 2012 and was implemented in two phases. The first commenced in July 2012 with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) placing shipments coming from EU AEO members into a lower risk category. The second phase took place in early 2013, with the EU re-classifying shipments coming from C-TPAT members into a lower risk category. CBP identification numbers for foreign manufacturers (MID) are therefore recognized by customs authorities in the EU, as per Implementing Regulation 58/2013 (which amends EU Regulation 2454/93 cited above).

Additional Information on the Decision

Introduction

A key EU priority is to ensuring products marketed in the region are safe for the environment and human health. U.S. manufacturers exporting to the European Union need to ensure their products meet these requirements to enter the market.

New Initiatives: European Green Deal & Circular Economy Action Plan II

On December 11, 2019, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen presented the European Green Deal. The goal of this policy and legislative program is to transform Europe into a climate neutral society by 2050. The European Green Deal affects all aspects of the European economy including agriculture, construction, finance and manufacturing.

The Communication "A new Circular Economy Action Plan For a cleaner and more competitive Europe" (CEAP II) sets out Commission's product policy within the European Green Deal. The CEAP II succeeds the 2014 Communication "Towards a circular economy: A zero waste program for Europe" and implements the European Green Deal. When implementing the CEAP II, the European Commission will promote legislation and other measures that encourage a wholistic assessment of a product's environmental footprint at the design phase of development. One legislative instrument the European Commission is looking to achieve this objective is the EU Ecodesign Directive. It will also look at other instruments including the EU Ecolabel and REACH.

Batteries

The EU Battery Directive adopted in 2006 applies to all batteries and accumulators placed on the EU market. This includes automotive, industrial and portable batteries. The Directive seeks to protect the environment by restricting the sale of batteries and accumulators that contain mercury or cadmium (with an exemption for emergency and alarm systems, medical equipment and cordless power tools) and by promoting a high level of collection and recycling. It places the responsibility on producers to finance the costs associated with the collection, treatment, and recycling of used batteries and accumulators. The Directive also includes provisions on the labeling of batteries and their removability from equipment. The European Commission publishes a FAQ document to assist interested parties in interpreting its provisions. For more information, see the U.S. Commercial Service to the EU market research reports.

Registration, Evaluation and Authorization and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH)

REACH applies to all chemicals manufactured or imported into the EU in quantities exceeding one metric ton. The regulation entered into force in 2007 (Regulation 1907/2006) and touches virtually every industrial sector, from automobiles to textiles. REACH imposes a registration obligation on all entities affected by the one metric ton criteria. The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) is the agency responsible for receiving and ensuring the completeness of such registrations. U.S. companies without a presence in Europe need to rely on an EU-based partner, typically either an importer or a specialized 'Only Representative'. The ECHA will issue a registration number to any company that submits a complete registration dossier.

In addition to the registration requirement, REACH allows the European Commission to monitory, restrict or prohibit the use of hazardous substances and products containing such substances. The Candidate List of Substances of Very High Concern (SVHCs) identifies substances the European Commission intends to restrict or prohibit in the EU. Under certain conditions, companies must notify ECHA when they export products containing Candidate List substances. The Authorization List identifies substances that require a company to obtain permission from the European Commission to import into the EU. Lastly, the Restriction List contains a list of substances that are subject to specific controls within the EU.

Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive

EU rules on WEEE, while not requiring specific customs or import paperwork, may entail a financial obligation for U.S. exporters. The Directive requires U.S. exporters to register relevant products with a national WEEE authority or arrange for this to be done by a local partner. It also requires manufacturers to inform the consumer that their product should be recycled by including the "crossed out wheelie-bin" symbol on the product or with the packaging. (See the section entitled "Mandatory Marks and Labels" for more information.) The WEEE Directive was revised on July 4, 2012 and the scope of products covered was expanded to include all electrical and electronic equipment. U.S. exporters seeking more information on the WEEE Directive should visit the Commission's WEEE website.

Restriction on Hazardous Substances (RoHS)

The ROHS Directive (Directive 2017/2102) imposes restrictions on the use of certain chemicals in electrical and electronic equipment. The directive applies to nearly all products that require power unless a specific exclusion or exemption applies. U.S. exporters certify a product meets the requirements of this legislation by affixing a "CE Mark" to their product. The U.S. exporter must retain a product file to support the CE Mark in the event of a control. (See the section entitled "Mandatory Marks and Labels" for more information.). U.S. exporters seeking more information on the RoHS Directive should visit ROHS 2

Cosmetics Regulation

The EU legislation harmonizing the regulation of cosmetic products has applied since July 11, 2013. The most controversial element of the regulation was the introduction of an EU-wide system for the notification of cosmetic products to the European Commission prior to their placement on the EU market. Only an EU-established entity may submit such a notification. Therefore U.S. exporters must either retain a "Responsible Person" to act on their behalf, rely on the entity responsible for the import of their product into the EU, or establish a presence in an EU Member State.

Agricultural Documentation

Phytosanitary Certificates: Phytosanitary certificates are required for most fresh fruits, vegetables, and other plant materials.

Sanitary Certificates: For commodities composed of animal products or by-products, EU countries require that shipments be accompanied by a certificate issued by the competent authority of the exporting country. This applies regardless of whether the product is for human consumption, for pharmaceutical use, or strictly for non-human use (e.g., veterinary biologicals, animal feeds, fertilizers, research). The vast majority of these certificates are uniform throughout the EU but the harmonization process is still ongoing. Most recently, certificates for a series of highly processed products including chondroitin sulphate, hyaluronic acid, hydrolyzed cartilage products, chitosan, glucosamine, rennet, isinglass and amino acids are being harmonized. Until harmonization is finalized, certain member state import requirements continue to apply. In addition to the legally required EU health certificates, a number of other certificates are used in international trade. These certificates, which may also be harmonized in EU legislation, certify origin for customs purposes and certain quality attributes. Up-to-date information on Harmonized Import Requirements.

Sanitary Certificates (Fisheries)

In April 2006, the European Union declared the U.S. seafood inspection system to be equivalent to the European one. Consequently, a specific public health certificate must accompany U.S. seafood shipments. The U.S. fishery product sanitary certificate is a combination of Commission Decision 2006/199/EC for the public health attestation and of Regulation 1012/2012 for the general template and animal health attestation. Unlike for fishery products, the U.S. shellfish sanitation system is not equivalent to that of the EU's. The EU and the United States are currently negotiating a veterinary equivalency agreement on shellfish. In the meantime, the EU still has a ban in place (since July 1, 2010), that prohibits the import of U.S. bivalve mollusks, in whatever form, into EU territory. This ban does not apply to wild roe-off scallops.

Since June 2009, the only U.S. competent authority for issuing sanitary certificates for fishery and aquaculture products is the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA-NMFS).

In addition to sanitary certificates, all third countries wishing to export fishery products to the EU are requested to provide a catch certificate. This catch certificate certifies that the products in question have been caught legally.

For detailed information on import documentation for seafood, please contact the NOAA Fisheries office at the U.S. Mission to the EU (stephane.vrignaud@trade.gov) or visit the following NOAA dedicated website.

Labeling and Marking Requirements

Manufacturers should be mindful that, in addition to the EU's mandatory and voluntary schemes, national voluntary labeling schemes might still apply. These schemes may be highly appreciated by consumers, and thus, become unavoidable for marketing purposes. In Ireland, with only minor exceptions, there are no general requirements for marking imported goods with the country of origin. One notable exception is that the Irish authorities require that the name and the EU address of the manufacturer, distributor, or packer also appear on the label. Certain food products must show particulars of place of origin, where its absence might mislead the consumer. Requirements for specific products should be obtained from the Irish importer. U.S. suppliers should also note that:

- The import, export, or transit of non-Irish goods with markings that would lead one to believe that the goods are of Irish manufacture or origin is prohibited.
- False or misleading trademarks, product descriptions, and other deceptive indications are also prohibited. Goods may not be imported with marks suggestive of Irish origin unless they bear an indication of their true origin.
- There are no regulations for the marking of shipping packages. Proper shipping practice dictates that packages should bear the consignee's mark and be numbered unless the shipment is such that the content of the packages can be readily identified without numbers.
- Packaged foods must carry labels that conform to Irish labeling requirements. The information shown on the label is designed to provide the consumer with adequate details about the products including details on ingredients, net weight, "best before" date, "use by" date, and general usage instructions.
- In relation to "best before" and "use by" dates, U.S. exporters should note that in Ireland dates are written in the following sequence: date, month, and year. For example: November 30, 2020 can be written as 30 Nov 20, 30-11-20, or 30/11/20.

One new exception is Ireland's Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2018 that was signed into law on October 17, 2018. This Bill contains a range of provisions, including minimum unit pricing of alcohol products; health labelling of alcohol products; regulation of advertising and sponsorship; structural separation of alcohol products in mixed trading outlets; and the regulation of the sale and supply of alcohol in certain circumstances. The measures, which diverge from EU-wide requirements, have the potential to generate additional administrative costs and detrimentally impact the ability of U.S. exporters to reallocate product in the European market. In particular, the new requirement that alcohol labels contain cancer warnings, health warnings and pregnancy warning will impact all alcohol exports to Ireland.

Manufacturers are advised to take note that all labels require metric units although dual labeling remains acceptable. The use of language on labels has been the subject of a Commission Communication, which encourages multilingual information, while preserving the freedom of Member States to require the use of language of the country of consumption.

An overview of EU mandatory and voluntary labeling and marking requirements has been compiled in the European Union Country Commercial Guide

U.S. Export Controls

The United States imposes export controls to protect national security interests and promote foreign policy objectives related to dual-use goods through implementation of the Export Administration Regulations (EAR). The Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) is comprised of two elements: Export Administration (EA), which is responsible for processing license applications, counselling exporters, and drafting and publishing changes to the Export Administration Regulations; and Export Enforcement (EE), which is responsible for the enforcement of the EAR. BIS works closely with U.S. embassies, foreign governments, industry, and trade associations to ensure that exports from the United States are secure and comply with the EAR. BIS officials conduct site visits, known as End-Use Checks (EUCs), globally with end-users, consignees, and/or other parties to transactions involving items subject to the EAR to verify compliance.

An EUC is an on-site verification of a non-U.S. party to a transaction to determine whether the party is a reliable recipient of U.S. items. EUCs are conducted as part of BIS's licensing process, as well as its compliance program, to determine if items were exported in accordance with a valid BIS authorization or otherwise consistent with the EAR. Specifically, an EUC verifies the *bona fides* of transactions subject to the EAR, to include: confirming the legitimacy and reliability of the end use and end user; monitoring compliance with license conditions; and ensuring items are used, re-exported or transferred (in-country) in accordance with the EAR. These checks might be completed prior to the export of items pursuant to a BIS export license in the form of a Pre-License Check (PLC), or following an export from the U.S. during a Post-Shipment Verification (PSV).

BIS officials rely on EUCs to safeguard items subject to the EAR from diversion to unauthorized end uses/users. The verification of a foreign party's reliability facilitates future trade, including pursuant to BIS license reviews. If BIS is unable to verify the reliability of the company or is prevented from accomplishing an EUC, the company may receive, for example, more regulatory scrutiny during license application reviews or be designated on BIS's Unverified List or Entity List, as applicable.

BIS has developed a list of "red flags", or warning signs, , and compiled "Know Your Customer" guidance intended to aid exporters in identifying possible violations of the EAR. Both of these resources are publicly available, and their dissemination to industry members is highly encouraged to help promote EAR compliance.

BIS also provides a variety of training sessions to U.S. exporters throughout the year. These sessions range from one to two-day seminars that focus on the basics of exporting to coverage of more advanced, industry specific topics. Interested parties can check a list of upcoming seminars and webinars or reference BIS provided online training.

BIS and the EAR regulate transactions involving the export of "dual-use" U.S. goods, services, and technologies. For advice and regulatory requirements, exporters should consult the other U.S. Government agencies which regulate more specialized items. For example, the U.S. Department of State's Directorate of Defense Trade Controls has authority over defense articles and services, or munitions. A list of other agencies involved in export control can be found on the BIS website or in Supplement No. 3 to Part 730 of the EAR.

The EAR is available on the BIS website and on the e-CFR (Electronic Code of Federal Regulations) and is updated as needed.

The Consolidated Screening List (CSL) is a list of parties for which the United States Government maintains restrictions on certain exports, reexports or transfers of items. The CSL consolidates eleven export screening lists of the Departments of Commerce, State and the Treasury into a single data feed as an aid to industry in conducting electronic screens of parties to regulated transactions. Exporters are encouraged to classify their items prior to export, as well as consult the CSL to determine if any parties to the transaction may be subject to specific license requirements.

Temporary Entry

Adequate warehousing facilities are available in major Irish cities. Bonded warehouses are operated in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, and Galway. The Dublin Port Company maintains the largest warehousing organization in the country. In addition to storage facilities, the Port provides services needed by distributors such as packing, sorting, bottling, and transport service. Imported goods liable to a duty may be stored in a bonded warehouse in the port area or other locations without payment of duties or taxes. The goods may remain there until needed, at which time they are cleared for Irish consumption by payment of duties and taxes; or sent to the country of destination.

Simplified procedures are available to traveling U.S. business and professional people for the temporary importation of commercial samples and professional equipment for display or demonstration though the use of an 'carnet'. An ATA Carnet is a customs document, obtained prior to departure, which facilitates customs clearance for temporary imports. With the carnet, goods may be imported without the payment of duty, tax, or additional security. A carnet is usually valid for one year from the date of issuance. A bond or cash deposit of 40% of the value of the goods covered by the carnet is also required. This will be forfeited in the event the products are not re-exported and duties and taxes are not paid. ATA Carnets can be obtained from the U.S. Council for International Business.

Prohibited and Restricted Imports

The Irish Government and the EU both have legislation on prohibited and restricted imports. An overview and updated list of prohibited and restricted goods into Ireland can be found at: Prohibitions and Restrictions. In addition, you will find detailed information on what goods can be sent to EU Member States from Ireland and can be received into Ireland from EU Member States.

The TARIC shows various rules applying to specific products being imported into the customs territory of the EU or, in some cases, when exported from it. To determine if a product is prohibited or subject to restriction, check the TARIC for the following codes:

- CITES Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species
- PROHI Import Suspension
- RSTR Import Restriction

Customs Regulations

The documents required for shipments include items such as the commercial invoice, bill of landing or airway bill, packing list, insurance documents, and when required, special certificates of origin, sanitation, and ownership. A copy of the commercial invoice should accompany the shipment to avoid delays in customs clearance. It is worth noting that imprecise descriptions are a common reason for goods being held without customs clearance, meaning that a clear description of the goods is essential and should be worded in such a way as to describe the goods to an individual who may not necessarily have an understanding of a particular industry or article. A clear description of goods should satisfy three basic questions as to what the product is, for what is it used, and of what it is made. No special form of invoice is required, but all of the details needed to establish the true value of the goods should be given. At least two additional copies of the invoice should be sent to the consignees to facilitate customs clearance. U.S. exporters should check out Irish Customs Import Procedures for full details.

U.S. exporters should note that since July 2009, nearly all companies doing business in the EU or companies exporting to the EU (i.e. Authorized Economic Operators) will need an Economic Operator Registration and Identification number (EORI). EORI numbers will be required for Customs Declarations and to apply for Authorized Economic Operator status. Member states may have different procedures for applying for EORI numbers and exporters will be required to register for EORI in the first member state they do business. However, once a company has an EORI it will be valid throughout the EU customs union and is expected to expedite customs processing. Information on the application of EORI in Ireland is available from Irish Customs.

The Union Customs Code (UCC) was adopted in 2013 and its substantive provisions were applied as of 1 May 2016. It replaces the Community Customs Code (CCC). In addition to the UCC, the European Commission has published delegated and implementing regulations on the actual procedural changes. These are included in Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/2446, Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/341 and the Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/2447.

Several changes in the revised customs policy also require an integrated IT system from the customs authorities. In April 2016, the European Commission (EC) published an implementing decision (number: 2016/578) on the work program relating to the development and deployment of the electronic systems of the UCC. The EC continues to evaluate the timeline by which the EU-wide integration of the customs IT system can be implemented. The current deadline of December 2020 may be extended until 2025 (draft proposal)

Key Link: Homepage of Customs and Taxation Union Directorate (TAXUD) Website

Customs Valuation – Most customs duties and value added tax (VAT) are expressed as a percentage of the value of goods being declared for importation. Thus, it is necessary to dispose of a standard set of rules for establishing the goods' value, which will then serve for calculating the customs duty.

Given the magnitude of EU imports every year, it is important that the value of such commerce is accurately measured for the purposes of:

- economic and commercial policy analysis;
- application of commercial policy measures;
- proper collection of import duties and taxes; and
- import and export statistics.

These objectives are met using a single instrument - the rules on customs value. The EU applies an internationally accepted concept of 'customs value'. The value of imported goods is one of three 'elements of taxation' that provides the basis for assessment of the customs debt, which is the technical term for the amount of duty that has to be paid, the other ones being the origin of the goods and the customs tariff.

Key Link: EU Customs Procedures

Standards for Trade

Overview

Products tested and certified in the United States to U.S. regulations and standards are likely to have to be retested and re-certified to EU requirements as a result of the EU's different approach to the protection of the health and safety of consumers and the environment. Where products are not regulated by specific EU technical legislation, they are always subject to the EU's General Product Safety Directive as well as to possible additional national requirements.

European Union legislation and standards created under the New Approach are harmonized across the Member States and European Economic Area countries to allow for the free flow of goods. An example of the New Approach is CE marking.

The concept of New Approach legislation is slowly disappearing as the New Legislative Framework (NLF), which entered into force in January 2010, was put in place to serve as a blueprint for existing and future CE marking legislation. Existing legislation has been reviewed to bring them in line with the NLF concepts, which means that, as of 2016, new requirements are being addressed and new reference numbers are to be used on declarations of conformity.

While harmonization of EU legislation can facilitate access to the EU Single Market, manufacturers should be aware that regulations (mandatory) and technical standards (voluntary) might also function as barriers to trade if U.S. standards are different from those of the European Union.

Agricultural Standards

The establishment of harmonized EU rules and standards in the food sector has been ongoing for several decades, and in January 2002 the EU publicized a general food law establishing the general principles of EU food law. This Regulation introduced mandatory traceability throughout the feed and food chain as of Jan 1, 2005. For specific information on agricultural standards, please refer to the Foreign Agricultural Service's website/.

There are also export guides to import regulations and standards available on the Foreign Agricultural Service's website: FAIRS Export Certificate Report.

Standards

EU standards setting is a process based on consensus initiated by industry or mandated by the European Commission and carried out by independent standards bodies, acting at the national, European or international level. There is strong encouragement for non-governmental organizations, such as environmental and consumer groups, to actively participate in European standardization.

Many standards in the EU are adopted from international standards bodies such as the International Standards Organization (ISO). The drafting of specific EU standards is handled by three European standards organizations:

1. CEN, European Committee for Standardization
2. CENELEC, European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization
3. ETSI, European Telecommunications Standards Institute

Standards are created or modified by experts in Technical Committees or Working Groups. The members of CEN and CENELEC are the national standards bodies of the Member States, which have "mirror committees" that monitor and delegate experts to participate in ongoing European standardization. CEN and CENELEC standards are sold by the individual Member States standards bodies. ETSI is different in that it allows direct participation in its technical committees from non-EU companies that have interests in Europe and provides some of its individual standards at no charge on its website. In addition to the three standards developing organizations, the European Commission plays an important role in standardization through its funding of the participation in the standardization process of small- and medium-sized companies and non-governmental organizations, such as environmental, labor and consumer groups. The Commission also provides money to the European standards bodies when it mandates standards development for harmonized standards that will be linked to EU legislation. Mandates– or requests (the Commission requests CEN/CENELEC or ESTI to develop standards) for standards.

Given the EU's vigorous promotion of its regulatory and standards system as well as its generous funding for its development, the EU's standards regime is wide and deep - extending well beyond the EU's political borders to include affiliate members (countries which are hopeful of becoming full members in the future) such as the Western Balkan countries among others. Another category, called "companion standardization body" includes the standards organization of Morocco, Israel, Kazakhstan and Australia, among others which are not likely to become a CEN member or affiliate for political and geographical reasons.

To view what CEN and CENELEC have in the pipeline for future standardization, it is best to visit their websites. Other than their respective annual work plans, CEN's "what we do" page provides an overview of standards activities by subject. Both CEN and CENELEC offer the possibility to search their respective database. ETSI's portal links to ongoing activities.

The European Standardization system and strategy was reviewed in 2011 and 2012. The new standards regulation 1025, adopted in November 2012, clarifies the relationship between regulations and standards and confirms the role of the three European standards bodies in developing harmonized standards (EN)[1]. The emphasis is also on referencing international standards where possible. For information, communication and technology (ICT) products, the importance of interoperability standards has been recognized. Through a relatively recent mechanism, a "Platform Committee" reporting to the European Commission will decide which deliverables from fora and consortia might be acceptable for public procurement specifications. The European standards bodies have been encouraged to improve efficiency in terms of delivery and to look for ways to include more societal stakeholders in European standardization. The Joint Initiative on Standardization, launched in 2016 with a number of action items to improve European standardization, involves a large group of stakeholders who are committed to deliver results by 2019.

Key Links: EU Standardization Policy

National Standards Authority of Ireland

Testing, Inspection and Certification

Conformity Assessment

Conformity Assessment is a mandatory step for the manufacturer in the process of complying with specific EU harmonized legislation. The purpose of conformity assessment is to ensure consistency of compliance during all stages, from design to production, to facilitate acceptance of the final product. EU product legislation gives manufacturers some choice regarding conformity assessment, depending on the level of risk involved in the use of their product. These range from self-certification, type examination and production quality control system, to full quality assurance system. Conformity assessment bodies in individual Member States are listed in the New Approach Notification and Designated Organizations (NANDO) information system.

Key Link: NANDO

To promote market acceptance of the final product, there are a number of voluntary conformity assessment programs. CEN's certification system is known as the Keymark. Neither CENELEC nor ETSI offer conformity assessment services.

Product Certification

To sell products in the EU market of 27 Member States as well as in EFTA (Norway, Liechtenstein Iceland, Switzerland) and Turkey U.S. exporters are required to apply CE marking whenever their product is covered by specific product legislation. CE marking product legislation offers manufacturers a number of choices and requires decisions to determine which safety/health concerns need to be addressed, which conformity assessment module is best suited to the manufacturing process, and whether or not to use EU-wide harmonized standards. The CE marking process is very complex and this section attempts to provide some background and clarification. U.S. exporters should check out the CCG for the European Union for more detail on CE Marking.

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[1] An EN standard is a standard developed by CEN/CENELEC and ETSI at the request of the EC in order to meet the essential requirements or other provisions of relevant European Union harmonization legislation

Products manufactured to standards adopted by CEN, CENELEC or ETSI, and referenced in the Official Journal as harmonized standards, are presumed to conform to the essential requirements of EU harmonized legislation. The manufacturer then applies the CE marking and issues a declaration of conformity. With these, the product will be allowed to circulate freely within the EU and EFTA. A manufacturer can choose not to use the harmonized EU standards, but then must demonstrate that the product meets the essential safety and performance requirements. Trade barriers occur when design, rather than performance, standards are developed by the relevant European standardization organization, and when U.S. companies do not have access to the standardization process through a European presence.

The CE marking addresses itself primarily to the national control authorities of the Member States, and its use simplifies the task of market surveillance of regulated products. As market surveillance was found lacking, the EU adopted the New Legislative Framework, which went into force in 2010. As mentioned before, this framework is like a blueprint for all CE marking legislation, harmonizing definitions, responsibilities, European accreditation and market surveillance.

The CE marking is not intended to include detailed technical information on the product, but there must be enough information to enable the inspector to trace the product back to the manufacturer or the local contact established in the EU. This detailed information should not appear next to the CE marking, but rather on the declaration of conformity (which the manufacturer or authorized agent must be able to provide at any time, together with the product's technical file), or the documents accompanying the product.

Accreditation

Independent test and certification laboratories, known as notified bodies, have been officially accredited by competent national authorities to test and certify to EU requirements.

"European Accreditation" is an organization representing nationally recognized accreditation bodies. Membership is open to nationally recognized accreditation bodies in countries in the European geographical area that can demonstrate that they operate an accreditation system compatible to appropriate EN and ISO/IEC standards.

Publication of Technical Regulations

The Official Journal of the EU is the official publication of the European Union. It is published daily on the internet and consists of two series covering adopted legislation as well as case law, studies by committees. It also lists the standards reference numbers linked to legislation (Harmonized Standards). National technical regulations are published on the Commission's website to allow other countries and interested parties to comment.

National Institute of Standards and Technology's (NIST) Notify U.S. Service

Members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are required under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) to notify to the WTO proposed technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures that could affect trade. Notify U.S. (www.nist.gov/notifyus) is a free, web-based e-mail registration service that captures and makes available for review and comment key information on draft regulations and conformity assessment procedures. Users receive customized e-mail alerts when new notifications are added by selected country(ies) and industry sector(s) of interest, and can also request full texts of regulations. This service and its associated web site are managed and operated by the USA WTO TBT Inquiry Point housed within the National Institute of Standards and Technology, part of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Contact Information

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CEN- European Committee for Standardization
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Fax: +32.2.550.08.19

CENELES- European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization
Avenue Marnix 17
B – 1000 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32.2.519.68.71
Fax: +32.2.519.69.15

ETSI- European Telecommunications Standards Insitute
Route des Lucioles 650
Sophia Antipolis
F-06560 Valbonne France
Tel: +33.4.92.94.42.00
Fax: +33.4.93.65.47.16

SBS- Small Business Standards
4, Rue Jacques de Lalaing
B-1040 Brussels
Tel: +32.2.285.07.27
Fax: +32-2/230.78.61

ANEC- European Association for the Co-ordination of Consumer Representation in Standardization
Avenue de Tervuren 32, Box 27
B – 1040 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32.2.743.24.70
Fax: +32.2.706.54.30

ECOS- European Environmental Citizens Organization for Standardization
Rue d'Edimbourg 26
B – 1050 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32.2.894.46.68
Fax: +32.2.894.46.10

EOTA- European Organization for Technical Assessment
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Trade Agreements

Ireland participates in the free trade arrangements of the European Union (EU) and European Free Trade Association (EFTA), and is a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). For a list of trade agreements with the EU and its Member States, as well as concise explanations, please see Trade and Related Agreements Database.

Licensing Requirements for Professional Services

Most non-EEA nationals must have an employment permit to work in Ireland. The employment permits scheme is governed by the Employment Permits Acts 2003–2018. Employment permits are issued by the Department of Enterprise Trade & Employment (DETE). The following is the list of regulatory bodies, or government ministers, where registration or recognition of qualifications is required for the grant of an employment permit - https://dbei.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Workplace-and-Skills/Employment-Permits/Registration-bodies-for-certain-employments/.

Selling US Products and Services

- Consumer goods are best sold through a distributor carrying stock for immediate delivery and sale, whereas capital goods and industrial equipment are more effectively marketed through a commissioned agent. In the case of certain raw materials with low mark-ups, or for capital goods and supplies for which there are limited numbers of potential users or buyers, direct sales techniques are effective.
- Regular communications and visits to a newly appointed representative in Ireland are useful to establish successful relationships, to get a better understanding of market specifics, trends, and developments, and to assist in the resolution of any early problems.
- An effective and responsive after-sales-servicing system should be incorporated into distribution plans.
- Frequently, U.S. firms will rely on the Irish distributor to handle the details of labeling and packaging for Irish and European preferences and the registration of the product.
- The familiarity and fluency of many Irish business firms with European languages also underline Ireland's capacity as a springboard for sales to continental Europe, including Central and Eastern Europe.

Use of an agent or distributor is not legally required however, three kinds of distribution agreements are covered by Irish legislation: exclusive, quasi-exclusive, and informal. In an exclusive distributorship, the distributor has the sole right to sell specified goods within a defined area. Quasi-exclusive distributorships allow the distributor to sell almost all the specified products within a defined area. Informal distributor arrangements impose heavier obligations on the distributor.

If contractual obligations are not met in a distribution agreement of indefinite term, it cannot be terminated until reasonable notice and/or fair compensation is provided. In general, grantors should consider protecting themselves by entering into agreements for definite periods rather than an indefinite period. In addition, specific performance target clauses should be incorporated into the distribution agreement.

- Under EU legislation (Commercial Agents Regulations 1994), a commercial agent is a self-employed intermediary who has continuing authority to negotiate the sale or the purchase of goods on behalf of another person, or to negotiate and conclude such transactions on behalf of the principal. Each party is entitled to a written document setting out the terms of their contract.

- EU legislation regarding unilateral termination of distribution agreements (EEC 86/653) applies and is designed to provide the local distributor with some degree of protection and monetary compensation when an agreement is terminated for reasons other than cause. The legislation will apply regardless of any clause in the agreement itself, and the parties may not deviate from the legislation as long as the distribution agreement is in force.

Establishing an Office

The Companies Act 2014 came into effect on June 1, 2015**.** The new Act affects all companies that were already on the register and was introduced to modernize and simplify company law, reduce administrative burden and ensure good corporate governance. All private companies limited by shares are required to change to the new company law and convert into one of two company types: Private Limited Company (LTD) which must have at least one director but must have a separate secretary or Designated Activity Company (DAC) which must have a least two directors. The Act has created new company types to replace all types of company. Company names must include a suffix at the end of its name:

PLC – Public Limited Company

PUC – Public Unlimited Company

PULC – Public Unlimited Company with no share capital

ULC – Private Unlimited Company

CLG – Company Limited by Guarantee (public guarantee companies)

U.S. companies may conduct business in Ireland through a branch or a place of business. A branch is a considered a division of a foreign company trading in Ireland that has the appearance of permanency, a separate management structure, and the ability to negotiate contracts with third parties, as well as reasonable financial independence. Branches must file company financial statements with the Registrar of Companies.

U.S. firms interested in establishing an office in Ireland should review the following:

- For a comprehensive practical overview and advice on evaluating and/or establishing business operations in Ireland, refer to Enterprise Ireland's website.
- For information on how to set up a business in Ireland from registration and legal advice to guidance on taxation and employment issues refer to the Irish Government's Local Enterprise Office, who administer the Supporting SMEs Online Tool, designed to support startups and SMEs.

Franchising

Opportunities exist for U.S. companies to establish franchise systems in Ireland across niche sectors. U.S. franchises compete for market share by country of origin primarily with Ireland and the U.K.

U.S. businesses looking to franchise within the European Union will likely find that the market is quite robust and friendly to franchise systems in general. There are a number of laws that govern the operation of franchises within the EU, but these laws are fairly broad and generally don't constrain the competitive position of U.S. businesses. The EU Regulation 4087/88 EEC regarding franchising provides a unified code for all the member states. Its primary focus concerns price fixing, transfer pricing, non-competition clauses, and exclusive dealing. It also exempts certain franchise agreements from the EU anti-trust regulations.

The franchisors should take care to look not only at EU regulations, but also at the local laws concerning franchising. More information on specific legislation can be found on the website of the European Franchise Federation.

Direct Marketing

The EU has yet to adopt legislation harmonizing the direct selling of consumer products. However, there is a wide range of EU legislation that impacts the direct marketing sector. Compliance requirements are extensive for marketing and sales to private consumers. Companies need to focus on the clarity and completeness of the information they provide to consumers prior to purchase and on their approaches to collecting and using customer data. The following gives a brief overview of the most important provisions flowing from EU-wide rules on distance-selling and on-line commerce.

Processing Customer Data

The EU has strict laws governing the protection of personal data, including the use of such data in the context of direct marketing activities. For more information on these rules, please refer to the Data Privacy section.

Distance Selling Rules

In 2011, the EU overhauled its consumer protection legislation and merged several existing rules into a single rulebook - "the Consumer Rights Directive". The provisions of this Directive have been in force since June 13, 2014 and replaced EU rules on distance selling to consumers and doorstep selling along with unfair contract terms and consumer goods and associated guarantees. The Directive contains provisions on core information to be provided by traders prior to the conclusion of consumer contracts. It also regulates the right of withdrawal, includes rules on the costs for the use of means of payment and bans pre-ticked boxes. Companies are advised to consult the relevant sections of

EU Member States' Country Commercial Guides and to contact the Commercial Service at the U.S. Mission to the European Union for more specific guidance.

In 2013, the EU adopted rules on Alternative Dispute Resolution which provide consumers the right to turn to quality alternative dispute resolution entities for all types of contractual disputes including purchases made online or offline, domestically or across borders. A specific Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) platform has been created specifically to resolve disputes about contractual disputes about online purchases of goods and services in a low cost, simple and quick manner. The service is available in all 23 languages of the EU member states, and each member state has their own point of contact. The ODR platform has been operational since 2016.

Key Links:

Consumer Affairs: http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/index_en.htm

Consumer Rights: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/consumer-marketing/rights-contracts/directive/index_en.htm

Distance Selling of Financial Services

Financial services are the subject of a separate directive that came into force in June 2002 (2002/65/EC). This piece of legislation amended three prior existing Directives and is designed to ensure that consumers are appropriately protected with respect to financial transactions taking place where the consumer and the provider are not face-to-face. In addition to prohibiting certain abusive marketing practices, the Directive establishes criteria for the presentation of contract information. Given the special nature of financial markets, specifics are also laid out for contractual withdrawal.

Key Link:

Access to European Union Law:

http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32002L0065:EN:NOT

Direct Marketing over the Internet

The e-commerce Directive (2000/31/EC) imposes certain specific requirements connected to the direct marketing business. Promotional offers must not mislead customers and the terms that must be met to qualify for them have to be easily accessible and clear. The Directive stipulates that marketing e-mails must be identified as such to the recipient and requires that companies targeting customers on-line must regularly consult national opt-out registers where they exist. When an order is placed, the service provider must acknowledge receipt quickly and by electronic means, although the Directive does not attribute any legal effect to the placing of an order or its acknowledgment. This is a matter for national law. Vendors of electronically supplied services (such as software, which the EU considers a service and not a good) must also collect Value Added Tax (VAT) (see Electronic Commerce section below).

Key Link:

EU – Digital Single Market E-Commerce: https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/e-commerce-directive

Joint Ventures/Licensing

No formal regulations relating to joint ventures in Ireland currently exist. In each case, the terms of the joint venture are the subject of a co-operation agreement between the parties concerned. Generally, the agreement sets out the basis on which the parties are to co-operate on a particular joint venture. Numerous international firms have joint venture and licensing arrangements with manufacturers based in Ireland.

Government approval is not necessary for licensing agreements and no statutory restrictions are imposed on the amounts of royalties or other details of licensing arrangements. However, an international firm intending to license the use of its trademark to a company based in Ireland must designate the licensee as a registered user, and an appropriate application must be lodged in order to prevent any future legal problems.

U.S. firms can gain access to the European marketplace by adopting a joint venture/licensing strategy incorporating Ireland. Enterprise Ireland, the state agency responsible for the development of indigenous Irish industry, continually seeks to develop joint ventures, licensing, technology transfer, and other types of strategic alliance arrangements between Irish and international firms.

As with all business investment decisions, U.S. firms considering joint venture, licensing, or other strategic alliance arrangements in Ireland should seek professional advice regarding the legal, financial, and taxation implications of the agreements being negotiated. The U.S. Commercial Service, U.S. Embassy, Dublin can assist U.S. companies in addressing these issues.

Express Delivery

Reliable courier services are readily available in Ireland through both international and indigenous express delivery services. Express service points are serviced at several locations around the country. Average delivery time from Ireland to most parts of the U.S. is two days, with one day to the east coast.

The de minimis value for Ireland for which no duty or tax is collected is €150 (customs duties) and €22 (VAT). The informal national threshold entry is €260. There is no relief from the payment of Customs Duty, VAT or Excise Duty on low value consignments, irrespective of their value, of tobacco, tobacco products, alcohol products, and perfumes or toilet waters.

Due Diligence

U.S. exporters seeking an Irish agent or distributor to service the domestic and European markets should consider visiting Ireland to appraise first-hand the relative merits of prospective agents. In addition to acquainting the U.S. exporter directly with local market conditions and special sales characteristics, a visit also provides an opportunity to discuss policy and sales campaigns with the agent or distributor, review responsibility for customs fees, taxes, labeling, transportation modalities, business procedures, payments and if necessary, registration. These responsibilities should always be clearly defined before undertaking a long-term relationship.

The U.S. Commercial Service at the U.S. Embassy in Dublin offers a range of customized business solutions to U.S. firms seeking to identify and/or perform due diligence on agents, distributors, sales, or business partners in Ireland. U.S. firms interested in achieving representation in Ireland should contact the U.S. Commercial Service in Dublin for information on matchmaking services such as the Gold Key Service (GKS), International Partner Search (IPS) and other customized services such as International Company Profile (ICP) for background checks.

U.S. firms are strongly encouraged to maintain close contact with newly appointed agents or distributors throughout their working relationship. Since certain products and equipment require servicing to maintain their useful life, the U.S. exporter should determine when this is needed and develop a distribution network to include such servicing by qualified personnel. To develop trust, loyalty and marketing skills, U.S. producers frequently bring their agents or distributors to the United States for training and marketing assistance.

Large Irish companies have listings on the Dublin and London stock exchanges, and in recent years, emerging high technology and internet companies have secured listings on the NASDAQ and the Frankfurt Stock Exchange. Publicly traded companies must publish substantive annual reports which meet the reporting requirements laid down by the accounting bodies and which comply with stock exchange regulations. In addition, company legislation requires that every registered company both privately held and publicly traded must file a set of audited accounts annually with the Companies Registration Office. Copies of such audited accounts can be obtained directly from the Companies

Registration Office for specified fees. In addition, mercantile agencies such as Dun & Bradstreet Ireland will undertake commercial credit reporting on any company in Ireland.

eCommerce

The Irish Government's attitude and approach to internet-related issues is progressive and facilitative. Ireland was one of the first EU member states to implement the Electronic Signatures Directive through the Electronic Commerce Act 2000 (ECA). Ireland has also implemented the Electronic Commerce Directive. The general legislative approach is consistent with the government's stated aim of retaining a light and flexible technology-neutral regulatory regime in this area.

The Irish online economy is becoming increasingly vibrant with the growth in total online spend estimated at around 20% year-on-year. Market value estimates vary significantly, ranging from €4 billion to €7 billion. A 2018 report by PayPal revealed that Irish consumers favor shopping at international online stores with 2.2 million Irish consumers making a purchase from an overseas website compared to 2.1 million making domestic purchases. The study forecast that Irish consumers online spend would reach €10.1 billion by 2020.

Strong household internet access (91%) and smartphone usage (90%) are driving Irish online retailing activity. Mobile commerce is becoming especially strong with consumers being particularly willing to make purchases via their smartphones. Prior to 2020, travel, hotel accommodation, event ticketing and apparel have been the principal goods and services bought online, however, the public health pandemic generated a significant spike in consumer online activity for Irish food retailers and other goods and services.

According to EuroMonitor International, internet retailing in Ireland continues to expand rapidly with mobile internet retailing becoming especially significant. Retailers are launching functional mobile apps while store-based retailers are increasingly utilizing multi-channel options. Click-&-collect services have become more widely available, allowing retailers to maximize retail potential without incurring delivery fees, while the consumer has almost immediate access to purchases without having to plan for deliveries.

Amazon remains the leading player in internet retailing locally while UK-based online marketplaces retain a strong market penetration. The latter may be changed with Brexit from January 2021. In early 2020, Amazon leased its first eCommerce warehouse in Ireland and is understood to have plans to expand its operations significantly by renting additional space. This is the company's first use of direct-hire staff in Ireland to handle online orders. The Dublin facility will receive shipments from Amazon's large fulfilment centers across Europe with packages sorted for 'last mile' delivery to Irish customers. UPS has launched an environmentally-friendly 'last mile' bike delivery service in Dublin city center.

The Irish government is currently supporting SME's in their efforts to develop online sales portals through a package of support measures. Leading U.S. digital and fintech innovators including Google, Amazon, MasterCard, Stripe and Square are also supporting Irish SMEs with their evolution to online retailing.

The Electronic Commerce Directive (2000/31/EC) provides rules for online services in the EU. It requires providers to abide by rules in the country where they are established (country of origin). Online providers must respect consumer protection rules such as indicating contact details on their website, clearly identifying advertising and protecting against spam. The Directive also grants exemptions to liability for intermediaries that transmit illegal content by third parties and for unknowingly hosting content.

Value Added Tax (VAT)

The EU's VAT system is semi-harmonized. While the guidelines are set out at the EU level, the implementation of VAT policy is the prerogative of Member States. The EU VAT Directive allows Member States to apply a minimum 15 percent VAT rate. However, they may apply reduced rates for specific goods and services or temporary derogations. Therefore, the examination of VAT rates by Member State is strongly recommended. These and other rules are laid out in the VAT Directive. Ireland's VAT rates are available from Irish Revenue.

The EU applies Value Added Tax (VAT) to sales by non-EU based companies of Electronically Supplied Services (ESS) to EU-based non-business customers. U.S. companies that are covered by the rule must collect and submit VAT to EU tax authorities. Since 2015, all supplies of telecommunications, broadcasting and electronic services are taxable at the place where the customer resides. In the case of businesses this means either the country where it is registered or the country where it has fixed premises receiving the service. In the case of consumers, it is where they are registered, have their permanent address, or usually live.

As part of the legislative changes of 2015, the Commission launched the Mini One Stop Shop (MOSS) scheme, the use of which is optional. It is meant to facilitate the sales of ESS from taxable to non-taxable persons (B2C) located in Member States in which the sellers do not have an establishment to account for the VAT. In 2021, this service will be extended to cover online sales of goods and services other than ESS. For more information please check the official guide on MOSS issued by the European Commission.

This (optional) plan allows taxable persons (sellers) to avoid registering in each Member State of consumption. A taxable person who is registered for the Mini One Stop Shop in a Member State (the Member State of Identification) can electronically submit quarterly Mini One Stop Shop VAT returns detailing supplies of ESS or other to non-taxable persons in other Member States (the Member State(s) of consumption), along with the VAT due. On February 12, 2020 the EU adopted Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/194 concerning the VAT on e-commerce. The regulation provides the details for the registration in the VAT One Stop Shop, including the Import One Stop Shop, and for the VAT One Stop Shop return.

In addition, in November 2019, the Council adopted new detailed measures that will pave the way for a smooth transition to new VAT rules for e-Commerce, such as:

- Council Directive (EU) 2019/1995 amending Directive 2006/112/EC regarding provisions relating to distance sales of goods and certain domestic supplies of goods.
- Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/2026 amending Implementing Regulation (EU) No 282/2011 regarding supplies of goods or services facilitated by electronic interfaces and the special schemes for taxable persons supplying services to non-taxable persons, making distance sales of goods and certain domestic supplies of goods.

On 8 May 2020, because of the practical difficulties created by the lockdown measures taken to contain the public health pandemic, the Commission proposed to postpone the introduction of new e-commerce VAT rules by six months. Once adopted by the Council, the rules will apply as of July 1, 2021 instead of January 1, 2021, giving Member States and businesses six more months to prepare.

Further information relating to VAT on ESS:

https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/business/vat/telecommunications-broadcasting-electronic-services/

Selling Factors & Techniques

U.S. firms should maintain close liaison with distributors and customers in order to exchange information and ideas. Communication through telephone and e-mail are widely utilized while video conferencing (MS Teams/Adobe etc) is becoming increasingly prevalent. However, the understanding developed through periodic personal visits remains the optimum way to keep distributors informed of new developments and to resolve any problems quickly. Prompt acknowledgement of correspondence is recommended.

Vigorous and sustained promotion is often needed to launch products. Products must be adapted to both technical requirements and to consumer preferences. It is not sufficient to merely label a product in conformity to national requirements. For the development of a product's full market potential, quality, price, packaging and after-sales service are key. U.S. exporters may also wish to consider warehousing in Ireland for expeditious supply and service for customers in Ireland and Europe.

Distribution methods vary by product, as well as with individual commercial relationships. There has been an increase in the centralization of distribution systems. Methods must be tailored to fit market conditions in each instance. U.S. companies can utilize successful distribution techniques practiced in the United States as a threshold for approaching the Irish market.

Trade Promotion & Advertising

Ireland does not host any major international trade fairs. In international terms, Irish trade fairs are small-scale events that attract local trade and consumer audiences. Thus, they principally offer sales and promotional opportunities for Irish manufacturers, agents, and distributors. In general, the international element of these events is limited to local representatives promoting international brands. One of the impacts of the public health pandemic in 2020 has been the accelerated adoption of virtual platforms for business communications by Irish companies and organizations. This includes increased sales promotion and advertising across social media channels.

Due to the proximity of Ireland to major trade fairs in European cities, most Irish manufacturers, agents, distributors, and end users attend the major European exhibitions in their industry sectors. The U.S. Commercial Service in Dublin promotes U.S. pavilions at European tradeshows to the Irish business community to ensure that U.S. exhibitors can take advantage of business opportunities in the Irish market. New ways of bringing trade promotion and matchmaking programs to a virtual audience are beginning to emerge but have yet to be measured for delivering successful outcomes.

- Ireland has approximately 60 newspapers and 150 periodicals or trade magazines. The Dublin dailies Irish Times and Irish Independent and the Cork-based Irish Examiner enjoy national distribution. The Irish Independent has the largest circulation, followed by The Herald. The Irish Times has the smallest circulation in Dublin, however it reaches the key business and financial markets.

- There are eight national Sunday newspapers, of which The Sunday Business Post is directed at corporate executives. British newspapers and tabloids are widely available in Ireland.

- There is increased competition in the broadcasting sector with independent national broadcasting organizations; Newstalk and Today FM (radio), Virgin Media (television) now challenging the state-controlled Radio-Telefis Eireann (RTE) organization. There are also a large number of independent radio stations operating in local areas.

- Pay-TV households account for over 71% of the 1.59 million TV households in Ireland. Digital TV services dominate across 98% of households.

- The Advertising Standards Authority of Ireland operates a code of standards. Advertising films must be approved before showing. Detailed advertising rates can be obtained from most local advertising agencies.

- There are numerous advertising agencies with a wide range of services in Ireland. Advertising agencies utilize every medium available to advertisers including direct mailings, press, radio, television, point-of-sale advertising, posters, public transportation vehicles and all social media channels.

- Other promotional techniques such as loyalty schemes, coupons, samples, premiums, and prizes are also used.

- The Irish Government strictly enforces laws covering gaming and lotteries, as well as restrictive trade practices. In 2010, the Department of Justice & Equality published a major review of Irish gambling legislation 'Options for Regulating Gambling' that outlined a range of choices for developing a revised regulatory architecture for gambling into the future. The Department subsequently published legislative proposals for a new and comprehensive framework for the regulation (including licensing) of gambling in Ireland in the Gambling Control Bill 2013. This bill is slowly working its way through the legislative drafting process. In March 2019, the Department announced plans to establish a Gambling Regulatory Authority for Ireland.

- Companies that advertise and sell goods and services should obtain local professional advice regarding provisions of the law and consumer acceptance of promotional or marketing techniques.

Major organizations engaged in market research provide the usual range of services, including store audits, consumer surveys, product field-testing, and attitude and motivation research. There are differences, however, in spending habits and preferences for goods and services, and local opinion should be obtained in advance of creating specific strategies that call for a major commitment of resources.

Pricing

Sales quotations are usually given on a c.i.f. (cost, insurance, freight) basis, to the point of importation. The c.i.f. quote is generally preferred by Irish importers as they are familiar with the customs charges and taxes on the product that are levied at the time of importation but may not be acquainted with U.S. trucking and ocean or air charges.

- Large firms and department stores, however, may purchase on f.o.b. (free on board) terms when they prefer to arrange for shipping and insure the goods themselves.
- Quotations and invoices can be made in U.S. dollars.
- Ireland incorporates EC customs duties and applies a value-added tax (VAT) of 23% to virtually all goods, including imported goods, sold in Ireland.

Sales Service/Customer Support

The provision of after-sales parts and service is essential and should be actively considered when entering into an agreement with an Irish partner. There are also independent after-sales, warranty and product servicing organizations specializing in specific business sectors.

Because of the differences between EU member states in relation to labeling, legal guarantees and liability, suppliers from outside of the EU should be aware of existing and upcoming legislation affecting sales, service and customer support and monitor EU initiatives aimed at harmonizing national legislation.

Product Liability

Under the 1985 Directive on liability of defective products, amended in 1999, the producer is liable for damage caused by a defect in a product. The victim must prove the existence of the defect and a causal link between defect and injury (bodily as well as material). A reduction of liability of the manufacturer is granted in cases of negligence on the part of the victim.

Key link:

Single Market Goods Product Liability: http://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/goods/free-movement-sectors/liability-defective-products_is

Product Safety

The 1992 General Product Safety Directive introduced a general safety requirement at the EU level to ensure that manufacturers only place safe products on the market. It was revised in 2001 to include an obligation on the producer and distributor to notify the Commission in case of a problem with a given product, provisions for its recall, the creation of a European Product Safety Network, and a ban on exports of products to third countries that are not deemed safe in the EU.

Key link: Product Safety Legislation

Legal Warranties and After-sales Service

Under the 1999 Directive on the Sale of Consumer Goods and Associated Guarantees, professional sellers are required to provide a minimum two-year warranty on all consumer goods sold to consumers (natural persons acting for purposes outside their trade, businesses or professions), as defined by the Directive. The remedies available to consumers in case of non-compliance are:

- Repair of the good(s);
- Replacement of the good(s);
- A price reduction; or
- Rescission of the sales contract.

Other issues pertaining to consumers' rights and protection, such as the New Approach Directives, CE marking, quality control and data protection are dealt with in other sections of this report.

Key link:

Consumers Rights: http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/rights/gen_rights_en.htm

Local Professional Services

Service providers focusing on EU law, consulting, and business development can be viewed on the website maintained by the Commercial Service at the U.S. Mission to the European Union. Please contact the US Commercial Service – Ireland at mailto:Office.Dublin@trade.gov for inquiries and contact information regarding Irish professional services firms.

Principal Business Associations

Chambers Ireland maintains a large network of chambers of commerce with the largest being based in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford.

The American Chamber of Commerce Ireland, (AmCham), is the voice of the 700 U.S. companies with operations in Ireland. AmCham represents the interests of its members with active working groups in areas such as human resources, research, development and innovation and employment law. The organization, for which the U.S. Ambassador to Ireland is patron, also maintains regional chapters and maintains a busy schedule of events throughout the year to facilitate policy exchange and networking.

The Irish Business and Employers' Confederation, (IBEC), is the largest business representational organization in Ireland with over 7,500 members. IBEC's remit is to lead, shape and promote business policy and conditions to drive success. The organization has over 60 industry and trade policy sub-groups encompassing Ireland's principal industry sectors.

The two primary organizations representing small and medium size companies are the Small Firms Association, (SFA – part of IBEC) and the Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association (ISME).

All business associations in Ireland accept U.S. companies as members.

Limitations on Selling US Products and Services

All citizens or sub-sets of the population of Ireland can own and sell manufacturing products or services across the board, therefore no specific limitations apply.

Trade Financing

Methods of Payment

Standard methods of payment are available for export sales to Ireland through a well-developed banking sector. Competition, to a large degree, has required the use of liberal financing, as opposed to requiring payment on a letter of credit or cash basis. Letters of credit can be used initially for new accounts with more liberal terms granted if justified by volume and customer reliability. Knowledge of industry practice and the customer is generally the prime consideration in deciding whether to use sight drafts, time drafts, or open accounts. Usual terms of sale are payment within 30 to 90 days after delivery, varying with the commodity and the credit standing of the purchaser.

The accepted and examined credit ratings throughout the world are generated by three main agencies—Standard & Poor's, Moody's, and Fitch Ratings. All major credit cards including Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted; however American Express (AmEx) is not as readily received as in the U.S. Vendors may require additional identification such as a passport. Debit cards including Maestro, Visa Debit and MasterCard debit are accepted. For more information about the methods of payment or other trade finance options, please read the Trade Finance Guide available at https://www.trade.gov/trade-finance-guide-quick-reference-us-exporters.

Banking Systems

A very sophisticated banking environment exists which offers many sources of financing to organizations doing business in Ireland. In broad terms, the sources of financing can be classified into two groups: a) financing and financial services available directly from banks, and other financial institutions, and b) financing available through financial markets, such as the Irish Stock Exchange (Euronext).

The Irish domestic banking sector, like many worldwide, came under intense pressure in 2007 and 2008 following the collapse of Ireland's construction industry and an end to Ireland's property boom. It was subsequently determined that several of Ireland's financial lenders (entirely commercially owned), were severely under-capitalized and required government bailouts to survive. The creation of the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) supported the banking industry and removed severely impaired property loans (granted on inflated asset prices) from the main institutions. As a result the government effectively controls Allied Irish Banks; has recapitalized Permanent TSB;

Anglo Irish Bank, Irish Nationwide Building Society and Educational Building Society are resolved and no longer exist, while Bank of Ireland succeeded to remain non-nationalized by realizing capital from the sale of non-essential portfolios as well as targeted burden-sharing with some bondholders.

The role of the Central Bank of Ireland (CBI) traditionally has been similar to that of central banks in other developed countries. The CBI is responsible for both central banking and financial regulation; and since 1998 in discharging its function as part of the European System of Central Banks in the Eurozone. A new CBI structure formed in 2010 which replaced the three previously related entities, the Central Bank and the Financial Services Authority of Ireland and the Financial Regulator. The CBI is responsible for the stability of Ireland's financial system and for ensuring proper and effective regulation of financial institutions and markets. It oversees and regulates Ireland's domestic banks; and international and investment banking operations located within the International Financial Services Center (IFSC).

All banks operating in Ireland must be licensed by the CBI. Retail banks in Ireland provide all general banking services, including comprehensive current account services and mortgage facilities. Retail banks are subsidiaries and affiliates of the main clearing banks which tend to concentrate on specific types of banking business; examples include wholesale and corporate banking, installment credit and leasing; and capital market activities. International and investment banking; and other financial services are carried out by banks which operate in the International Financial Services Center (IFSC).

Foreign Exchange Controls

Ireland is a member of the European Union (EU) and the European Monetary System (EMS). Commercial transactions and payment terms therefore reflect common Western practices. Primary import payment considerations are determined by the financial reputation of an individual customer combined with competitive considerations. There are no commercial foreign-exchange limitations or unusual regulations. Additionally, there are no restrictions on inward investment, foreign trading, or the repatriation of capital and profits of American firms based in Ireland.

The Irish importer can arrange import financing through a local branch bank manager. Experienced importers respect overseas vendor's payment terms. The domestic market operates quite differently, with trade customers taking cash discounts and paying up to 90 or even 180 days after delivery. Occasionally, new importers attempt to apply domestic practices to the international marketplace.

US Banks & Local Correspondent Banks

Listings of all financial institutions licensed by the Central Bank of Ireland are searchable here. Major Irish banks can facilitate Exim Bank programs in Ireland.

Protecting Intellectual Property

Protecting Your Intellectual Property in Ireland:

Several general principles are important for effective management of intellectual property ("IP") rights in Ireland. First, it is important to have an overall strategy to protect your IP. Second, IP may be protected differently in Ireland than in the United States. Third, rights must be registered and enforced in Ireland under local laws. For example, your U.S. trademark and patent registrations will not protect you in Ireland. There is no such thing as an "international copyright" that will automatically protect an author's writings throughout the entire world. Protection against unauthorized use in a particular country depends, basically, on the national laws of that country. However, most countries do offer copyright protection to foreign works in accordance with international agreements.

Obtaining patent grants in the EU is based on a first-to-file basis. Similarly, most trademark and design rights are based on a first-to-file registration system, so you should consider how to obtain patent, design, or trademark protection before introducing your products or services to the EU market. It is vital that companies understand that intellectual property rights are primarily private rights and that the U.S. government cannot enforce them for private individuals in the EU. It is the responsibility of the rights holders to register, protect, and enforce their rights where relevant, retaining their own counsel and advisors. Companies may wish to seek advice from local attorneys or IP consultants who are experts in EU law. The U.S. Commercial Service can provide a list of local lawyers upon request.

While the U.S. Government stands ready to assist, there is little we can do if the rights holders have not taken these fundamental steps necessary to securing and enforcing their IP in a timely fashion. Moreover, in many countries, rights holders who delay enforcing their rights on a mistaken belief that the USG can provide a political resolution to a legal problem may find that their rights have been eroded or abrogated due to legal doctrines such as statutes of limitations, laches, estoppel, or unreasonable delay in prosecuting a law suit. In no instance, should U.S. Government advice be seen as a substitute for the responsibility of a rights holder to promptly pursue its case.

It is always advisable to conduct due diligence on potential partners. A good partner is an important ally in protecting IP rights. Consider carefully, however, whether to permit your partner to register your IP rights on your behalf. Doing so may create a risk that your partner will list itself as the IP owner and fail to transfer the rights should the partnership end. Keep an eye on your cost structure and reduce the margins (and the incentive) of would-be bad actors. Projects and sales in Ireland require constant attention. Work with legal counsel familiar with Ireland laws to create a solid contract that includes non-compete clauses, and confidentiality/non-disclosure provisions.

It is also recommended that small and medium-size companies understand the importance of working together with trade associations and organizations to support efforts to protect IP and stop counterfeiting. There are a number of these organizations, both Irish and U.S.-based including:

- The U.S. Chamber and local American Chambers of Commerce
- National Association of Manufacturers (NAM)
- International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA)
- International Trademark Association (INTA)
- The Coalition Against Counterfeiting and Piracy
- International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition (IACC)
- Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA)
- Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO)

IP Resources

A wealth of information on protecting IP is freely available to U.S. rights holders. Some excellent resources for companies regarding intellectual property include:

- For information about patent, trademark, or copyright issues -- including enforcement issues in the US and other countries -- call the STOP! Hotline: **1-866-999-HALT** or visit www.STOPfakes.gov.
- For more information about registering trademarks and patents (both in the U.S. as well as in foreign countries), contact the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) at: **1-800-786-9199**, or visit http://www.uspto.gov/.
- For more information about registering for copyright protection in the United States, contact the U.S. Copyright Office at: **1-202-707-5959**, or visit http://www.copyright.gov/.
- For more information about how to evaluate, protect, and enforce intellectual property rights and how these rights may be important for businesses visit the "Resources" section of the STOPfakes website at .
- For information on obtaining and enforcing intellectual property rights and market-specific IP Toolkits visit: **www.stopfakes.gov**/businesss-tools/country-ipr-toolkits. The toolkits contain detailed information

on protecting and enforcing IP in specific markets, and also contain contact information for local IPR offices abroad and U.S. government officials available to assist SMEs. 2020 Ireland IP Snapshot

The U.S. Department of Commerce has positioned IP attachés in key markets around the world. You can get contact information below for the IP attaché who covers the European region:

In any foreign market companies should consider several general principles for effective protection of their intellectual property. For background, please link to our article on Protecting Intellectual Property and Stopfakes.gov for more resources.

IP Attaché Contact

Susan Wilson
U.S. Mission to the European Union
Boulevard du Régent 27

BE-1000 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32 2-811-5308
E-mail: susan.wilson@trade.gov

For more information, contact ITA's Office of Intellectual Property Rights Director, Stevan Mitchell at Stevan.Mitchell@trade.gov.

Selling to the Public Sector

Selling to the Government

Many governments finance public works projects through borrowing from the Multilateral Development Banks. Please refer to "Project Financing" Section in "Trade and Project Financing" for more information.

Public procurement in Ireland is estimated to be worth €17 billion annually. It is across a wide range of sectors and encompasses products and services. Public bodies are constantly under pressure to buy smartly, spend less and collaborate with others in purchasing. This often results in larger, higher profile procurement activity, often using competitive dialogue, frameworks or central purchasing arrangements. Buyers' procurement practices can also fall under scrutiny in the Courts where unsuccessful tenderers can seek redress.

The Irish Government has an Office of Government Procurement (OGP) which endeavors to reduce procurement costs and achieve better value for money. Together with four key sectors (Health, Local Government, Education and Defense), the OGP has responsibility for sourcing all goods and services on behalf of the public service. The OGP and its sector partners are putting in place framework agreements and contracts through which public sector bodies can buy goods and services. The sourcing model is broken down into 16 categories of expenditure. The 8 categories of common goods and services are procured by the OGP. Four sectors – Health, Education, Local Government and Defense – retain sector sourcing functions to procure the remaining categories for which they are the main users. The OGP Sourcing organization is broken down into a number of portfolios, each dedicated to different categories of spend. The sourcing portfolios are: Information and Communications Technology (ICT); Facilities Management; Utilities, Fleet and Plant, Marketing, Print & Stationery; Travel, HR and Managed Services; Professional Services; and Spot Buying.

As a member of the EU, Ireland follows the public procurement regulations applicable across the Community. Government procurement in Europe is governed by both international obligations under the WTO Government Procurement Agreement (GPA) and EU-wide legislation under the EU Public Procurement Directives. U.S.-based companies are permitted to bid on public tenders covered by the GPA, while European subsidiaries of U.S. companies may bid on all public procurement contracts covered by the EU Directives in the European Union.

Ireland has adopted the four principal EU public procurement directives namely:

- Directive 2014/24/EU (replacing Directive 2004/18/EC) on the coordination of procedures for the award of public works contracts, public supply contracts and public service contracts applies to the general sector;
- Directive 2014/25/EU (replacing Directive 2004/17/EC) coordinating the procurement procedures of entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors;
- Directive 2009/81/EC on defense and sensitive security procurement**.** This Directive sets Community rules for the procurement of arms, munitions and war material (plus related works and services) for defense purposes, but also for the procurement of sensitive supplies, works and services for non-military security purposes;
- Directive 2014/23/EU on the award of concession contracts. A concession contract (either for the delivery of works or services) is conducted between a public authority and a private enterprise that gives the right to the company to build infrastructure and operate businesses that would normally fall within the jurisdiction of the public authority (e.g. highways).

The EU has three remedy directives imposing common standards for all member states to abide by in case bidders identify discriminatory public procurement practices. Electronic versions of the procurement documentation must be available through an internet URL immediately on publication of the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) contract notice. Full electronic communication (with some exceptions) became mandatory for all public contracts from October 2018. Central purchasing bodies are required to publish their contracts and requests for tenders since April 2017.

All Irish work, supply, service, and utility procurement project notices which fall within the guidelines of EU public procurement directives are published electronically in the Official Journal of the European Community (OJEC) "S" series. The Irish government also has its own eTenders Public Sector Procurement portal that provides electronic access to all Irish public sector procurement opportunities published in the OJEC and in the national and local print media. U.S. Commercial Service Ireland actively monitors and reports on major procurement projects offering opportunities for U.S. firms. Since 2016, Ireland has seen increased investment funding from the European Investment Bank (EIB) for a range of EIB-funded projects in Ireland.

Electronic invoicing (e-invoicing) was introduced beginning of the 3rd quarter of 2018, based on the requirement set forth in Directive 2014/55/EU. The Directive makes the receipt and processing of electronic invoices in public procurement obligatory. Standards for e-invoicing are being developed by the European Committee for Standardization (CEN).

There are restrictions for U.S. suppliers in the EU utilities sector, both in the EU Utilities Directive and in EU coverage of the GPA. Article 85 of Directive 2014/25 allows EU contracting authorities to either reject non-EU bids where the proportion of goods originating in non-EU countries exceeds 50 percent or give preference to the EU bid if prices are equivalent (meaning within a three percent margin). Moreover, the Directive allows EU contracting authorities to retain the right to suspend or restrict the award of service contract to undertaking in third countries where no reciprocal access is granted.

There are also restrictions in the EU coverage of the GPA that apply specifically to U.S.-based companies. U.S. companies are not allowed to bid on works and services contracts procured by sub-central public contracting authorities in the following sectors:

- Water sector
- Airport services
- Urban transport sector as described above, and railways in general
- Dredging services and procurement related to shipbuilding

U.S. companies bidding on Government tenders may also qualify for U.S. Government advocacy. A unit of the U.S. Commerce Department's International Trade Administration, the Advocacy Center coordinates U.S. Government interagency advocacy efforts on behalf of U.S. exporters bidding on public sector contracts with international governments and government agencies. The Advocacy Center works closely with our network of the U.S. Commercial Service worldwide and inter-agency partners to ensure that exporters of U.S. products and services have the best possible chance of winning government contracts. Advocacy assistance can take many forms but often involves the U.S. Embassy or other U.S. Government agencies expressing support for the U.S. bidders directly to the foreign government. Consult Advocacy for Foreign Government Contracts for additional information.

Financing of Projects

There are no restrictions on investments by foreign companies in new projects and existing entities in Ireland, nor are restrictions imposed on the repatriation of capital and profits by foreign firms. International firms investing in Ireland can take advantage of investment incentives provided by the Irish government through IDA Ireland, the state organization responsible for attracting international investment into Ireland. These incentives include:

- A 12.5% corporate tax rate for qualifying industries
- Capital investment
- R & D and training grants and tax credits
- Rent subsidy for industries in certain regions
- Assistance with site location.

There are a range of incentives available to manufacturing companies and providers of international tradable services such as computer software, telemarketing, and financial services.

The Government of Ireland has established the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) to help provide cost effective financing for public sector investment projects, including public and private partnerships with multinational firms. State authorities are obliged to seek advice on financing public projects from the ISIF, which will assess financial and structuring, and will in certain circumstances be able to raise funds for public projects. The ISIF has the power to set up special purpose companies for the purpose of financing projects.

The EU-U.S. Privacy Shield

On July 16, 2020, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) issued a judgment declaring as "invalid" the European Commission's Decision (EU) 2016/1250 of July12, 2016 on the adequacy of the protection provided by the EU-U.S. Privacy Shield. As a result of that decision, the EU-U.S. Privacy Shield Framework is no longer a valid mechanism to comply with EU data protection requirements when transferring personal data from the European Union to the United States. This decision does not relieve participants in the EU-U.S. Privacy Shield of their obligations under the EU-U.S. Privacy Shield Framework.

The EU-U.S. Privacy Shield Framework was designed by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the European Commission to provide companies on both sides of the Atlantic with a mechanism to comply with EU data protection requirements when transferring personal data from the European Union to the United States in support of transatlantic commerce. While it is no longer a valid transfer mechanism under the GDPR, as U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross noted on July 16, 2020, "The Department of Commerce will continue to administer the Privacy Shield program, including processing submissions for self-certification and re-certification to the Privacy Shield Frameworks and maintaining the Privacy Shield List."

For more information:

Commerce FAQs on Privacy Shield following CJEU decision of July 16

EU-U.S. Privacy Shield

Other transfer mechanisms

Cyber-security

Network and Information Systems (NIS) Security Directive

The European Network and Information Systems (NIS) Security Directive, applicable since 2016, sets a minimum baseline of requirements to ensure better protection of critical infrastructures in Europe. The legislation sets basic principles for Member States for common minimum capacity building and strategic cooperation. It also directs operators of essential services (OES) and digital service providers (DSP) to ensure they apply basic common security requirements.

DSPs are broadly defined to include: online/e-commerce marketplaces (including app stores); online search engines (with the exclusion of search function limited to a specific website); and Cloud computing services. NIS systems are considered the e-communications network, connected devices and digital data. Obligations for both OES and DSP include: to take technical and organizational measures to NIS risk management; to prevent and minimize the impact of NIS security incidents; to notify, without undue delay, incidents having a significant impact on the continuity of the essential services they provide. Member states have implemented the rules in different manners, particularly regarding OES, so it is important to check the local transpositions. Because the current approach is relatively unharmonized across the EU, the European Commission may modify the NIS Directive.

For more information:

NIS Directive

Cybersecurity Act

The EU adopted the Cybersecurity Act in March 2019 to set up a mechanism to develop voluntary EU certification schemes for ICT security products, processes and services. The Cybersecurity Act does not set out requirements in details but lays out elements that should be in any given scheme to provide assurance on security requirements for all ICT products, services and processes. The areas that would benefit from certification schemes will either be proposed by the European Commission through an annual work program or by stakeholder group. Product manufacturers and service providers are encouraged to monitor the development of these schemes. The EU cybersecurity agency ENISA creates ad-hoc stakeholder groups to help it create certification schemes, and companies can apply to participate in these groups.

More information:

EU Cybersecurity Act

EU Cybersecurity Agency, ENISA

Data Privacy and Protection

The EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which governs how personal data of individuals in the EU may be processed and transferred, went into effect on May 25, 2018. The GDPR is a comprehensive privacy legislation that applies across sectors and to companies of all sizes. It replaces the Data Protection Directive 1995/46. The overall objectives of the measures are the same – laying down the rules for the protection of personal data and for the movement of data.

The GDPR is broad in scope and uses broad definitions. “Personal data” is any information that relates to an identified or identifiable living individual (data subject) such as a name, email address, tax ID number, online identifier, etc. “Processing” data includes actions such as collecting, recording, storing and transferring data.

A company that is not established in the Union may have to comply with the Regulation when processing personal data of EU and EEA residents (EEA countries include Norway, Lichtenstein and Iceland) and Switzerland: a) If the company offers goods or services to data subjects in the EU; or,

b) If the company is monitoring data subjects' behavior taking place within the EU.

The mere accessibility of a company's website in the EU is insufficient to subject a company to GDPR, but other evidence of the intent to offer goods or services to data subjects in the EU would be relevant. For instance, conducting advertising campaigns directed at EU markets or mentioning an EU member state in relation to the good or service could be relevant. The European data protection authorities published guidelines to help companies determine whether they fall within the GDPR's territorial scope.

As a general rule, companies that are not established in the EU but that are subject to the GDPR must designate in writing an EU representative for purposes of GDPR compliance. There is an exception to this requirement for small scale, occasional processing of non-sensitive data.

Fines in case of non-compliance can reach up to 4% of the annual worldwide revenue or 20 million euros – whichever is higher. Companies of all sizes and sectors should consider GDPR as part of their overall compliance effort with assistance of legal counsel.

The European Commission and Data Protection Authorities released official guidelines to help companies with their compliance process. These documents relate, for instance, to the role of the data protection officer, personal data breach notification, data protection impact assessment.

Note: the EU is currently updating its e-privacy legislation governing confidentiality of communications. If enacted, this legislative instrument could add several requirements in addition to the GDPR. We encourage U.S. exporters to monitor this situation as it evolves through the EU legislative process.

For more information:

Full GDPR text

Official Press Release

European Commission guidance:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-topic/data-protection_en

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/justice-and-fundamental-rights/data-protection/2018-reform-eu-data-protection-rules_en

https://edpb.europa.eu/edpb_en

https://edpb.europa.eu/our-work-tools/general-guidance/gdpr-guidelines-recommendations-best-practices_en

Transferring Customer Data to Countries outside the EU

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) provides for the free flow of personal data within the EU but also for its protection when it leaves the region's borders.

The GDPR sets out obligations on data controllers (those in charge of deciding what personal data is collected and how/why it is processed), on data processors (those who act on behalf of the controller) and gives rights to data subjects (the individuals to whom the data relates). These rules were designed to provide a high level of privacy protection for personal data and were complemented by **measures to ensure the protection is maintained when data leaves the region**, whether it is transferred to controllers, processors or to third parties (e.g. subcontractors). EU legislators put restrictions on transfers of personal data outside of the EU, specifying that such data could only be exported if "adequate protection" is provided.

The European Commission is responsible for assessing whether a country outside the EU has a legal framework that provides enough protection for it to issue an "adequacy finding" to that country. The U.S. does not have an adequacy decision (see section on the EU-U.S. Privacy Shield below). This means that U.S. companies can only receive personal data from the EU if they:

- Provide appropriate safeguards (e.g. standard contractual clauses, binding corporate rules), or,
- Refer to one of the GDPR's derogations.

For more information:

EU data protection authorities' FAQs on data transfers to the U.S.

Important note:

The legal environment for data transfers to the United States continues to evolve. Companies that transfer EU citizen data to the United States as part of a commercial transaction should consult with an attorney, who specializes in EU data privacy law, to determine what options may be available for a transaction.

Business Travel

Business Customs

Given the close economic, political, and cultural relations that exist between Ireland and the United States, business opportunities for U.S. companies are broad based and the transactions are easily accomplished. In general, Irish business executives are less formal than their European counterparts and the use of first names at an early stage of a business relationship is acceptable. Friendship and mutual trust are highly valued and once an American has earned this trust, a productive working relationship can usually be expected. However, principles of customary business courtesy, especially replying promptly to sales orders and requests for price quotations, are a prerequisite for success and should be practiced. The exchange of business cards is widely used at the introductory stage of a business relationship – though they are less prevalent among the tech community.

Conservative business attire is recommended for business meetings and functions while the tech and start-up communities favor more casual attire. Business appointments are required, and visitors are expected to be punctual. Because of the moderating influence of warm ocean currents, medium-weight clothing may be worn most of the year. A travel umbrella, rainwear, hat, and sturdy walking shoes should also be included in the wardrobe since there is occasional light rain ("liquid sunshine") and many "soft" days.

Travel Advisory

The State Department's Country Specific Information for Ireland can be found at this link.

Safety and Security

Ireland remains largely free of terrorist incidents. While the 1998 ceasefire in Northern Ireland is holding, there have been incidents of violence in Northern Ireland associated with paramilitary organizations. These have the potential for some spillover into Ireland. Travelers to Northern Ireland should consult the Country Specific Information for the United Kingdom.

We remind you that even demonstrations and protests intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and possibly escalate into violence. You should avoid the areas of such gatherings if possible and be careful within the vicinity of any demonstrations. You should stay current with media coverage of local events and be aware of your surroundings at all times. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' website, where the current Travel Advisories and Map can be found.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada, or for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to take responsibility for their own personal security while traveling overseas. For general information about appropriate measures travelers can take to protect themselves in an overseas environment, see the Department of State's Know Before You Go page.

Crime

Ireland has a relatively low rate of violent crime. Petty crime and residential crime are much more common, especially in urban and tourist areas. Rates for residential break-ins, theft, burglary, and purse-snatching have all risen in recent years and thieves often target rental cars and tourists, particularly in the vicinity of tourist attractions. In rare cases, these crimes have involved physical assault or violence, more commonly in Dublin. Avoid parks after dark and avoid showing signs of affluence in addition to guarding your valuables, passport and wallet. We recommend you leave your passport in a secure location separate from your purse or luggage. Do not leave your drinks unattended at bars or restaurants, as there have been reported incidents of drinks being spiked with illegal substances, leading to robbery and sexual assaults. Please practice sound personal security practices and maintain an awareness of your surroundings during your stay in Ireland.

Crimes involving credit and debit cards and automated teller machines (ATMs) are also a concern. Travelers should protect their PIN numbers at all times and avoid using ATM machines that appear to have been tampered with. There has been an increase in Ireland of the use of "skimmers" on ATM machines, especially in tourist areas. Skimmers are usually small electronic devices that are attached to the outside of an ATM machine in order to "skim" the ATM or credit card data for later criminal use. Most ATMs in Ireland now have electronic warnings about usage and advise customers to look closely at the ATM before using it.

Visa Requirements

Every U.S. traveler must have a valid U.S. passport.

Entry into Ireland is subject to Irish Immigration laws and inspection. U.S. citizens who wish to enter Ireland must ensure they provide all documentation relating to the purpose of their trip to Ireland to the Irish Immigration official at the point of entry.

For those wishing to enter Ireland as a visitor, Irish Immigration may grant a stay of up to ninety days, however, they may grant a shorter stay depending on the documentation provided. Those individuals wishing to remain in Ireland for longer than three months should contact the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) in Dublin and outside of Dublin, the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB), Tel: +353-1-666-9100 for guidance.

A U.S. citizen entering Ireland who wishes to establish permanent residency must register with the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service in Dublin or outside of Dublin, the Garda National Immigration Bureau as soon as possible after entering the country.

U.S. citizens planning to work in Ireland must first obtain a work permit prior to traveling to Ireland. These permits are issued by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Once the permit is issued, the traveler presents it to Immigration officials upon arrival in Ireland. For further guidance, please visit the work permits section. U.S. companies that require travel of Irish businesspersons to the United States should allow sufficient time for visa issuance if required.

For information on visa application requirements and procedures for travel to the United States, please visit the U.S. Embassy Dublin website.

For information on Irish employment law visit: Irish Employment Law

The Department of State encourages U.S. citizens living overseas or planning to travel abroad to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). Once enrolled, the U.S. Embassy/Consulate can keep the individual up to date with important safety and security announcements. Enrolling will also make it easier for the Embassy to contact the individual in the event of an emergency.

U.S. Companies that require travel of foreign businesspersons to the United States should be advised that security evaluations are handled via an interagency process. Visa applicants should visit the following links for information and to begin the application process:

State Department Visa Website: http://travel.state.gov/visa/

U.S. Embassy Dublin Visa Unit: https://ie.usembassy.gov/visas/

Currency

Ireland is part of the Eurozone therefore the local currency is the euro. All major credit cards including Visa, MasterCard/Eurocard are widely accepted; however American Express (AmEx) is not as readily received as in the U.S. Vendors may require additional identification such as a passport. Debit cards including Irish Laser Cards, Maestro, Visa Debit and MasterCard debit are accepted.

Most Irish banks are affiliated to payment facilities networks such as ‘Plus,’ ‘Cirrus,’ and ‘Maestro’. ATMs are commonplace in cities and towns both on street, in retail outlets and some gas stations and visitors should be aware that bank transaction fees apply. Traveler’s checks are not generally accepted for purchases. Visitors should inquire about the policy of the bank, hotel, or store before seeking to cash a personal check. Irish banks may not accept $100 bills for currency exchange.

For currency or other numerical quantities, a comma is commonly used to mark off the thousands position and a decimal point (period) to denote decimal amounts -- the same practice as followed in the United States; for example, €1,234,456.78.

Telecommunications/Electronics

Through the ease of telecommunications, e-mails and international calls are frequently the best method of arranging appointments and maintaining solid commercial relations. Virtual communication has been readily adopted by the business community to counteract travel restricts since March 2020. The time zone for Ireland is Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) or 5 hours ahead of the U.S. Eastern Standard Time (EST + 5 hours).

- Cell phones are widely used in Ireland as there are approximately **5.44** million cell phone subscribers (equating to **113%** market coverage). Tri-band and quad-band cell phones can be used to place calls to the United States and other countries from Ireland.
- Ireland has a relatively sophisticated digital telecommunications system, which includes a direct dialing telephone service connecting every part of Ireland with over 90% of the rest of the world.
- A wide range of business services including point-to-multipoint data transmission, computer-to-computer file transfer networking, text messaging, fax, telex, video communications, Skype etc., are available.
- U.S. calling cards such as AT&T and Sprint may be used locally for making international calls. Phone cards for local and international calling are widely available in local shops and vending machines.
- Internet access is also widely available through Internet cafes, Wi-Fi locations, and hotels. Electricity in Ireland (220 volts, 50 cycles) is not compatible with U.S. voltage unless you have a converter or transformer and an Irish three-pronged plug.

Transportation

Ireland has four international airports (Dublin, Shannon, Cork, and Knock). Aer Lingus, American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, US Airways, and United Airlines operate scheduled air services between Ireland and the United States to 18 different destinations. Irish travelers also utilize UK and other European hubs, which have numerous daily connections to the U.S.

While Ireland has more paved road on a per capita basis than any other country in the EU, it lacks a complete national efficient network of highways in some parts of the country. Travel times take longer than expected at first glance, though the opening of “motorways” (expressways) from Dublin to major cities has greatly improved travel time on many routes. Ninety-six percent of all inland passenger transport and over ninety percent of inland freight transport are conveyed by road. The balance is carried by rail. A 3,000-kilometer rail system provides passenger and freight services to most cities and main towns, including those in Northern Ireland.

Rental automobiles are available at numerous locations across Ireland. Rates are usually more expensive than in the U.S. and other parts of Europe. Better rental rates may be secured by booking reservations in the U.S. through one of the U.S. car rental agencies with fleets in Ireland. An international or state driving license is acceptable.

A few notes of caution: rental cars offer a target for petty thieves in Ireland and visitors should take care not to leave belongings visible in cars parked at common tourist destinations. Cars in Ireland are “right-hand drive,” traffic moves on and from the left-hand side of the road, like in the United Kingdom, and traffic circle “roundabouts” are frequent in most towns and cities. Also, in relative terms, J-walking is a very common practice for pedestrians in Ireland. Drivers should use caution; pedestrians, including children, and cyclists often cross against lights or in the middle of roads. Pubs in Ireland, particularly in Dublin, stay open late and pedestrian traffic can be heavy throughout the night. It may take the visitor some time to adjust to these differences. Most auto accidents for visitors to Ireland happen shortly after departure from the rental car facilities. As car navigation systems have become widely available, rental cars are a more viable means for business travel. For specific information concerning Irish driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please visit Tourism Ireland.

Taxis in Ireland are reasonably priced, but availability varies with time of day and where you are in the country. Major taxi companies now operate via apps. Intercity bus service is reliable and efficient due to "bus lanes" during high traffic periods.

Ireland has a diverse range of accommodations—from world-class hotels to the more individualized and economical bed and breakfast (B&B) guesthouses. In view of the large number of visitors to Ireland, business travelers are advised to make their hotel reservations well in advance in order to assure the needed accommodations, especially during the summer months.

Ireland has a wide and excellent range of restaurants with an equally wide range of prices, catering to all wallets. All the major international forms of cuisine are available in addition to local Irish recipes. The food service sector is well regulated and standards of hygiene in food preparation are high.

Language

There are two official languages in Ireland – Irish and English. While English is used predominantly, the Irish language, Gaelic, can be heard in the western and other parts of the country as indicated by signage marking Irish-speaking regions – An Gaeltacht. English is used for business contracts and correspondence; however, some terms may have different meanings from those in the United States. To assure complete understanding, it is important to define unfamiliar terms. Reference to Incoterms, the international set of rules for commercial terms, helps to reduce possible misunderstandings.

Health

Medical services are very good at major hospitals and generally comparable with those in the United States. Private clinics can be found in major cities. Common medical needs are readily obtained, and special supplies are normally available on short notice. An international certificate of vaccination is not required for travelers from the United States. Drinking water is good, most pharmaceuticals are available, and sanitation is up to American standards.

Local Time, Business Hours and Holidays

A 37.5-hour, 5-day workweek is the norm for offices and factories in Ireland. Customary office working hours are from 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., with lunch from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Banking hours are from 10:00 to 4:00 p.m. Most retail stores are open from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and 12:00 p.m. (noon) to 6:00 p.m., Sundays and Public Holidays. Many malls/outlets also have later hours on weekdays to accommodate evening shoppers.

The following is a listing of the official statutory public holidays in Ireland when most commercial offices are closed. Certain other days are celebrated as holidays within local jurisdictions. If New Year's Day, Saint Patrick's Day, Christmas Day, or Saint Stephen's Day fall on a weekend, the following Monday is a public holiday.

National Holidays

New Year's Day (Bank Holiday): Friday, January 1, 2021

Saint Patrick's Day: Wednesday, March 17, 2021

Good Friday: April 2, 2021

Easter Monday (Bank Holiday): April 5, 2021

Spring May Bank Holiday: Monday, May 3, 2021

June Bank Holiday: Monday, June 7, 2021

Summer Bank Holiday: Monday, August 2, 2021

October Bank Holiday: Monday, October 25, 2021

Christmas Day: Saturday, December 25, 2021

Saint Stephen's Day: Sunday, December 26, 2021

New Year's Day: Saturday, January 1, 2022

During vacation seasons many Irish business executives may not be available except by appointment, especially in July and August. Also, appointments may be difficult to schedule on Friday afternoons during the summer months, when extended weekends are often taken. Most businesses are closed from December 24 through January 2 during the Christmas season.

Temporary Entry of Materials or Personal Belongings

Simplified procedures are available to traveling U.S. business and professional people for the temporary importation of commercial samples and professional equipment for display or demonstration though the use of a "carnet." A carnet is a customs document, obtained prior to departure, which facilitates customs clearance for temporary imports. With the carnet, goods may be imported without the payment of duty, tax, or additional security. A carnet is usually valid for one year from the date of issuance. A bond or cash deposit of 40% of the value of the goods covered by the carnet is required. This will be forfeited in the event the products are not re-exported and duties and taxes are not paid. Carnets can be obtained from the U.S. Council for International Business.

Investment Climate Statement (ICS)

The U.S. Department of State's Investment Climate Statements, prepared annually by U.S. embassies and diplomatic missions abroad, provide country-specific information and assessments of the investment climate in foreign markets. Topics include: Market barriers, business risk, legal and regulatory system, dispute resolution, corruption, political violence, labor issues, and intellectual property rights.

Please visit the U.S. Department of Department of State's 2020 Investment Climate Statement for the 2020 Investment Climate State for Ireland

Political Environment

For background information on the political and economic environment of Ireland, please read

[US Department of State website.]