Setting Up a Business in Ireland

The foreign investor's guide to navigating complexity in this exciting jurisdiction

We are the business behind business®.

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Ireland profile

Ireland is one of Europe's most attractive destinations for international investment, offering a pro-business environment, access to the European single market, a highly educated workforce, and a globally recognized tax and legal framework.

Ireland is a dynamic and welcoming economy on the northwestern edge of Europe that benefits from its status as the only English-speaking country in the European Union (EU). In recent years, many of the world's biggest companies—in particular, the technology and life sciences sectors—have set up offices or regional headquarters in Ireland. These include tech giants Alphabet, Meta, and Microsoft, as well as pharmaceutical multinationals, such as GSK and Pfizer. Such businesses are attracted by low tax rates, a stable and pro-business political culture, and a highly skilled workforce.

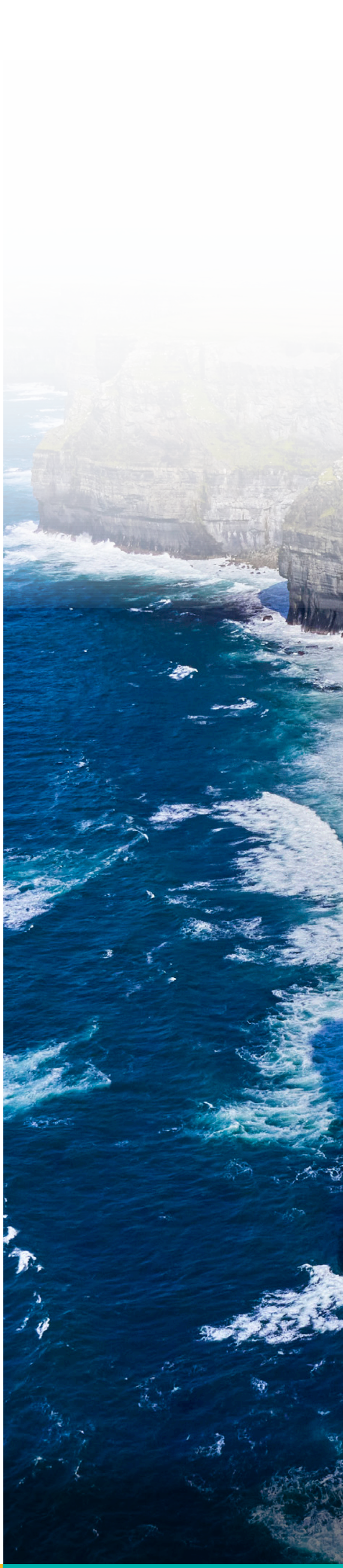
The value of overseas investment to the Irish economy is a testament to the country's reputation as one of the most business-friendly nations in the world. Official estimates suggest that 25% of all private-sector employment in Ireland is directly or indirectly the result of foreign direct investment (FDI), while inward investors account for around 80% of corporation tax receipts.[1,2]

Ireland's recovery from the global financial crisis began in 2007, after a number of major technology companies began setting up offices there in response to high corporate tax rates in the United States and other jurisdictions. As a result, Ireland today boasts a thriving start-up ecosystem. Figures from the Irish Venture Capital Association show that venture capital investment into Irish tech start-ups rose by 21% in 2024 to a record EUR 1.48 billion.[3]

There's also a significant presence of global pharmaceutical businesses, and Dublin boasts a thriving financial services sector. Additionally, Irish government supports the creation of a highly skilled workforce as well as entrepreneurial innovation through a system of research and development (R&D) tax credits and a forward-thinking intellectual property regime.

In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, the development agency IDA Ireland launched a new strategy aimed at helping foreign multinationals navigate post-pandemic economic and logistical challenges, such as labor shortages and supply chain disruption. IDA Ireland also put a greater emphasis on encouraging business activity in areas such as sustainability.

Why invest in Ireland?



A pro-business economy

Ireland offers a stable political environment, transparent legal framework, and long-standing government support for foreign direct investment. The country consistently ranks among the world's most business-friendly jurisdictions, supported by a competitive corporate tax environment, strong legal protections, and a predictable regulatory system.

Gateway to Europe

As the only English-speaking country in the EU, Ireland provides direct access to the single market's more than 450 million consumers. Its strategic geographic position also strengthens commercial links between North America, Europe, and international markets.

Highly skilled workforce

Ireland benefits from a highly educated and internationally diverse workforce, with strong talent pools across technology, pharmaceuticals, life sciences, financial services, engineering, and professional services. The country also has one of the highest proportions of STEM graduates in Europe.

Innovation and R&D incentives

Ireland actively supports innovation through a well-developed R&D ecosystem. Businesses can benefit from R&D tax credits, intellectual property incentives, and collaboration opportunities through universities, research institutions, and state-supported agencies, such as IDA Ireland.

Strong multinational presence

Ireland is home to many of the world's leading multinational organizations, particularly across technology, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and financial services. This established corporate ecosystem provides access to experienced professional services, infrastructure, and international business networks.

Pillar Two readiness

Ireland has implemented OECD/G20 Pillar Two global minimum tax rules in line with EU requirements, providing certainty for multinational groups operating internationally. While maintaining a competitive investment environment, Ireland continues to offer regulatory stability and transparency for large cross-border businesses.

Ireland at a glance

Capital and government seat
Dublin

Currency
Euro (EUR)

Official languages
English, Irish

Population
~5.4 million

GDP (nominal)
~USD 570bn

GDP per capita
~USD 105,000

Time zone
GMT

Telephone country code
(+353)

Legal system
Common law

How to do business in Ireland

Entry options for foreign investors

All companies in Ireland are obliged to prepare annual accounts and maintain accurate financial records in accordance with either the EU-endorsed International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) or Irish Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).

There are very few restrictions on overseas investors in terms of setting up operations in Ireland—and the most suitable company structure depends on the business's specific circumstances. The main structure options are:

Private limited company (LTD)

- Most common investor vehicle
- Separate legal entity
- No minimum capital requirement

Public limited company (PLC)

- Listing and securities use cases
- Share capital requirements

Branch office

- Extension of foreign parent
- Companies Registration Office (CRO) requirements

Partnership/Limited liability partnership (LLP)

- Tax-transparent structures
- Useful for investment arrangements

Ireland's regulatory environment

Ireland benefits from a transparent legal and regulatory framework aligned with EU standards.

Key regulators include:

- Companies Registration Office (CRO)
- Revenue Commissioners
- Central Bank of Ireland (for regulated sectors)
- Workplace Relations Commission (WRC)

Taxation

Corporation tax

Ireland applies a 12.5% corporation tax rate to trading income generated by Irish tax resident companies.

A higher 25% rate generally applies to passive income and certain non-trading activities.

Global minimum tax (OECD Pillar Two)

Ireland has implemented OECD Pillar Two rules in line with EU directives. These rules apply to multinational enterprise groups with consolidated annual revenues above EUR 750 million.

Qualifying multinational groups may become subject to a 15% minimum effective tax rate through domestic top-up tax rules.

Transfer pricing

Ireland applies OECD-aligned transfer pricing rules based on the arm's length principle. Groups may need to maintain transfer pricing documentation demonstrating that related-party transactions are priced appropriately.

Dividend withholding tax

Dividend payments are generally subject to a 25% withholding tax, although exemptions may apply for:

- EU resident entities
- Treaty jurisdictions
- Certain group structures

Stamp duty*

Stamp duty may apply to:

- Share transfers
- Property acquisitions
- Certain business asset transactions

Rates vary depending on asset type.

Tax treaties

Ireland has one of the world's largest double tax treaty networks. The treaty framework helps reduce double taxation exposure and supports inbound and outbound investment.

Tax incentives

Ireland offers a number of tax incentives designed to support innovation and inward investment.

These include:

- R&D tax credits
- Knowledge Development Box regime
- Capital allowances for certain intellectual property assets

Value added tax (VAT)

Ireland's VAT regime is aligned with EU VAT rules and applies to the sale of goods and services, imports, and certain cross-border transactions. Ireland's standard VAT rate is 23%.

Reduced VAT rates apply to certain sectors:

- 13.5% | Utilities, construction-related services, cleaning, and selected labour-intensive activities
- 9% | Hospitality, tourism, accommodation, restaurants, newspapers, and sporting facilities
- 0% | Certain food products, children's clothing, books, medicines, exports, and intra-EU supplies where qualifying conditions are met

Businesses may need to register for VAT depending on:

- Annual turnover thresholds
- Imports into Ireland
- Intra-EU trading activity
- Cross-border digital services
- E-commerce sales to EU consumers

Digital services and e-commerce

Ireland participates in the EU's One Stop Shop (OSS) and Import One Stop Shop (IOSS) systems, which simplify VAT reporting for businesses selling goods and services across multiple EU jurisdictions.

Reverse charge mechanism

In certain cross-border business-to-business transactions, VAT may be accounted for by the customer under reverse charge rules.

Investor considerations

Ireland's VAT system provides alignment with EU rules, supporting businesses trading across European markets. Foreign investors should assess VAT registration and reporting obligations early in the establishment process.

Employment regulation

Ireland's employment framework is broadly employer friendly but contains important statutory protections around employment terms, working time, leave, equality, dismissal, payroll reporting, pensions, and immigration permissions.

For foreign investors establishing operations in Ireland, employment planning should be considered alongside entity formation, payroll registration, immigration requirements, and workplace policies.

1 Basic employment terms

Employers must provide employees with core written terms shortly after employment begins. These include details such as the employer and employee names, place of work, job title or nature of work, start date, pay arrangements, working hours, and other key conditions.

Employers should also maintain compliant employment contracts, workplace policies, payroll processes, and records of working time and leave.

2 Remote and hybrid working

Ireland has introduced a statutory right for employees to request remote working. Employees can request remote working from the first day of employment, although they must generally have six months' continuous service before an approved remote working arrangement can begin.

Employers are not required to automatically grant remote working requests, but they must consider requests in line with the applicable Code of Practice and provide a reasoned response.

For investors, this means Irish employment policies should address:

- Eligibility for remote or hybrid working
- Request and approval process
- Data protection and confidentiality
- Health and safety obligations
- Equipment and expense arrangements
- Cross-border working risks, including tax and social security issues

3 Social security and payroll taxes

Employers are responsible for operating payroll deductions and reporting employment taxes to Revenue.

Key payroll deductions may include:

- PAYE income tax
- Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI)
- Universal Social Charge (USC)
- Local property tax deductions, where applicable

4 PAYE modernisation and real-time payroll reporting

Ireland operates a real-time payroll reporting system under PAYE Modernisation. Employers must report employee pay and statutory deductions to Revenue on or before each payroll payment date.

This means payroll setup should be completed before employees are paid, and employers should ensure that employee details, tax credits, pay data, benefits, pension contributions, and leaver information are reported accurately.

For inbound employers, payroll registration and payroll provider selection should be addressed early in the setup process.

5 Auto-enrolment pensions: MyFutureFund

Ireland's new auto-enrolment pension system, known as MyFutureFund, commenced on January 1, 2026.

Eligible employees are automatically enrolled where they are:

- Between age 23 and 60
- Earning more than €20,000 per year across employments
- Not already contributing to an occupational pension or similar supplementary pension arrangement through payroll

Initial contribution rates for 2026–2028 are:

Employee	1.5%
Employer	1.5%
State	0.5%

Contribution rates are scheduled to increase gradually over the first 10 years, reaching 6% from the employee, 6% from the employer, and 2% from the state from 2035 onward. Employers should factor auto-enrolment into payroll implementation, employee communications, and total employment cost planning.

6 Foreign employees and employment permits

EU, European Economic Area (EEA), Swiss, and U.K. nationals generally have the right to work in Ireland without an employment permit. Other nationals may require an Irish employment permit depending on role, nationality, and immigration status.

Critical Skills Employment Permit

Designed for highly skilled roles where Ireland has identified labour or skills shortages.

From March 1, 2026, relevant minimum salary thresholds include:

- EUR 40,904 for eligible roles on the critical skills occupations list
- EUR 68,911 for other eligible roles not on the ineligible occupations list

This permit is commonly relevant for technology, engineering, healthcare, finance, and other specialist roles.

General Employment Permit

Used for a wider range of roles where the occupation is not ineligible and permit conditions are met.

From March 1, 2026, the general minimum salary threshold is EUR 36,605, subject to role-specific exceptions and permit rules.

Employers should assess permit requirements before offers are finalised, as processing timelines and documentation can affect hiring plans.

7 Minimum wage and working time

Ireland applies statutory minimum wage rules, working time limits, annual leave entitlements, public holiday entitlements, and rest break requirements.

Overtime is not generally subject to a statutory premium rate unless provided for in the employment contract, collective agreement, or sector-specific arrangement.

8 Equality and dismissal protections

Irish employment law prohibits discrimination across protected grounds, including gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, and membership of the Traveller community.

Employees may bring workplace claims before the Workplace Relations Commission. Employers should ensure that dismissal processes are fair, documented, and compliant with statutory notice and unfair dismissal rules.

9 Investor considerations

Foreign investors establishing in Ireland should plan early for:

- Employment contracts and HR policies
- Payroll registration and PAYE reporting
- Pension auto-enrolment obligations
- Remote and hybrid working policies
- Immigration and employment permit timelines
- Working time and leave compliance
- HR recordkeeping and workplace procedures

How CSC can help you invest in Ireland

Despite Ireland's business-friendly environment, investors may still face complexity around incorporation, tax registration, employment setup, governance requirements, payroll compliance, and ongoing regulatory obligations.

Working with an experienced local provider can help reduce implementation timelines, improve compliance oversight, and support long-term operational efficiency.

Who we are

CSC provides knowledge-based solutions for every phase of the business life cycle, helping businesses form entities, maintain compliance, execute transaction work, and support real estate, merger and acquisition (M&A), and other corporate transactions in hundreds of U.S. and international jurisdictions.

We work with some of the world's largest banks and commercial lenders to reduce risk in their lien portfolios, improve their transaction speeds, and create a secure environment for their financial processing needs. We also provide solutions for secure real estate document preparation and recording.

We are the trusted partner for 90% of the Fortune 500®, nearly 10,000 law firms, and more than 3,000 financial organizations. Headquartered in Wilmington, Delaware, USA, since 1899, we are a global company capable of doing business wherever our clients are—and we accomplish that by employing experts in every business we serve.

What we do

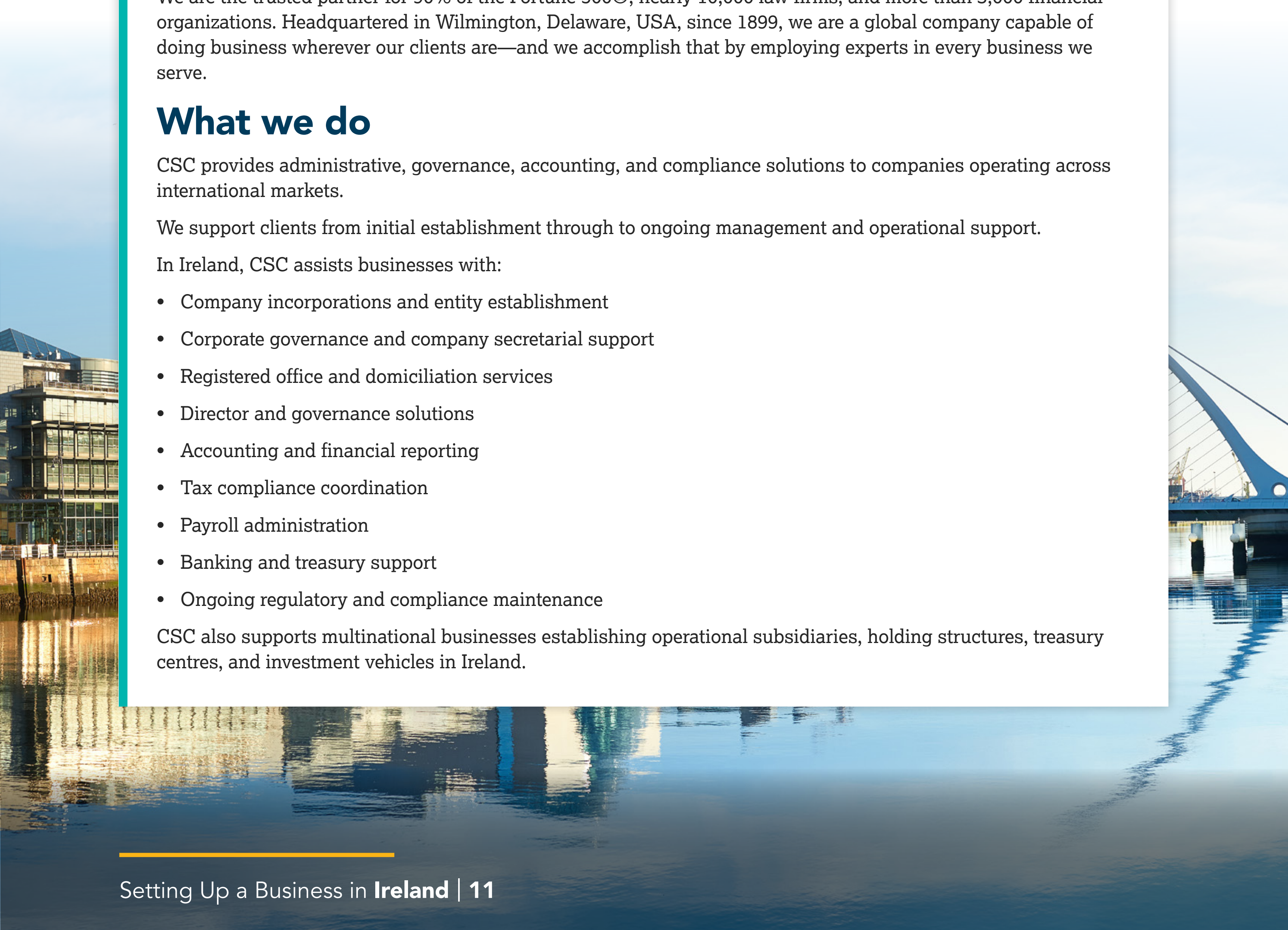
CSC provides administrative, governance, accounting, and compliance solutions to companies operating across international markets.

We support clients from initial establishment through to ongoing management and operational support.

In Ireland, CSC assists businesses with:

- Company incorporations and entity establishment
- Corporate governance and company secretarial support
- Registered office and domiciliation services
- Director and governance solutions
- Accounting and financial reporting
- Tax compliance coordination
- Payroll administration
- Banking and treasury support
- Ongoing regulatory and compliance maintenance

CSC also supports multinational businesses establishing operational subsidiaries, holding structures, treasury centres, and investment vehicles in Ireland.



Services

CSC provides a broad range of corporate, governance, administration, and transaction support services to businesses investing and operating in Ireland.

Our services are structured across four core service pillars:

Entity solutions

Supporting businesses throughout the full entity life cycle—from incorporation through to ongoing governance and compliance.

- Corporate services
- Company formations and incorporations
- Corporate secretarial support
- Registered office and domiciliation services
- Director and governance services
- Accounts preparation and financial reporting
- Tax compliance coordination
- Global payroll solutions
- Treasury and cash management support
- Special purpose vehicle (SPV) administration
- Global subsidiary management
- Private client services

Fund solutions

Supporting fund managers, investment structures, and alternative asset platforms across administration, governance, and reporting.

- Fund administration
- Private equity
- Private debt
- Real estate and infrastructure funds
- Hedge funds and fund of funds
- Shadow accounting
- Middle-office outsourcing
- Loan administration
- Reconciliation services
- Treasury management
- Regulatory and governance support
- AML and KYC services
- Regulatory reporting
- Technology and consulting solutions

Capital markets

Providing transaction support and specialist fiduciary services across complex financing and structured transactions.

- Trustee services
- Indenture and note trustee services
- Successor trustee appointments
- Bankruptcy, insolvency, and restructuring support
- Escrow services
- Independent director services
- Loan agency services
- Administrative and facility agent services
- Collateral and security agent services
- Depositary agent and account bank services
- SPV management and administration
- Transaction structuring and compliance
- Domiciliation and management services

Digital brand and cyber risk

Helping businesses protect and manage digital assets, online presence, and intellectual property.

- Domain security
- Domain portfolio management
- Online brand protection
- Digital asset monitoring
- Cyber risk mitigation support

Ireland continues to attract global investors seeking access to European markets, a transparent regulatory environment, and a stable business ecosystem. With local expertise and global reach, CSC supports clients at every stage of establishing and operating in Ireland.

Appendix

The following appendix provides additional context on Ireland's international treaty framework.

Double Tax Treaty Network

Ireland maintains one of the world's most extensive double tax treaty networks, with over 75 double taxation treaties in force with jurisdictions across Europe, North America, Asia, the Middle East, and other major global markets.

These treaties are designed to:

- Reduce or eliminate double taxation on cross-border income
- Provide certainty on tax residence and taxing rights
- Reduce withholding tax exposure on dividends, interest, and royalties
- Support efficient international group structures and financing arrangements
- Encourage foreign direct investment into Ireland

Ireland's treaty network is a key factor in its attractiveness as an international holding company, operational headquarters, and investment platform location.

Examples of treaty partner jurisdictions include:

- United Kingdom
- United States
- Canada
- Germany
- France
- Netherlands
- Luxembourg
- Switzerland
- Singapore
- United Arab Emirates
- China
- Japan

Businesses should seek professional tax advice when relying on treaty benefits, as eligibility and application depend on the specific facts and structure involved.

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