

St. Patrick's Day

Ireland provides ideal market access for doing business in the EU

Anne Barrington
AMBASSADOR OF IRELAND

A happy St. Patrick's Day to everyone in Japan!

St. Patrick arrived in Ireland in 432 and in the following decades, through the power of his words and his deeds, he had a profound and lasting impact on the people of our island. He was a peaceful person, modest, unassuming and in tune with nature. I like to think that he had many characteristics that Japanese people admire.

For over 1,200 years St. Patrick's Day has been celebrated in Ireland. Following the Great



Famine disaster of the 1840s many of our population began a tradition of emigration that has lasted into this century. It is through our worldwide diaspora of over 70 million people that St. Patrick's Day has become a global phenomenon. The oldest St. Patrick's Day parade in the world is in New York, showing the strong affinity between Ireland and the U.S. through the emigration of our people there.

This year, Ireland commemorates the 1916 Easter Rising that set in motion the achievement of our independence some six years later. Inspired by our own heritage and the ideals of the French and the American revolutions, Ireland sought independence while proclaiming a republic based on liberty and equality for all its people.

As we commemorate this

milestone in Ireland's history we are mindful also of the fifth anniversary of the triple disaster that hit Japan when the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake and tsunami struck, followed by the ensuing nuclear disaster. The devastating loss that so many endured will remain a legacy for all those left behind in Japan.

I am honored to chair the international committee of the charity Support our Kids. This charity helps the children of the affected region. Groups of children travel every year to a number of countries, including Ireland. While in my country they study our ancient culture, learn English in a safe environment and come to terms with what they have lost and continue to endure. One aim is for these children to become ambassadors for Japan during the

Tokyo Olympics in 2020.

On March 22, the great Irish artist Enya will perform here in Tokyo at a charity concert and auction for Support our Kids. This is a unique opportunity to hear this wonderful artist in person and support a great charity.

After a number of difficult years, Ireland's economy has recovered and for the second year in a row our growth, at well over 7 percent last year, is the highest in the European Union. Last year, our export growth — at 13.5 percent — was the highest since 2000 and exports continue to contribute strongly to our economy. The general government deficit has fallen to 1.5 percent and is expected to fall further this year. Our debt to GDP ratio is on a firm downward trajectory, falling from 120 percent of GDP to below 97 percent in

2015. We have restructured our banks and implemented a range of reforms to ensure that we remain competitive.

Ireland would very much like to do more business with Japan. We have a pool of highly skilled, multilingual workers and we are the only English-speaking country in the Eurozone. We have barrier-free access to an EU market of 500 million people. And we will remain firm and committed members of the European Union, one of the great inventions of the 20th century.

Ireland is ranked first in the world for the availability of competent senior managers. We also top the world rankings for the flexibility and adaptability of our workforce and for openness to foreign ideas.

We have the youngest population in the European Union

and our education system ranks in the top 10 in the world. Over 50 percent of 30 to 34-year-olds have a third-level degree. This is higher than any other country in the EU.

We have maintained our position as the best country in the Eurozone for doing business and overall we come in fourth in the world.

And for Ireland, Japan remains our most important partner in Asia. We highly appreciate the long-term investments that Japan has made and the top-class standards that this market demands. To succeed in doing business in Japan is, for Irish companies, a standard which ensures success elsewhere.

We excel in the niche areas of ICT, pharmaceuticals, financial services and food where we firmly believe that collaboration



World Heritage site Skellig Michael, off the southwest coast of Ireland, was used as a filming location in the latest Star Wars movie. EMBASSY OF IRELAND

with Japan will lead to real added value for both our countries.

I believe many Japanese people would enjoy the unspoiled beauty of our natural surroundings and I would like to invite more people to visit us. A Japanese language website dedicated to tourism will open in May at www.ireland.com. So, please

consider Ireland a holiday destination.

But before you travel to Ireland join us if you can in Omotesando on March 20 for a wonderful parade to be followed by the I Love Ireland Festival in Yoyogi Park. You don't need to have any Irish heritage. Just a love of fun and a touch of green will do!

Nation defined by ongoing commitment to human rights, freedom of oppression

Michael D. Higgins
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

May I send my very best wishes for St. Patrick's Day to the people of Ireland and to our global family and friends around the world. I do so with particular warmth this year as we commemorate the centenary of one of the most significant events in our nation's journey to independence — the Easter Rising of 1916.

As we come together to celebrate our Irishness on our national day, it is appropriate that we not only recall our founding moments, but also take the opportunity to imagine what Ireland might yet become. We must ask ourselves how we might best use that freedom, which was handed down to us by previous generations, in such a way that will serve all of our people.

As to 1916, with the benefit of rich and recent scholarship, we can appreciate in a new way the complexity of the historic event that was the Easter Rising. We can now acknowledge the diverse identities, backgrounds



and experiences of those who participated in it, as well as the varied ideologies and beliefs that motivated them. We also recognize that, whatever their differing priorities, all of these men and women were as one in their commitment to rejecting empire. All of them were determined to achieve independence and to proclaim a free republic with equal rights and opportunities for all its citizens.

One hundred years later, as we reflect on the proclamation of 1916, and the idealism that inspired it, we are urged to re-engage with the work of crafting, together, a republic worthy of that title. We are invited to seek to achieve the unfulfilled promises of the past as we imagine,

together, new possibilities for our present and collective future.

In undertaking that task we can draw on the aspirations, expressed in different places and at different times by our people since the founding moments of our state, in The Democratic Programme of the First Dail in 1919, in Bunreacht na hEireann in 1937 and in the sentiments expressed at the moment of the formal establishment of the Irish Republic in 1948. As a people we have of course revisited our constitution on many occasions, seeking to ensure that the principles it enshrines bring us closer to the ideals of freedom, justice and equality that were proclaimed in 1916. The need for idealism remains.

On many occasions since my inauguration as president of Ireland I have witnessed idealism of so many at every level of our society here in Ireland, and among our extended family around the globe, who are working for the creation of a better world at home and abroad. Their sense of justice and solidarity is reflected in a multitude

of actions that is a pleasure to acknowledge.

When we Irish are at our best we are a nation defined by a commitment to human rights, creative imagination, and, at a global level, the upholding of freedom from oppression. In

this new century, we Irish have a most valuable contribution to make in the global fight against extreme poverty, hunger and in our response to climate change. Conscious of our history and culture, we can give a lead too in crafting a human response to

the ongoing refugee crisis. We can, in so many ways, continue the work of making Ireland the real republic of which our founders dreamed.

May I wish all Irish people, by birth or descent, those who have made new homes here in Ireland and all who share our national day with us, a very happy St. Patrick's Day.

Happy Saint Patrick's Day

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