

Public Relations in Ireland

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Part 1: Background information

Official Name:

Conventional Long Form: Republic of Ireland

Conventional Short Form: Ireland

Local Long Form: None

Local Short Form: Eire

Capital City: Dublin

Major Cities: Belfast, Cork, Galway

Official Language: English (official) is the language generally used; Irish (Gaelic or Gaeilge) spoken mainly in areas located along the western seaboard.

Type of Government: Republic, parliamentary democracy

Location: Western Europe, occupying five-sixths of the island of Ireland in the North Atlantic Ocean, west of Great Britain

Currency: Euro (EUR)

Culture:

As of a 2002 census in Ireland, the country's religious following was comprised of 88.4 percent Roman Catholic, 2.95 percent Church of Ireland (Anglican), 0.53 percent Presbyterian, 0.26 percent Methodist, less than 0.05 percent Jewish, and approximately 2.3 percent other religious groupings (mainly Islam); 3.53 percent marked the "no religion" box.

Both the United States' fast-food culture and continental European dishes have influenced the country. Common meals include pizza, curry, Chinese food and, recently, some Western African dishes. The increase in fast food consumption has led to the increase of public health problems including obesity and one of the highest rates of heart disease in the world. The large emphasis on meat in an Irish diet is also somewhat to blame. The last quarter of a century saw the emergence of a new Irish cuisine consisting of fresh vegetables, fish, soda bread, handmade cheeses and, of course, the potato.

Pub culture is dominant in Irish society. The term refers to the Irish habit of frequenting public houses (pubs) or bars. Traditional pub culture is concerned with more than just



drinking, even though Ireland has a recognized problem with over-consumption of alcohol, with the third-highest alcohol consumption in the world according to the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development Health Data 2005 survey.

Best known among tourists is the traditional pub, with its traditional Irish music (or “trad music”). Many more modern pubs often substitute traditional music for a DJ or non-traditional live music.

A significant recent change in pub culture in the Republic of Ireland was the introduction of a smoking ban on March 29, 2004, in all workplaces, including pubs and restaurants.

Sport in Ireland is popular and widespread, the most popular being Gaelic football, hurling, rugby, soccer and hockey — both field and ice.

Part 2: Overview of the public relations industry

Formal public relations practice in Ireland started with state entities. In 1927, The Electricity Supply Board (ESB) appointed Ned Lawler as public relations officer. He played a major role in awareness campaigns, particularly the rural electrification scheme, which continued into the 1950s.

The Public Relations Institute of Ireland (PRII) was formed in 1953 by Leslie Luke when he suggested to Lawler a “meeting of public relations officials.” This meeting was held in Dublin on October 28, 1953, and Lawler was elected chairman and convener. The first Irish consultants emerged in the 1950s. The PRII currently has over 1,000 members. They are comprised of public relations and communications professionals drawn from consultancies, industry, government, semi-state, voluntary and business organizations.

One of the most significant events in the history of the PRII was the visit of Pope John Paul II to Ireland in 1979. The Institute volunteered the services of its members and more than 100 took part in what was probably the biggest media event in the country ever, with more than 3,000 journalists attending.

In addition to the PRII, the Public Relations Consultants Association of Ireland (PRCAI) was founded in 1989. Northern Ireland practitioners join the UK’s Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR). Friendly links between practitioners in the Republic and in the North go back to 1964. Two Northern Ireland consultancies are members of the PRCAI and Northern Ireland entries feature prominently in the annual PRII/PRCAI awards for Excellence in Public Relations.

Other associations include the Forum on Public Procurement (FPP) and the Marketing Institute of Ireland (MII). The FPP is a nonprofit organization that is the representative body for organizations and individuals concerned with purchasing and supply chain management within the public sector in Ireland, while the MII is the professional body for marketing people throughout Ireland. Established in 1962, the MII offers

membership, qualifications and training with a network of over 3,500 members throughout Ireland.

Public relations is still, somewhat grudgingly, criticized. Leaders in politics, business and the voluntary sector recognize its importance and are increasingly using its services. This respect is most evident in the financial and political areas, inspired by the large number of corporate financial developments of recent years and the fact that no Irish government was re-elected from 1969 to 2002.

Most of the consultancies are still Irish-owned and headed by their founder-owner. But Edelman, Lopex, Ogilvy and Hill & Knowlton came in the 1980s, and in recent years have seen an expansion of their international presence.

According to the PRII, most consultancies in Ireland offer a broad range of services in many of the following areas: internal communications, corporate public relations, consumer public relations, media relations, business-to-business, public affairs, community relations, corporate social responsibility, investor relations, strategic communication, issues management, crisis management, events management, sponsorship, health care and digital public relations.

Some examples of public relations organizations in Ireland include:

- PRII – Public Relations Institute of Ireland: www.prii.ie
- PRCA – Public Relations Consultants Association of Ireland: www.prca.ie
- CIPR – UK’s Chartered Institute of Public Relations: www.cipr.co.uk
- FPP – Forum on Public Procurement: www.fpp.ie
- MII – Marketing Institute of Ireland: www.mii.ie

Part 3: Overview of public relations as it relates to students

The first course in public relations was held in 1951 at the Rathmines High School of Commerce in Dublin, now part of the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT). While the PRII ran successful part-time courses, the first full-time course started in 1978 at DIT with support of PRII. Originally a certificate course, it became a postgraduate diploma in 1990 and a master’s degree in 1997. PRII introduced mandatory educational qualifications for membership in 1985 and launched its own two-year night course in 1986. From the start, this course attracted more than a hundred students each year. In 1997, the PRII introduced its own National Syllabus Diploma to set the syllabus and examine all other institutions apart from DIT. Three colleges offer the PRII National Diploma in a one-year, full-time program and four run it for two years, part-time. The total enrollment is more than 500 students.

Public relations research in Ireland is still in its infancy, but there has been steady development through the master’s degree at DIT, with some 160 graduates to date. It has produced many exploratory studies in public relations practice. The program runs for a duration of one year and combines lectures, project work, the production of an academic

dissertation and work experience, with the intention of preparing students for a successful career in public relations.

Course content includes:

- The Theory & Practice of Public Relations
- Public Relations Writing
- Electronic Public Relations
- Print & Design
- Television & Radio
- Political Economy of Public Communication
- Society & Representation
- Communication Theory and Public Relations Applications
- The Marketing Environment
- Public Affairs & Lobbying
- Strategy & Corporate Environment
- Research Methodology
- Dissertation

Following its successful investment in pre-entry education, PRII turned its attention to continuing professional development and launched a comprehensive program in 2002, describing it as a “flexible framework within which companies and individuals can plan and recognize professional development and learning.”

PRII offers a student membership with an annual fee of €3.49. Students must be at least 20 years of age and have evidence of registration for a course recognized by the PRII in subjects relevant to the practice of public relations.

The Irish Academy: www.irishacademy.com

The Academy offers a Certificate in “Public Relations and PR Writing Skills.” At foundation level, the “Introduction to Public Relations” course is taught by colleges throughout the country and is also available through distance learning. Courses are taught on campus at UCD (Dublin), UCC (Cork) and GMIT (Galway).

Dublin Institute of Technology: www.dit.ie

The Institute is a comprehensive higher education institution that aims to achieve an innovative, responsive, caring and flexible learning environment with state-of-the-art facilities and the most advanced technology available. It is committed to providing access to higher education for students of different ages and backgrounds, and to achieving quality and excellence in all aspects of its work.

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