

Transport and Tourism in Ireland

This overview of the transport and tourism sectors in Ireland was prepared to provide information for the mission of the Transport and Tourism Committee to the country in 2018 (04-06 April).

1. INTRODUCTION

Ireland joined the European Union (EU) in 1973 and was one of the first countries to adopt the euro on 1 January 1999¹.

Its political system is a parliamentary, representative democratic republic and the country's economy is expected to grow at a solid pace supported mainly by domestic activity. Irish GDP growth performed better than expected in the third quarter of 2017 as headline figures were driven up by the activities of multinational companies in the country (please see Table 1 below).

Transport and housing will account for approximately 30% and 20% of total government capital expenditure planned until 2021. During the pre-crisis property boom, a considerable proportion of property development activity occurred in relatively remote areas without appropriate transport links to the main centres of employment. To address this growing problem, the Irish authorities face a quadruple challenge:

- delivering additional transport capacity;
- finding the right balance between public and private transport;
- improving the efficiency of transport corridors by means of careful spatial planning; and
- limiting carbon emissions from transport².



¹ European Commission - DG ECFIN (Economic and Financial Matters) - [Ireland and the euro](#).

² European Commission - The Commission's Annual Growth Survey - The European Semester - [Country Report Ireland 2017](#) (p.46).



Ireland has transposed 98% of EU transport related directives into national law. The country recorded relatively few pending court cases about an alleged infringement of EU transport law at the end of July 2016³.

Table 1: Macro-Economic Forecasts for Ireland

	2016	2017	2018	2019
GDP growth (% , year over year)	5.1	7.3	4.4	3.1
Inflation (% , year over year)	-0.2	0.3	0.9	1.1

Source: European Commission⁴

2. GENERAL TRANSPORT

2.1. Renewable Energy in Transport

The Renewable Energy Directive (Directive 2009/28/EC⁵) imposes on all Member States a 10% share of renewable energy sources in transport by 2020. In 2015, renewable energy accounted for 6.5% in Irish transport, compared to an EU average of 6.7% for the same year⁶. In the same year, Ireland was among the EU countries with the highest number of charging points for electric vehicles per city population. The number of new cars using alternative fuels was also on the rise in 2015, but from a very low level⁷.

In Ireland, the support scheme for renewable energy sources used in the transport sector is a quota system. This scheme obliges suppliers of fuels to ensure that biofuels make up to a defined percentage of the company's total annual sale of fuel⁸. The Irish authorities expect transport emissions, representing about 20% of total emissions, to increase by 11% between 2015 and 2020. This increase in transport emissions is largely due to the shortage of mass transit facilities around Dublin, which underlines the importance of additional investments in public transport and spatial planning⁹.

2.2. Transport Infrastructure Quality

In the World Economic Forum's index of satisfaction with transport infrastructure quality, Ireland is ranked 7th out of the 28 Member States based on overall performance of transport infrastructure (please see Figure 1 below). These ratings of the quality of the Irish transport infrastructure have gone down slightly compared to previous years, but they generally remain above the EU average (with the exception of the quality of the railroad infrastructure)¹⁰.

³ European Commission - DG MOVE (Mobility and Transport) - Ireland Country Scoreboard - [Internal Market](#).

⁴ European Commission - DG ECFIN (Economic and Financial Affairs) - [Country page for Ireland](#).

⁵ Directive 2009/28/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on [the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources](#) and amending and subsequently repealing Directives 2001/77/EC and 2003/30/EC - Article 3, paragraph 4: "Each Member State shall ensure that the share of energy from renewable sources in all forms of transport in 2020 is at least 10% of the final consumption of energy in transport in that Member State." (p.L140/28).

⁶ EUROSTAT - Statistics explained - [Energy from Renewable Sources](#) - Table 4, updated September 2017.

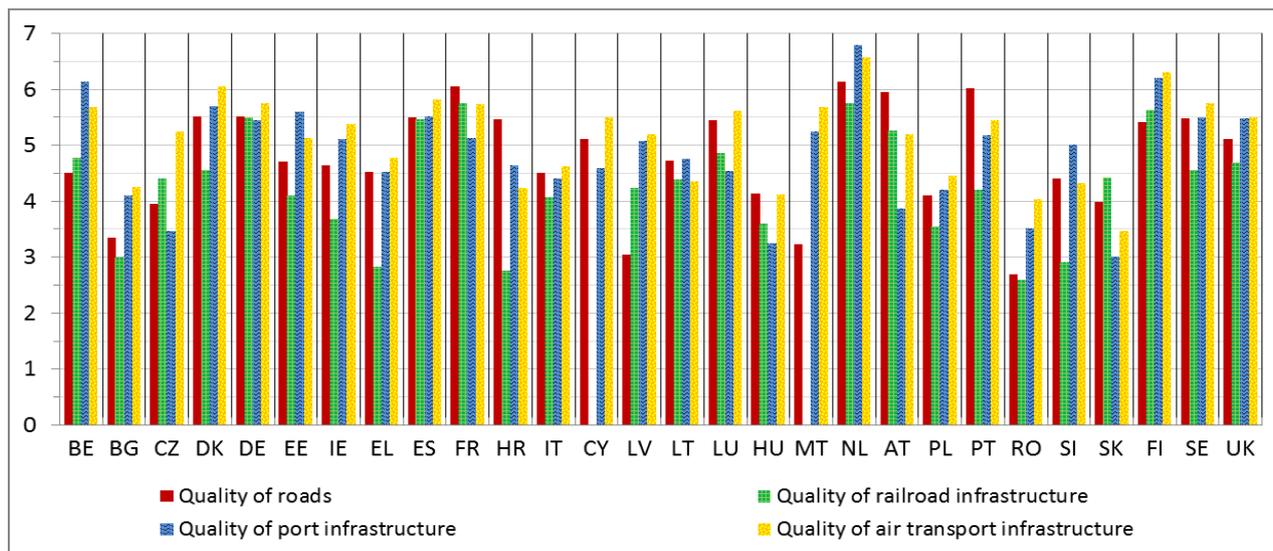
⁷ European Commission - DG MOVE (Mobility and Transport) - Ireland Country Scoreboard - [Energy Union and Innovation](#).

⁸ RES Legal - Legal sources on renewable energy - [Ireland: Summary](#) - updated October 2017.

⁹ European Commission - The Commission's Annual Growth Survey - The European Semester - [Country Report Ireland 2017](#) (p.56).

¹⁰ European Commission - DG MOVE (Mobility and Transport) - Ireland Country Scoreboard - [Investments and Infrastructure](#).

Figure 1: Satisfaction with Infrastructure Quality (2016-2017)



Source: World Economic Forum¹¹

In general, consumer satisfaction with transport in Ireland has improved between 2013 and 2015 and it is close to the EU average as regards all means of transport¹².

The analysis of the World Bank Logistics Performance Index (LPI)¹³ shows that Ireland is in 11th position among the Member States¹⁴. One of the components of the LPI is quality of trade and transport related infrastructure (e.g. ports, railroads, roads, information technology)¹⁵. However, the timeliness of shipments in Ireland has decreased between 2014 and 2016 and is now slightly below the EU average¹⁶.

2.3. The Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)

The North Sea-Mediterranean Corridor is the only Core Network Corridor (CNC) of the TEN-T that crosses Ireland (please see Map 1 below). It stretches from Belfast and the Irish ports of Cork and Dublin, as well as from the northern United Kingdom (UK) ports Glasgow and Edinburgh through Belgium, with a branch from Amsterdam and Rotterdam, via Luxembourg to Strasbourg and Basel and via Lyon to the southern French ports of Fos/Marseille. It covers rail, road, airports, ports, RRT's and the Dutch-Belgian inland waterway system as well as the Rhône river. The key project is the Seine-Escaut inland waterway¹⁷.

The European Coordinator for this CNC is Mr Péter Balázs and he explains that, when complete, the corridor will improve links between the British Isles and Continental Europe. In the United Kingdom and Ireland, rail

¹¹ European Commission - The European Semester Thematic Fiche 2017 - [Transport](#) (p.10). Data taken from the World Economic Forum, produced for its Global Competitiveness Report 2016-2017. Scale from 1 [extremely underdeveloped] to 7 [extensive and efficient by international standards]. The countries were ranked on their overall performance on transport infrastructure. The results should however be interpreted with caution, since they report a subjective view rather than an objective assessment. They can reflect the satisfaction with the density of infrastructure rather than the quality of maintenance. They also do not reflect differences observed within Member States, which can be very significant, e.g. between regions, road types (motorway, secondary, local) or ownership models (concession or national roads).

¹² European Commission - DG MOVE (Mobility and Transport) - Ireland Country Scoreboard - [People](#).

¹³ The Logistics Performance Index (LPI) is the weighted average of the scores of a country on six key dimensions: efficiency of the clearance process, quality of trade and transport related infrastructure, ease of arranging competitively priced shipments, competence and quality of logistics services, ability to track and trace consignments, and timeliness of shipments in reaching destination within the scheduled or expected delivery time. The LPI consists of both qualitative and quantitative measures.

¹⁴ The scores demonstrate comparative performance (lowest score to highest score) from 1 to 5. Concerning the global LPI, it is worth adding that there are 23 Member States ranked in the top 50 out of the 160 countries compared by the World Bank. According to the European Commission, this shows that despite increasing challenges, Member States are still performing relatively well.

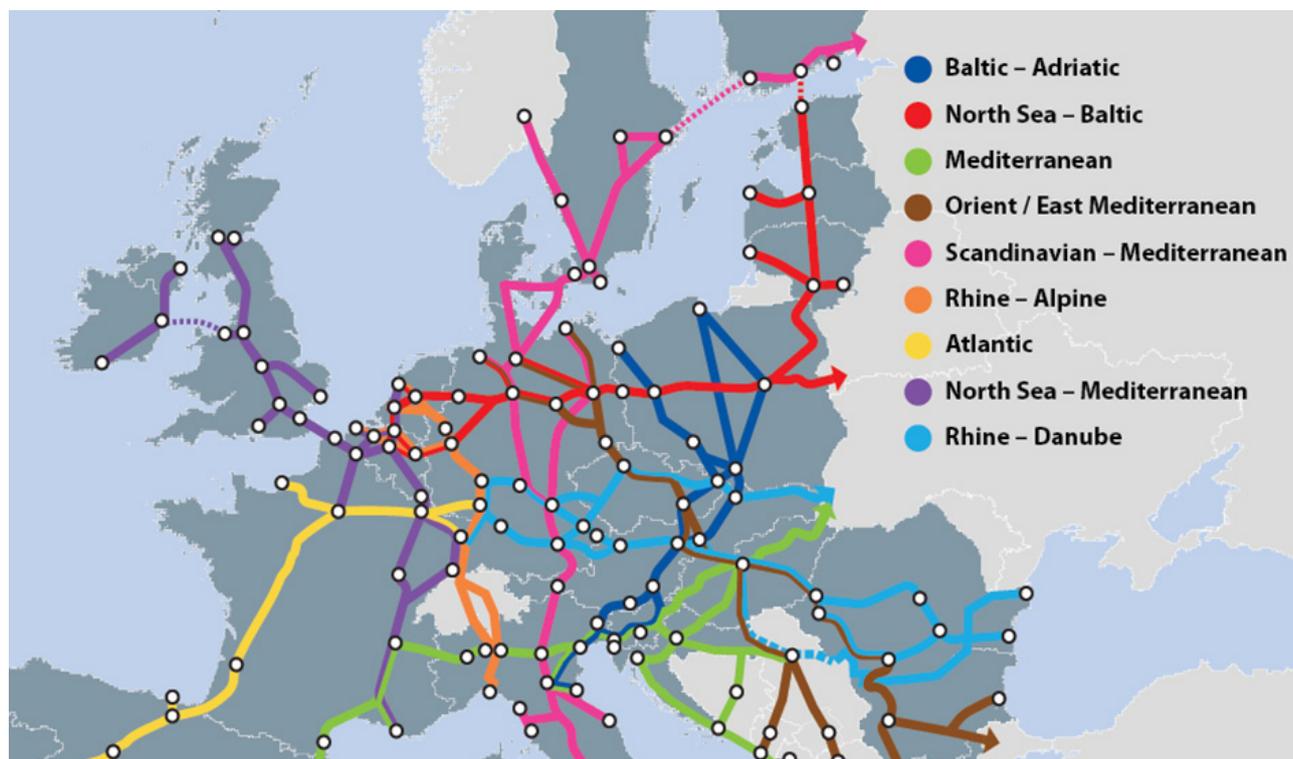
¹⁵ European Commission - The European Semester Thematic Fiche 2017 - [Transport](#) (p.10).

¹⁶ European Commission - DG MOVE (Mobility and Transport) - Ireland Country Scoreboard - [Investments and Infrastructure](#).

¹⁷ European Commission - DG MOVE (Mobility and Transport) - TEN-T [Country Fiche](#) for Ireland.

connections present the most significant challenge, in particular the Belfast-Dublin and the Dublin-Cork connections and the Dublin Area Rapid Transit (DART) project¹⁸.

Map 1: The TEN-T Core Network Corridors - focus on Ireland



Source: European Commission¹⁹

As for the completion of the TEN-T core networks in Ireland, it is nearing completion for both road (93%) and rail networks (92%)²⁰.

Regarding the financing, the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) has selected 6 projects involving Ireland in the CEF Call 2015, of which no projects were actions exclusively in Ireland (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: CEF Transport Projects involving Ireland

Name of the Project	Reference	Member States involved	Beneficiary	Estimated total cost	Maximum EU contribution	EU Co-financing rate
Performance Based Navigation (PBN) Implementation Toolkit	2015-BE-TM-0040-W	All EU Member States	Eurocontrol	€4,912,000	€2,456,000	50%
SESAR Deployment Programme Implementation 2015 - Cluster 1	2015-EU-TM-0193-M	AT, BE, DK, FI, FR, DE, IE, IT, LU, NL, PT, ES, SE, UK	SESAR Deployment Manager	€258,481,518	€105,545,416	40.83%

¹⁸ European Commission - DG MOVE (Mobility and Transport) - [North Sea-Mediterranean Core Network Corridor](#).

¹⁹ European Commission - DG MOVE (Mobility and Transport) - Trans-European Transport Networks - [TENtec - Maps](#).

²⁰ European Commission - DG MOVE (Mobility and Transport) - Ireland Country Scoreboard - [Investments and Infrastructure](#).

Name of the Project	Reference	Member States involved	Beneficiary	Estimated total cost	Maximum EU contribution	EU Co-financing rate
SESAR Deployment Programme Implementation 2015 - Cluster 2	2015-EU-TM-0196-M	AT, BE, DK, FI, FR, DE, EL, IE, IT, LV, NL, PT, SI, ES, SE, UK	SESAR Deployment Manager	€854,946,393	€367,146,178	42.94%
Convergence of DSNA and COOPANS ATM Systems step 1B (CODACAS 1B) - General Part	2015-EU-TM-0387-S	AT, HR, DK, FR, IE, SE	The French Republic - Ministry of the Environment, Energy and the Sea DGAC/DSNA	€4,635,000	€2,317,500	50%
Convergence of DSNA and COOPANS ATM Systems step 1B (CODACAS 1B) - Cohesion Part	2015-EU-TM-0388-S	AT, HR, DK, FR, IE, SE	The French Republic - Ministry of the Environment, Energy and the Sea DGAC/DSNA	€775,000	€658,750	85%
The Causeway Study - Impact of CNG on the Irish Gas Network	2015-EU-TM-0186-S	IE, UK	Gas Network Ireland	€18,264,757	€7,404,531	40.54%

Source: INEA²¹

3. ROAD TRANSPORT

In 2015, passenger cars accounted for 80.1% of passenger transport by land in Ireland, with 51.9 billion pkm²². This was then followed by buses and coaches (16.6%), railways (3%), and tram and metro (0.3%).

Furthermore, in 2015, the average amount of time that Irish car drivers spent in traffic jams was just over 32 hours per year, which is above the annual EU average of 30 hours in road congestion²³.

At the end of 2015, there were 916km of motorways in Ireland out of a total road network length of 98,898km in the country²⁴.

In 2015, 78.4% of the haulage by vehicles registered in Ireland was national haulage, whereas only 21.6% was international haulage, moving a total of 9.9 billion tkm combined. The Irish road freight transport sector employed 19.4 thousand people in 2014 and encompassed over 4500 enterprises²⁵.

In 2010, the EU renewed its commitment to improving road safety by setting a target of reducing road deaths by 50% by 2020, compared to 2010 levels. Ireland's road safety performance is better than the EU average²⁶, as illustrated by Figure 2 below.

²¹ INEA (Innovation and Networks Executive Agency) website - Connecting Europe Facility - Projects by country - [Ireland](#).

²² European Commission - [EU Transport in Figures](#) - Statistical Pocketbook 2017 (pp.49-50).

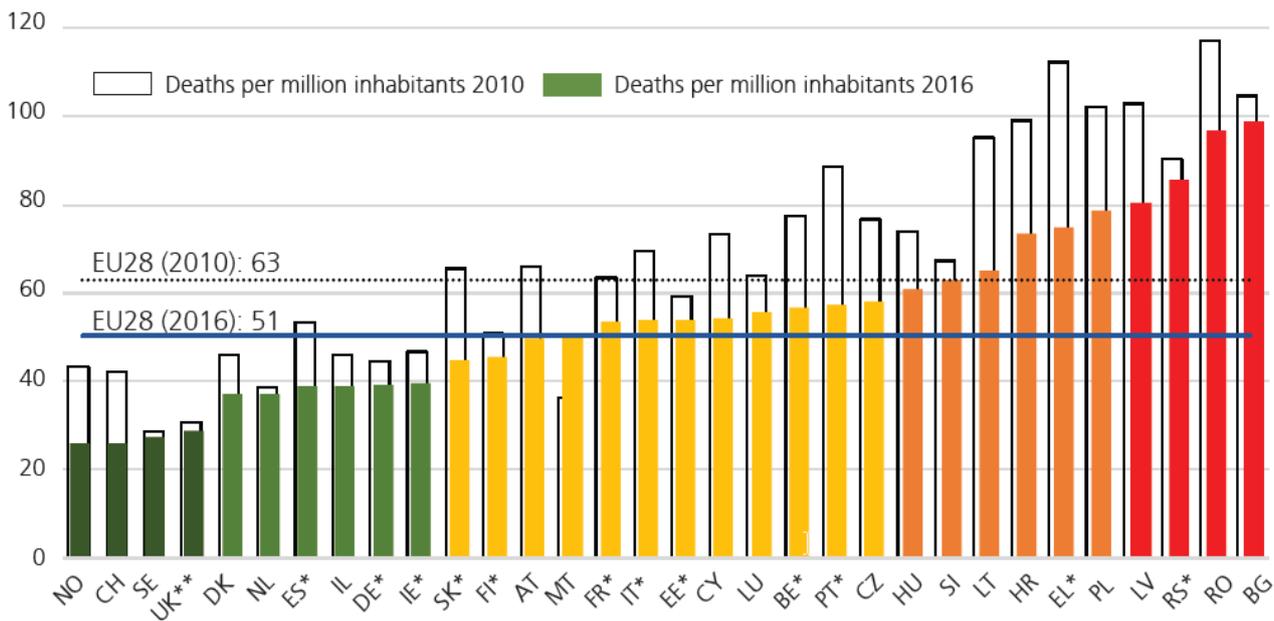
²³ European Commission - DG MOVE (Mobility and Transport) - Ireland Country Scoreboard - [Energy Union and Innovation](#).

²⁴ European Commission - [EU Transport in Figures](#) - Statistical Pocketbook 2017 (pp.78-79). For the collection of data for these statistics, the European Commission defines a country's road network length as the sum of motorways, main or national roads, secondary or regional roads, and other roads (to be used with caution as some countries include roads without a hard surface in "other roads").

²⁵ European Commission - [EU Transport in Figures](#) - Statistical Pocketbook 2017 (pp.38-40 and pp.24-25).

²⁶ European Commission - DG MOVE (Mobility and Transport) - Ireland Country Scoreboard - [People](#).

Figure 2: Mortality (road deaths per million inhabitants) in 2016, with mortality in 2010 for comparison



Source: European Transport Safety Council²⁷

However, a total of 188 people lost their lives on Irish roads in 2016, compared to 162 in 2015. This represents a 16% increase. The number of driver deaths in all types of vehicle went up by 17% (passengers by 41% and pedestrians by 6%) compared to the same period in 2015.

In response to the slowdown, a Road Traffic bill, containing a series of reforms was passed at the end of 2016 in Ireland. The new bill introduces roadside drug testing for a wide range of drugs. The bill also creates a new option for local authorities to impose a special speed limit of 20km/h in built-up areas. This will be in addition to the existing speed limits for built-up areas of 50km/h, 40km/h and 30km/h. The bill also gives effect to an agreement between Ireland and the UK on mutual recognition of driver disqualifications. UK licence holders who are disqualified from driving in Ireland will also be disqualified in the UK and vice-versa²⁸.

4. MARITIME TRANSPORT

The port governance model in Ireland is broadly in line with that elsewhere in Europe: one of publicly controlled port authorities with high levels of private-sector involvement in the provision of infrastructure and services. Ports differ greatly in size, in current capability and in future potential.

The core objective of National Ports Policy published in March 2013 is to facilitate a competitive and effective market for maritime transport services. Three national ports fulfill the criteria to be considered “Ports of National Significance”: the Dublin Port Company, the Port of Cork Company and the Shannon Foynes Port Company. They are each responsible for 15% to 20% of overall tonnage through Irish ports and have clear potential to lead the development of future port capacity in the medium and long term, when and as required²⁹.

²⁷ European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) - '[Ranking EU Progress on Road Safety](#)' - 11th Road Safety Performance Index Report, June 2017 (p.16). *National provisional estimates used for 2016, as the final figures for 2016 are not yet available at the time of going to print. **UK data for 2016 are the provisional total for Great Britain for the year ending September 2016 combined with the total for Northern Ireland for the calendar year 2016. Numbers of deaths in LU and MT are particularly small and are therefore particularly subject to substantial annual fluctuation. Annual numbers of deaths in CY and EE are also relatively small and therefore may be subject to annual fluctuation.

²⁸ European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) - '[Ranking EU Progress on Road Safety](#)' - 11th Road Safety Performance Index Report, June 2017 (p.11).

²⁹ Irish Government - Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport - [2013 National Ports Policy](#) (p.13).

In 2015, the relevance of intra-EU transport in terms of Ireland's total maritime transport was 67.7% for inwards maritime transport (32.5 million tonnes, of which 22 million tonnes came from the EU) and 92.1% for outwards maritime transport (16.8 million tonnes, of which 15.5 million tonnes went to the EU). In the same year, the UK to Ireland maritime route was ranked 20th out of the main routes in intra-EU maritime transport (with nearly 11.5 million tonnes transported) and the Ireland to UK maritime route was ranked 26th (with over 8 million tonnes transported)³⁰.

In 2015, the port of Dublin was the only Irish port to be included in the top 40 ranking of the major EU seaports in terms of container traffic (it was ranked 29th with 627.7 thousand TEU)³¹.

In terms of employment and revenue for Ireland, the maritime sea transport employed over 600 people in 2014 and there were 136 sea transport enterprises, turning over EUR 826 million in the sector. Inland water transport is much less significant for Ireland with only around 100 people employed in 26 enterprises (turnover for 2014: EUR 13 million)³².

5. RAILWAY TRANSPORT

In 2015, two thirds of all EU passenger rail services were provided under Public Service Contracts (PSCs), especially for regional and suburban traffic. For example, in Denmark, Ireland, Greece, Croatia and Luxembourg, all passenger rail services are covered by PSCs³³.

Concrete plans for the rail extensions are being delayed. Some details of the expansions to Ireland's railways envisaged in the Capital Investment Plan still need to be specified, such as the connection between Dublin and its airport or the underground plan for the Dublin Area Rapid Transit (DART) system. Works to extend Dublin's light rail tram system (LUAS) are ongoing³⁴.

In its Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035, one of the key objectives regarding heavy rail infrastructure is the implementation of the DART Expansion Programme. Other goals include the construction of additional train stations in developing areas with sufficient demand, implement a programme of station upgrades and enhancement, and ensure an appropriate level of train fleet, of an appropriate standard, to operate on the rail network³⁵.

In general, Ireland has the lowest share of electrified railway lines in the EU³⁶. In 2015, there were 1,894km of railway lines in use in the country, on which only 52km were electrified (representing 2.7%). The main railway gauge is 1,600mm (which is unusual and only otherwise found in Brazil and some parts of Australia) and Ireland does not currently have any high-speed railway lines³⁷.

In 2015, rail passenger transport in Ireland accounted for 1.9 billion pkm, which represented only 3% of the modal split of passenger transport on land (please see Section 3 for the distribution among the other modes)³⁸.

In 2015, rail freight in the country moved 100 million tkm³⁹.

³⁰ European Commission - [EU Transport in Figures](#) - Statistical Pocketbook 2017 (pp.68-69).

³¹ European Commission - [EU Transport in Figures](#) - Statistical Pocketbook 2017 (p.70).

³² European Commission - [EU Transport in Figures](#) - Statistical Pocketbook 2017 (pp.24-26).

³³ European Commission - The European Semester Thematic Fiche 2017 - [Transport](#) (p.4). This average hides significant differences across countries. The use of competitive tenders for the award of these contracts is a key indicator of the degree of market opening. However in the EU, the majority of PSCs are still awarded directly to incumbents. While the Fourth Railway Package has introduced the principle of competitive tendering, it will take time (up to 2023) before the use of tenders is widespread.

³⁴ European Commission - The Commission's Annual Growth Survey - The European Semester - [Country Report Ireland 2017](#).

³⁵ Irish National Transport Authority - ["Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035"](#) (pp.61-62).

³⁶ European Commission - DG MOVE (Mobility and Transport) - Ireland Country Scoreboard - [Energy Union and Innovation](#).

³⁷ European Commission - [EU Transport in Figures](#) - Statistical Pocketbook 2017 (pp.80-82).

³⁸ European Commission - [EU Transport in Figures](#) - Statistical Pocketbook 2017 (p.49 and p.53).

³⁹ European Commission - [EU Transport in Figures](#) - Statistical Pocketbook 2017 (p.42).

6. AIR TRANSPORT

Regarding the air passenger traffic between Member States in 2015, Ireland reported that its most popular flying destination was the UK with over 11.5 million passengers carried, followed by Spain (over 3.4 million) and France (over 1.9 million). For the same year, 71,200 passengers flew on domestic flights within Ireland⁴⁰.

Ireland has 10 commercial airports on its territory, but only Dublin Airport carries more than 10 million passengers per year. In 2015, the airport was ranked 12th major European airport in terms of passenger traffic with 24.92 million passengers carried (arriving, departing and in transit)⁴¹. The airport claims that this number increased to 27.9 million passengers in 2016. It also reports that it has 41 scheduled airlines, up to 740 aircraft movements per day, and that it flies to over 180 destinations, in 42 countries on four continents⁴².

In terms of freight traffic, Dublin Airport is ranked 19th in the list of major European airports with 137.3 thousand tonnes of cargo and mail loaded and unloaded in 2015⁴³.

The United Kingdom-Ireland Functional Airspace Block (UK-Ireland FAB), as defined by the Single European Sky (SES), was established in 2008 to create a seamless and cost efficient operation across the countries' joint airspaces⁴⁴. The UK-Ireland FAB acts as Europe's North Atlantic gateway, with around 90% of North Atlantic traffic passing through Irish or UK airspace. In the first four years of operation it delivered over €70m of enabled savings to customers, including 232,000 tonnes of CO₂ and 73,000 tonnes of fuel. Major projects have included the first-ever operational trial of cross-border dynamic sectorisation (the tactical switching of air traffic services between providers) and a world-first operational trial of cross-border arrival management procedures (slowing down aircraft across borders in order to reduce the time they are required to spend in airport holding stacks)⁴⁵.

With regards to investments, according to the European Commission's Country Report, Irish investment in aircraft transport equipment fell by approximately 20% in 2015 but still accounted for close on 40% of total investment in machinery and equipment. These are purchases of planes for rental abroad by leasing companies based in Ireland, and almost entirely compensated for by imports⁴⁶.

7. TOURISM

Tourism is one of Ireland's most important economic sectors and has significant potential to play a further role in Ireland's economic renewal. Not only does it directly generate employment, economic activity and exports, but tourism also contributes to encouraging social inclusion and access to the labour market.

In 2015, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport published Ireland's National Tourism Policy entitled "People, Place and Policy - Growing Tourism to 2025", where specific targets are set. By 2025 the Irish Government estimates that overseas tourism revenue will reach €5 billion in real terms (i.e. in 2014 prices), and that employment in the sector will reach 250,000. This will be underpinned by 10 million overseas visits per year by 2025 (compared to 7.6 million in 2014)⁴⁷.

One of the main objectives of Ireland's National Tourism Policy is to allow the interchange between modes as a means to facilitate inter-modal connectivity for international visitors. For the Greater Dublin Area

⁴⁰ European Commission - [EU Transport in Figures](#) - Statistical Pocketbook 2017 (pp.56-57).

⁴¹ European Commission - [EU Transport in Figures](#) - Statistical Pocketbook 2017 (p.83 and p.59).

⁴² Dublin Airport website - About us - Did you know? - [Facts and Figures](#).

⁴³ European Commission - [EU Transport in Figures](#) - Statistical Pocketbook 2017 (p.62).

⁴⁴ UK-Ireland FAB website - [15 FAB Facts](#).

⁴⁵ NATS website - About us - Single European Sky - [UK-Ireland FAB](#).

⁴⁶ European Commission - The Commission's Annual Growth Survey - The European Semester - [Country Report Ireland 2017](#) (p.45).

⁴⁷ Irish Government - Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport - ["People, Place and Policy - Growing Tourism to 2025"](#) (p.6).

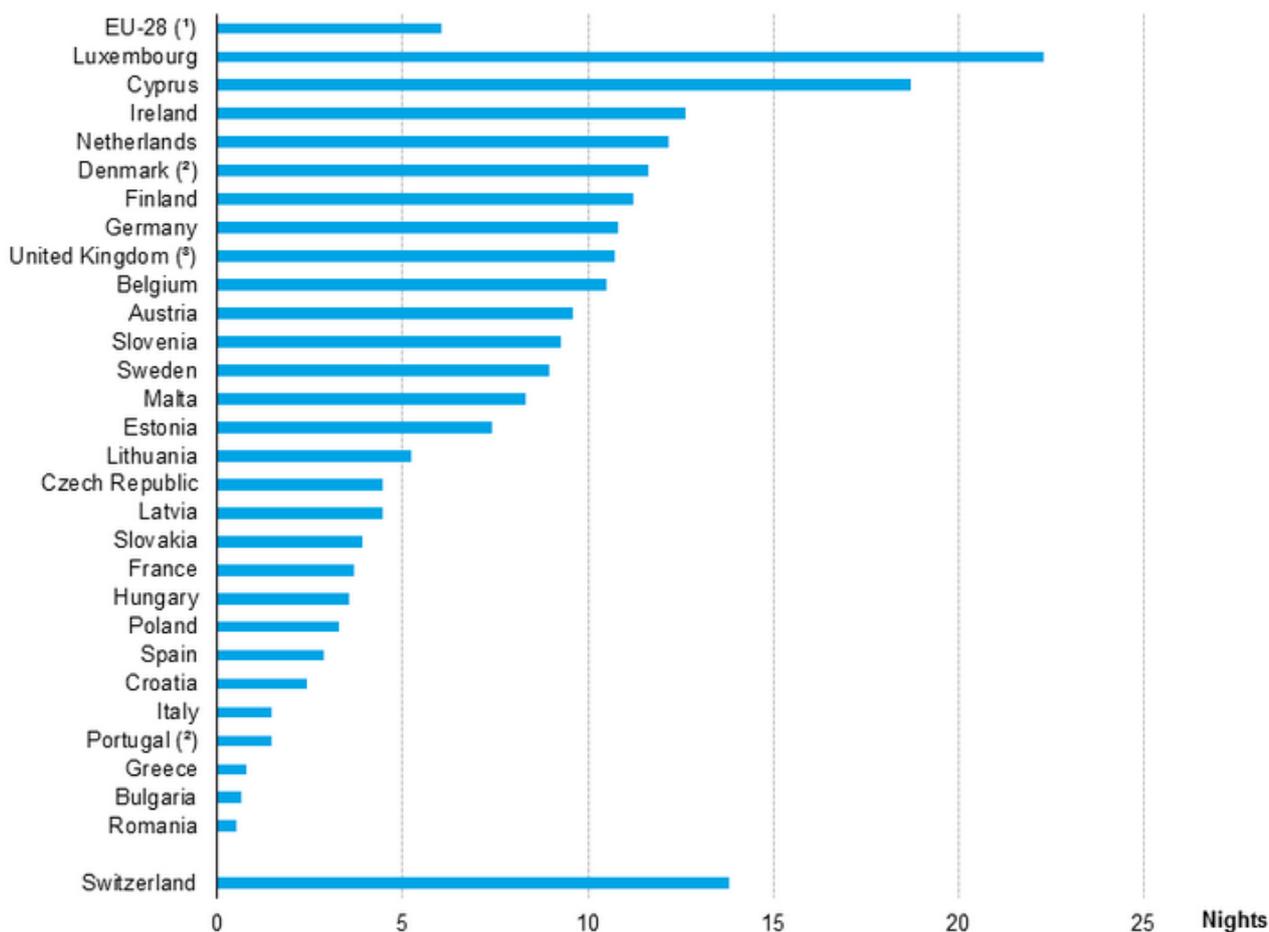
(GDA), this means an enhanced public transport network in order to increase the number of trips that can be made by each mode or a combination of modes. Policies also include the continued roll-out of the “Leap card” (method to pay for public transport in GDA, Cork, Galway, Limerick, and Waterford) and the further development of public transport information portals⁴⁸.

In the 2016-2035 perspective, the Dublin and Mid-East Regions of Ireland are expected to be attractive, vibrant locations for tourism (as well as for industry, commerce and recreation) and are a major focus for economic growth within the Country⁴⁹.

Since 2010, there has been a sustained increase in tourism activity, driven by increased numbers of overseas visitors. The total revenue from tourism in Ireland in 2016 was €6.7 billion (excluding Irish carrier fares of €1.5 billion): overseas visitors accounted for 68.7% (€4.6 billion). The overall central budget allocated to tourism in 2017 is €122 million, an increase of 0.9% on 2016⁵⁰.

In 2016, Ireland was one of the EU Member States whose inhabitants took part in outbound tourism, spending the most nights abroad (please see Figure 3 below).

Figure 3: Country of origin for outbound tourism trips, 2016 (average nights spent abroad per inhabitant aged 15 years or more)



Source: European Commission⁵¹

⁴⁸ Irish National Transport Authority - “Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035” (p.19).

⁴⁹ Irish National Transport Authority - “Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035” (p.5).

⁵⁰ OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) - Tourism Trends and Policies 2018 - OECD Country Profiles - Ireland (p.195).

⁵¹ Eurostat, Statistics explained - Tourism Statistics - Country of origin of outbound tourism trips - data extracted in July 2017. (¹) Estimate made for the purpose of this publication (Eurostat), using the latest available data for the EU Member States. (²) 2015. (³) 2013.

There are two UNESCO Cultural World Heritage sites in Ireland: Brú na Bóinne and Sceilg Mhichíl⁵². The first was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in December 1993 in recognition of its outstanding universal value. Brú na Bóinne, which means the 'palace' or the 'mansion' of the Boyne, refers to the area within the bend of the River Boyne which contains one of the world's most important prehistoric landscapes. The three main prehistoric sites of the Brú na Bóinne Complex (Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth) are situated on the north bank of the River Boyne 50 km north of Dublin. This is Europe's largest and most important concentration of prehistoric megalithic art. The monuments there had social, economic, religious and funerary functions⁵³.

Inscribed in 1996, Sceilg Mhichíl is an outstanding and unique example of an early religious settlement, preserved because of a remarkable environment. The Skellig Rocks, Skellig Michael (also known as Great Skellig) and Little Skellig, are towering sea crags rising from the Atlantic Ocean almost 12 kilometres west of the Iveragh Peninsula in County Kerry. Located at the western edge of the European landmass, Skellig Michael was the chosen destination for a small group of ascetic monks who, in their pursuit of greater union with God, withdrew from civilization to this remote and inaccessible place. Some time between the sixth and eighth centuries, a monastery was founded on this precipitous rock giving rise to one of the most dramatic examples of the extremes of Christian monasticism⁵⁴.

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⁵² UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) - The States parties - [Ireland](#).

⁵³ World Heritage Ireland website - [Brú na Bóinne](#).

⁵⁴ World Heritage Ireland website - [Skellig Michael](#).