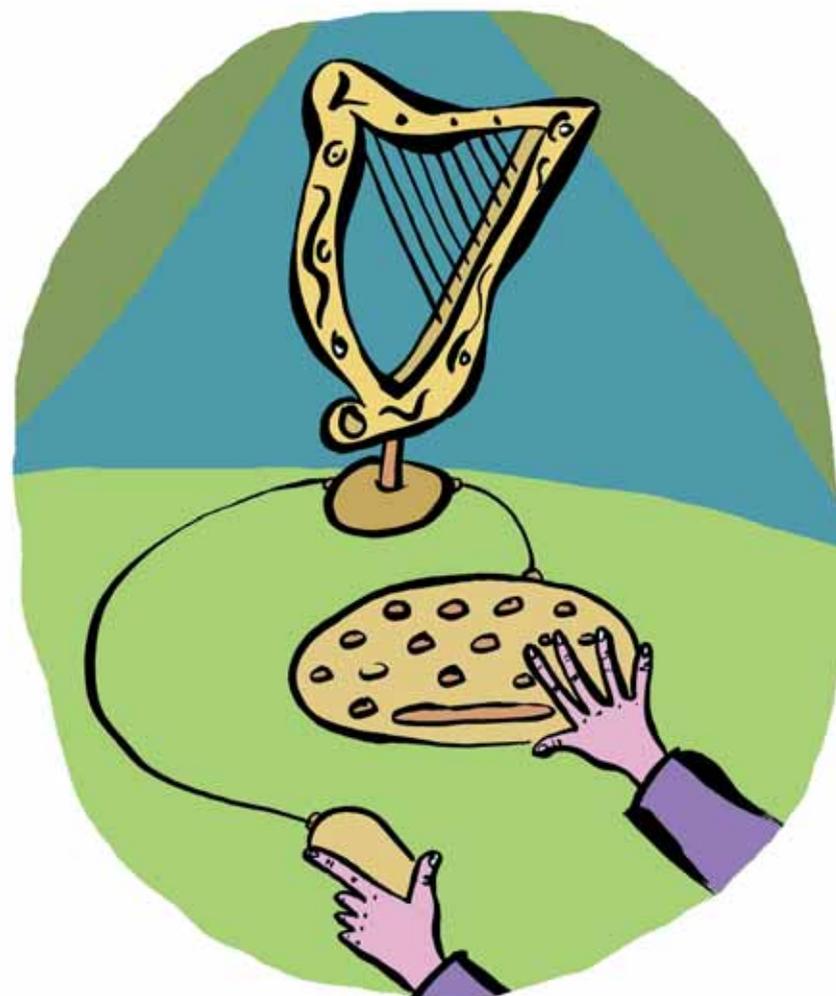


Using the Internet for... Government information



Using the Internet for **Government information**

by Niamh Boland and Bernadette Cogan, Dublin City Public Libraries.

Lifesteps offers you a range of online and printed guides. Written by staff from Irish public libraries, each guide contains easy to follow, step by step explanations of how to use the Internet to achieve a specific goal or 'life step'.

Lifesteps is an initiative of Irish public libraries, managed by An Chomhairle Leabharlanna and funded by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government through the Information Society Fund.

For updates, news on the project and for a full listing of all the guides, log on to www.lifesteps.ie

You can contact the Lifesteps team at lifesteps@librarycouncil.ie

ISBN: 187351218X

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Note: words in red appear in the glossary at the end of this module.

Introduction

In recent years there has been a major transformation in how Government services are delivered to the Irish public. In the future, the majority of Government information and transactions will be available **online**. The main Irish Government **web portal** www.irlgov.ie enables you to access information with a few clicks. This would previously have involved more time-consuming methods (e.g. queuing at local Government office for long periods).

The Reach agency web portal is another Irish Government website and this integrates public services and implements the framework for electronic government. To view this web portal enter the URL: <http://www.reach.ie>

This particular guide provides an overview of Irish Government public information available online. It focuses on the use of information and sources, using as an example the major 'LifeStep' of moving from one country to another. It will be of interest to Irish people looking to relocate abroad or return home, and to those of other nationalities looking to move to Ireland.

Need to Have

PC and **Internet** connection. (Internet access is available in your local public library)

Need to Know

Must have basic familiarity with the World Wide Web.

Related Guides

The 'Internet Basics' Lifesteps guide (copies available at your local library and via www.lifesteps.ie)

Quick Guide

- To access the official Irish State website which provides **links** to all Government departments, State organisations, and Government services, access the website www.irlgov.ie

- For gaining information on a large number of topics that influence the lives of all citizens, view the official e-Government website www.oasis.gov.ie
- To gain information on topics such as travelling abroad, renewing a passport, or citizenship issues; visit the Department of Foreign Affairs website at www.foreignaffairs.gov.ie
- For people overseas who wish to find information on Ireland as a business destination, as a holiday destination, or as somewhere to gain employment; access the Irish Government's international directory site www.ask-ireland.com
- For those who wish to receive detailed information on employment rights and how to **download** work permits, visit the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment website www.entemp.ie

Step-by-Step Guide

Step 1

<http://www.irlgov.ie>

Type in the address of the Government of Ireland website (<http://www.irlgov.ie>) and hit the 'Return' or 'Enter' key. A web address can sometimes be referred to as a **URL**.

This website could be described as the 'front door' to the Irish government online as it functions as the 'one-stop', easy-to-use web portal to government online services.



This means you can access information on any government department or state agency.

Step 2

Click on **All State Organisations** to access organisations divided into different categories, such as **Central Government, Commercial Semi-State, Education, Government Departments, Local Authority, Other Links** (e.g. Northern Ireland Tourist Board), or **Police/Defence Forces**. Click **Back** on your **web browser toolbar** to return to the previous page.

Step 3

Click on **Government Departments** to get a list of all the Government departments. This allows you to enter the website of a specific Government department (e.g. in relation to farming, you click on the Department of Agriculture and Food).

If you need any more details about the content of these links the **Help** section provides a very easy-to-follow overview of the services and information available to you.

If you do not know the exact URL or you are unsure as to which Department to obtain the information from, you can use the 'Quicksearch' function on the Irish Government **web portal** (www.irlgov.ie). You can type in a range of keywords to reach the site you need.

Step 4

<http://www.oasis.gov.ie/>

Click the '**Back**' button back to the Government of Ireland website (<http://www.irlgov.ie>). Underneath the **Find Information** link in the left **menu bar** is the **Citizen Information** link. This brings you directly to the Irish Government's OASIS site. OASIS stands for Online Access to Services, Information and Support) [URL: <http://www.oasis.gov.ie/>] and provides you

with the information you need at different stages of your life, or 'LifeSteps'. Examples of such stages include: registering the birth of a new baby, employment rights, required procedures for marriage ceremonies, buying a house, or medical cards. This **e-Government** approach is citizen-based, and is designed to help you find the information you need in the most convenient way. It helps you access the necessary Government services and information promptly and easily.

Moving Country is featured here as a worked example of a major step an individual may choose to take during their life.

Worked Example

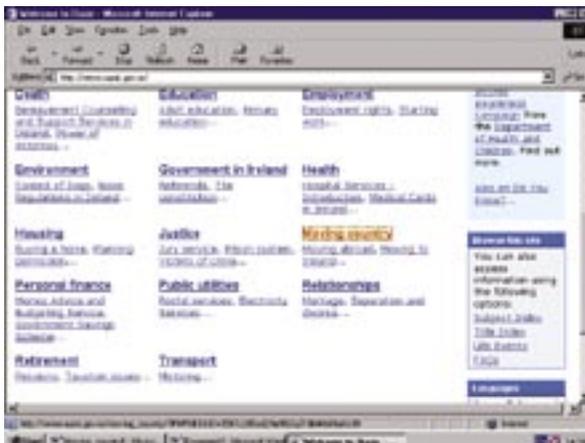
Section 1: Irish people moving abroad

Visa Requirements

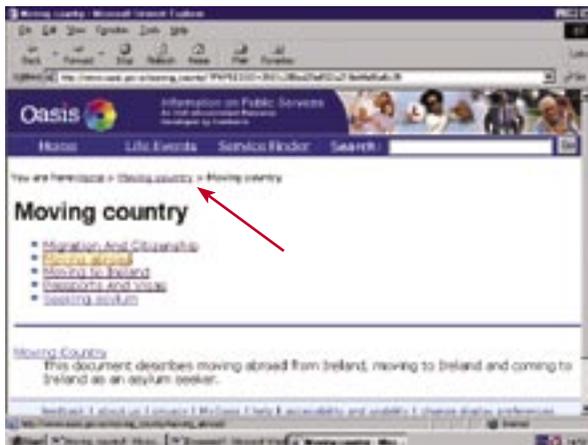
Step 1:

www.oasis.gov.ie

If the OASIS site is not already open, please enter the URL www.oasis.gov.ie directly into the address bar. Scroll down with the vertical **scroll bar** to view the various options. Click on **Moving Country** as shown below.



You will notice at the top of your screen what is known as a **crumb trail**. (shown by the arrow in the diagram below).

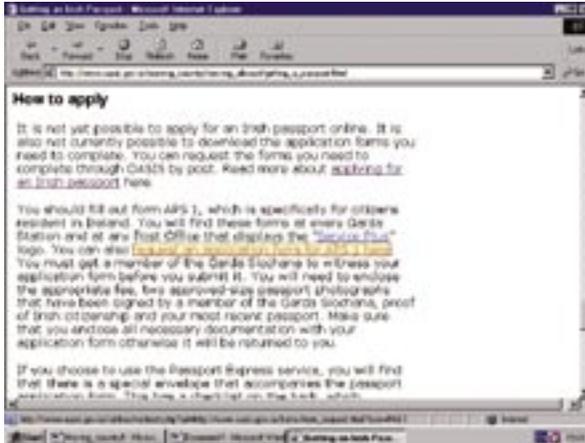


This is very practical for navigating the OASIS **Moving Country** section, as it allows you to see exactly how you got to a certain page and makes it easy to find your way back. You can also use the **Back** button in a similar way, but the crumb trail lays everything out clearly for you.

Step 2:

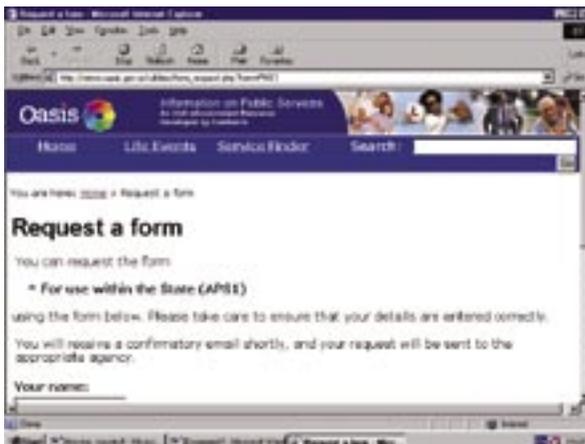
Click on the link **Moving Abroad**.

Here you can find out information on diplomatic support service entitlements for Irish citizens abroad. It also provides you with a list of Irish embassies and consulates abroad if you are out of the country while applying for a passport. It also contains details of the current passport application procedures and rules including details on the requirements for passports for minors. Click on **Getting an Irish Passport** to view this information. You can **Request an Application form** online by clicking the link.



You can also find an address and e-mail contact for the Irish Passport Office at the very bottom of the screen should you have any further queries.

In this webpage (shown in diagram below) you need to fill in your details (name, address, postcode, country and e-mail address). **An e-mail address is required to request this form online.** Otherwise you can apply by post or pick up an application form at your local library, Garda Station or Post Office (Note: it must be a Post Office that displays the *Service Plus* logo.)



Step 3:

Click on the **Moving Country** link (in the crumb trail). Next click on the link to **Passports And Visas**.

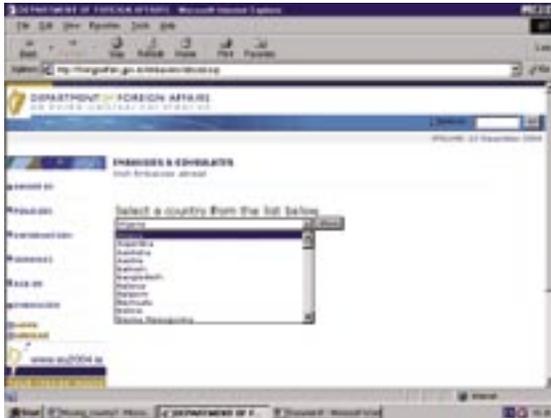
If you already have an Irish passport but wish to obtain information on travelling to the U.S.A. (e.g. information regarding machine-readable passports), you can find information on this by clicking on the second link in the list i.e. **Machine-readable Irish passports and travel to the U.S.A.**

Step 4:

Once again click on the **Moving Country** link in the crumb trail. Click **Moving Abroad** and then the link **Diplomatic Supports for Irish People Abroad**.



From here, you can then click the link to the Department of Foreign Affairs via the **40 Irish embassies and 70 consulates-general** link. Through this link you will find a list of Ireland's embassies and consulates-general overseas. Alternatively, you could reach here via the Department site (URL is www.foreignaffairs.gov.ie).



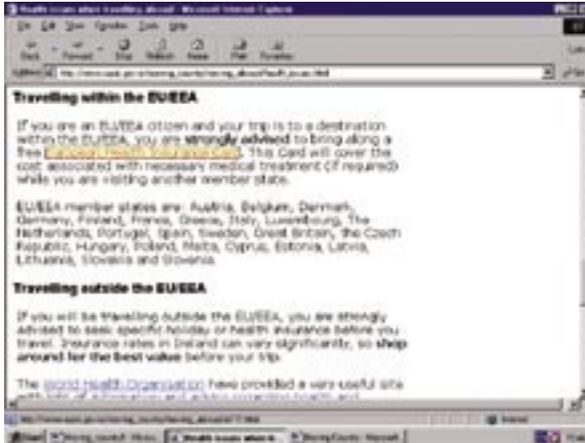
Step 5:

Click **Back** to return to the OASIS site.

Health care and services is a very important subject area to consider when moving to another country. Click the **Moving Abroad** link in the crumb trail. Click the fifth link **Health issues when travelling abroad**.

Here, it is possible to access a sample list of vaccines recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO), as well as further useful information on vaccinations and immunisations.

To find information about the European Health Insurance Card for destinations within the EU/EEA, return to the **Health Issues** page (**Back** button or crumb trail) and click on the link that is just over half way down the page.



There is also a useful practical checklist for travellers with tips on how to avoid preventable health risks when travelling abroad.

Step 6:

Click the **Moving Abroad** link (on the crumb trail near the top of the page) and then **Leaving Ireland and your social security entitlements** (the seventh option down). This page provides you with information on countries that Ireland has bilateral social security agreements with. It details the documentation you need to obtain before leaving Ireland, and indicates whether this can be applied for online or only in the traditional way.

Section Two: Applying for a work permit in Ireland

Step 1:

Enter the URL <http://www.ask-ireland.com> This opens the Irish Government's international directory site. *AskIreland* aims to help people overseas quickly find information about Ireland on individual Governmental agencies, State organisations and other relevant topics. It is offered in six languages.

There are five main sections in the *AskIreland* Directory: information on buying goods from Ireland, setting up a business in Ireland, visiting and working in Ireland and a section under the heading **Other Irish Links** that provides an extensive list of links to **Government Departments**, **Government Offices**, and **State Cultural Institutions**.

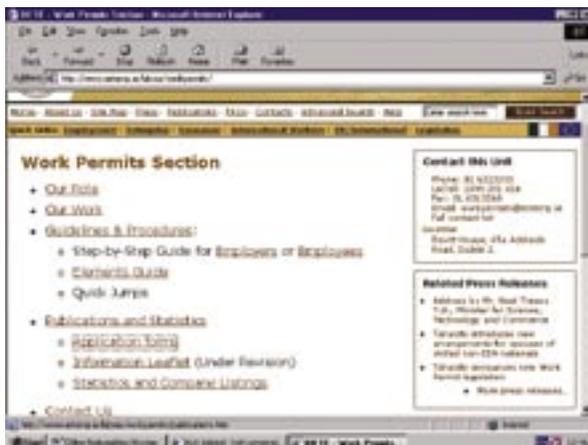


Step 2:

Click on this **Other Irish Links** tab in the *AskIreland* Directory. Once here, click on the link to the **Department of Enterprise, Trade and Environment (DETE)** (Fifth in the list under the heading **Government Departments**).

This opens the Department website. Under the heading **International Workers** (scroll down to view this heading on the left-hand side), click on the link **Work Permits** to view information and guidelines for those wishing to work in Ireland.

In this section it is possible to view guidelines and procedures on getting a work permit.



Step 3:

You may also **download** an application form online. To submit your application for a work permit, you must print and complete the electronic version provided. To accomplish this you click on the **Applications Forms** link under the **Publications and Statistics** heading and click on the **New Application Form** link under the **Work Permits Publications** link. To complete the process this completed form must be posted to the DETE Work Permits Section.



Glossary

- Address bar:** The long, narrow window at the top of the browser, which shows the web address (URL) of the site you are currently viewing. In Internet Explorer, the word 'Address' appears just to the left of the window. The address bar is automatically filled when you visit a web page. Alternatively, you can type in the address of a web page you wish to visit, and click the 'Go' button at the right-hand end of the window, to view the web page.
- Crumb trail:** A web site navigation technique, which provides links back to each previous page, you navigate. The crumb trails typically appear horizontally near the top of a web page.
- Click:** To tap on a mouse button, pressing it down and then immediately releasing it. The phrase to click on means to select an object or phrase on the screen by moving the mouse pointer to the object's position and quickly pressing and releasing the button on the left of the mouse.
- Download:** The process of copying a computer file from the Internet onto your own PC is called downloading. A file such as a music (MP3) file or a document is made available to the Internet by storing it on a server. To download the file, you usually click on a link to it, or else right-click and choose 'save target as' (in Internet Explorer) or 'save link as' (Mozilla Firefox). A box pops up asking you where on your hard disk you want to store the file; you choose the location for storage, click the button and the file is copied onto your hard disk (or downloaded).
- E-Government:** E-Government is a set of services that the state delivers to the public via the Internet. For example, the ability to pay tax online (at revenue.ie) is an E-Government service. E-Government has advantages for the consumer (no queuing, easy access) and for the government (low cost, efficient processing of information). Increased delivery of E-Government services is a priority for governments across Europe, including Ireland.

- FAQ:** **(Frequently Asked Question)**
A FAQ is a list of questions and their answers, which are commonly asked. These are published on the website of a product or service, so that the same question is not asked of the supplier, over and over again. A good example of a FAQ, which focuses on web security, is at <http://www.w3.org/Security/Faq/www-security-faq.html>
- Homepage:** The main or introductory page of a website.
- HTML:** HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language) is the computer programming language used to define the structure and layout of a text.
- Internet:** A large collection of computers, connected together to allow them to share information with one another.
- Link:** A link, or hyperlink, is a part of a web page that, if clicked with a mouse, opens a different web page. Links are usually shown in blue and underlined on a web page.
- Menu bar:** This is the row of buttons at the very top of the browser window. It offers a range of things you can do with a web page. For example clicking on 'File' and 'Save As' in the drop-down menu allows you to save a copy of the web page so that it is available even when offline.
- Online/Offline:** When you are logged onto a computer through your modem, you are said to be online. When you are using your computer but are not connected to a computer through your modem, you are said to be working offline.
- PDF:** **(Portable Document Format)**
A PDF is a type of computer file (in the same way that an MP3 or a Microsoft Word file is a type of file), which is commonly used on the Internet for presenting documents. PDFs are excellent for printing out – a printed PDF generally looks much better than a printed (HTML) Web page. PDFs are thus mainly used for material which the user is expected to print out (such as Government forms, brochures, reports), rather than material which is meant to be viewed online. PDFs require a specific piece of software, a PDF

viewer, to be viewed and printed out. By far the most common PDF viewer is Adobe Acrobat, which is available for free online.

- Scroll bar:** The bar located to the far right of your web browser is known as the vertical scroll bar. It lets you scroll up and down a web page by placing your mouse arrow pointer on the up or down arrows along the side and holding down your left mouse key.
- Toolbar:** A series of selectable buttons on your screen that allow you to select desktop, application or web browser functions.
- URL:** The Uniform Resource Locator, or address, of a web page. Like the phone number of a particular person, this is unique and goes direct to the web page it is associated with.
- Web browser:** A web browser allows you to view and navigate web pages. You probably have a browser called 'Netscape' or 'Explorer' on your computer.
- Web portal:** A web portal is a single access point or gateway to a broad array of resources and services.

Links

<http://www.irlgov.ie>
<http://www.oasis.gov.ie>
<http://www.reach.ie>
<http://www.ask-ireland.com>
<http://www.environ.ie>
<http://www.met.ie>
<http://www.foreignaffairs.gov.ie>
<http://www.who.int>
<http://www.cso.ie>
<http://www.entemp.ie>
<http://www.revenue.ie>
<http://www.teagasc.ie>
<http://www.fas.ie>
<http://www.dttis.ie>
<http://www.ncts.ie>
<http://www.pensionsboard.ie>
<http://www.welfare.ie>
<http://www.cro.ie>
<http://www.gro.ie>
<http://www.basis.ie>
<http://www.publicjobs.ie>

Final Notes

We hope you have found this guide useful in assisting you to find Irish Government public information on the Internet. If you would like to receive further information on this topic, or would like to consult similar guides to useful material on the internet, please approach the library staff in your local library or consult the website www.lifesteps.ie.