

Module: Europe
Topic Content: Northern Europe

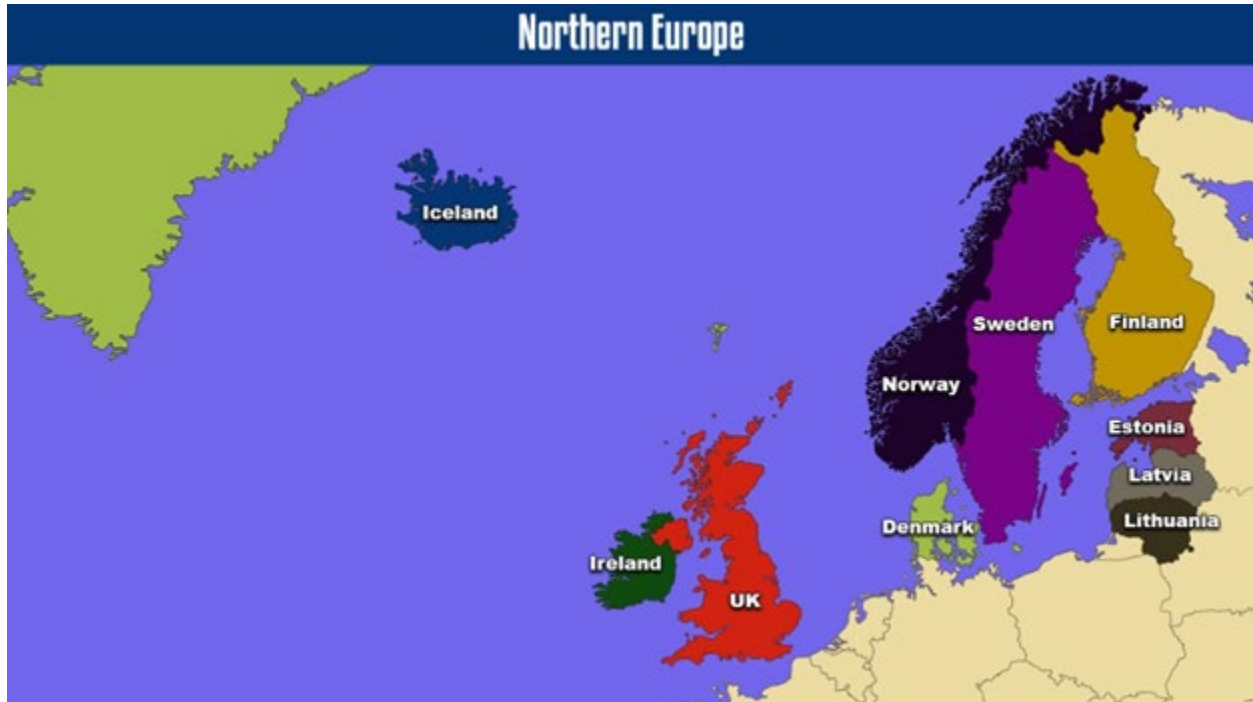
Northern Europe



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Introduction



Northern Europe includes the British Isles, the Jutland and Scandinavian Peninsulas, Iceland, Greenland, and some areas near the Baltic Sea. Ten nations make up Northern Europe: The United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Iceland.

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United Kingdom



The United Kingdom is located on the British Isles, off the northwest coast of continental Europe. The official name of this country is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This title is typically shortened to the UK. The UK is made up of four constituent countries: England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. London is the capital and most populous city of the UK. It is located on the Thames River in southern England. London is one of the most important and influential cities in the international community.

The United Kingdom once controlled the British Empire, which was the largest empire in the world. At its height, the British Empire included roughly 25% of the Earth's surface. This vast empire spread British culture and the English language to many parts of the world.

The UK was also the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution. During the 1700s, the UK began to shift away from a rural agricultural society toward an urban industrialized society. This transition was fueled by natural resources from British colonies, as well as local deposits of coal and iron.

After World War II, the UK began to dismantle its empire. Several British colonies gained independence during this time. However, the UK still has several overseas territories. The UK is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, along with many former British colonies. The UK is one of the founding members of NATO and a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

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Ireland



The nation of Ireland is located on the island of Ireland, which is west of Great Britain. This nation, also called the Republic of Ireland, spans most of the island. Northern Ireland is located on the northeastern area of the island, and is a part of the UK. This political division has roots that go back to the sixteenth century.

The United Kingdom once ruled all of Ireland. When King Henry VIII broke from the Catholic Church, he decreed that all of England's territories had to convert to Protestantism. Many Catholics in Ireland refused and were punished with strict laws. Protestants from England and Scotland were sent to control Ireland, occupying lands in the north. For hundreds of years, this religious divide has led to violent conflict and multiple uprisings.

In 1921, the Republic of Ireland successfully gained independence from the UK. Despite this, Catholics and Protestants continued fighting until a peace agreement was signed in 1998. There is still tension regarding the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. Catholic Nationalists want Northern Ireland to reunite with the Republic of Ireland. Protestant Unionists want Northern Ireland to remain a part of the UK.

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Denmark



Denmark is located on the Jutland Peninsula between the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. The nation spans the peninsula and many of the surrounding islands. Denmark also has two constituent countries: Greenland and Faroe Islands. The Faroe Islands are a small archipelago located north of the UK.

Danish is the official language in Denmark, and Lutheranism is the predominant religion. Lutheranism is a branch of Protestant Christianity. Ethnic Danes make up roughly 85% of the population of Denmark. The country has a minority immigrant population that includes people from Germany, Poland, Syria, Iraq, and Romania. Denmark has a highly developed mixed economy that is heavily involved in international trade. Denmark is also a member of the European Union and a founding member of NATO.

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Norway



Norway is located on the western coast of the Scandinavian Peninsula. Glaciers are responsible for the numerous fjords that make up this country's rugged coastline. The terrain is mostly mountainous, with some fertile valleys. These mountains provide valuable minerals like limestone, iron, and titanium.

The North Sea provides Norway with fisheries and oil reserves. Norway is the second largest exporter of fish and seafood in the world. It is also one of the world's largest producers of petroleum products, but is not a member of OPEC. Oil and natural gas account for approximately 50% of Norway's exports and 20% of Norway's GDP.

Norway has a developed economy, advanced infrastructure, and a high standard of living. It is also a welfare state. This means the Norwegian government provides welfare services like healthcare, childcare, and education. These services are not free, but are paid for through high tax rates. Norway is not a member of the EU, but is a founding member of NATO.

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Sweden



Sweden is located on the eastern part of the Scandinavian Peninsula, near the Baltic Sea. It shares a border with Norway in the west and Finland in the northeast. Sweden maintained neutrality through World War I and World War II. It also stayed neutral during the Cold War, and never became a member of NATO. Sweden joined the European Union in 1995, but maintains its own currency, the Swedish krona.

Sweden has a highly developed economy and a high standard of living. It also maintains one of the most extensive welfare states. Healthcare, education, unemployment benefits, and retirement pensions are all provided by the government. These services are funded by Swedish citizens through high tax rates.

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Finland



Finland is located east of the Scandinavian Peninsula, along the northeastern coast of the Baltic Sea. Most of the population lives in the southern part of the country. The north is sparsely populated and covered with dense taiga forest vegetation. Forestry is one of Finland's major resources, along with minerals like iron, copper, nickel, and gold.

Finland has two official languages: Finnish and Swedish. The nation is highly industrialized with a large manufacturing sector. Some of the country's major exports include electronics, machinery, paper goods, and refined metals. The tertiary sector is the largest part of the economy. Like Norway and Sweden, Finland is a welfare state that provides many social services to its citizens. Finland is also a member of the EU and has adopted the euro as its national currency.

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Baltic States



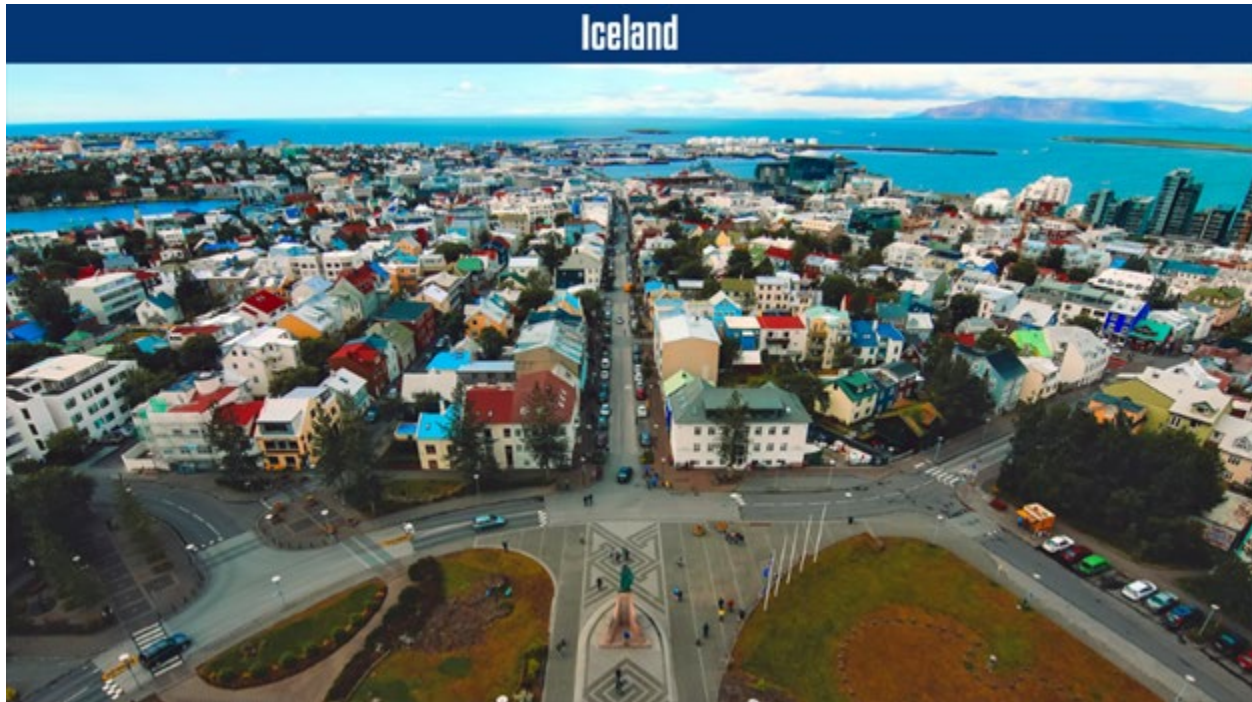
The Baltic States are located in northeastern Europe, along the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea. The Baltic States are made up of three independent nations: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. These nations each have a unique cultural identity and language. However, they have a shared political history.

In 1940, the USSR annexed Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The United States and many other nations never officially recognized the Soviet occupation of the Baltic States. Despite this, all three countries remained a part of the Soviet Union for most of the twentieth century. In 1990, Lithuania declared independence from the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union broke up in 1991, Latvia and Estonia reestablished their independence.

After gaining independence, the Baltic States transitioned to capitalist economies. Early economic development was hindered by decades of communism. However, the Baltic States experienced rapid growth from 2000-2007. In 2004, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania all became members of NATO and the EU. The euro is the official currency of all three Baltic States.

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Iceland



Iceland is an island nation located northwest of the British Isles and east of Greenland. It is situated between the Atlantic Ocean and Arctic Ocean, near the Arctic Circle. Iceland is nicknamed “the land of fire and ice” because glaciers and active volcanoes dominate the landscape. The warm waters of the North Atlantic Drift help raise the temperature of the island. Iceland is highly urbanized with most of the population living in cities along the coast.