

Living & Working in **IRELAND**

Includes buying a home in Ireland

Joe Laredo

3rd
Edition

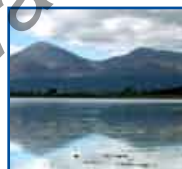
Now in
COLOUR



The best-selling and most comprehensive book available for foreigners living in Ireland. Contains up to twice as much information as similar books

Living & Working in **IRELAND**

● A Survival Handbook ●




Joe Laredo




Survival Books ● London ● England

First published 2001
Second Edition 2007
Third Edition 2009

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or recorded by any means, without prior written permission from the author.

Copyright © Survival Books 2001, 2007, 2009
Cover photograph © unknown ( www.123rf.com)
Illustrations and maps © Jim Watson

Survival Books Limited
Office 169, 3 Edgar Buildings, George St,
Bath, BA1 2FJ, United Kingdom
+44 (0)1225-462135, info@survivalbooks.net
 www.survivalbooks.net and www.londons-secrets.com

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A CIP record for this book is available
from the British Library.
ISBN: 978-1-905303-92-2

Printed and bound in India by Ajanta Offset

Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks to all those who contributed to the successful publication of this third edition of *Living and Working in Ireland*, including Kerry Laredo (research and editing), Lilac Johnston (proofreading), Di Tolland (design and desktop publishing) and Jim Watson for the superb illustrations, maps and cover design. I would also like to thank Chris Toomey (research), Stephen Jeffery (The Property Finders), Richard Ryan (An Post), Brian Sheehan (Editor, Industrial Relations News), and Tina Moisander (Vivas Health) for their help with this and previous editions. Finally, a special thank you to the many photographers (listed on page 416) – in particular Peter Farmer – whose beautiful images add colour and bring Ireland to life.



What readers & reviewers have said about Survival Books:

'If you need to find out how France works then this book is indispensable. Native French people probably have a less thorough understanding of how their country functions.'

Living France

'It's everything you always wanted to ask but didn't for fear of the contemptuous put down. The best English-language guide. Its pages are stuffed with practical information on everyday subjects and are designed to compliment the traditional guidebook.'

Swiss News

'Rarely has a 'survival guide' contained such useful advice – This book dispels doubts for first-time travellers, yet is also useful for seasoned globetrotters – In a word, if you're planning to move to the US or go there for a long-term stay, then buy this book both for general reading and as a ready-reference.'

American Citizens Abroad

'Let's say it at once. David Hampshire's Living and Working in France is the best handbook ever produced for visitors and foreign residents in this country; indeed, my discussion with locals showed that it has much to teach even those born and bred in l'Hexagone – It is Hampshire's meticulous detail which lifts his work way beyond the range of other books with similar titles. Often you think of a supplementary question and search for the answer in vain. With Hampshire this is rarely the case. – He writes with great clarity (and gives French equivalents of all key terms), a touch of humour and a ready eye for the odd (and often illuminating) fact. – This book is absolutely indispensable.'

The Riviera Reporter

'A must for all future expats, I invested in several books but this is the only one you need. Every issue and concern is covered, every daft question you have but are frightened to ask is answered honestly without pulling any punches. Highly recommended.'

Reader

'In answer to the desert island question about the one how-to book on France, this book would be it.'

The Recorder

'The ultimate reference book. Every subject imaginable is exhaustively explained in simple terms. An excellent introduction to fully enjoy all that this fine country has to offer and save time and money in the process.'

American Club of Zurich

'The amount of information covered is not short of incredible. I thought I knew enough about my birth country. This book has proved me wrong. Don't go to France without it. Big mistake if you do. Absolutely priceless!'

Reader

'When you buy a model plane for your child, a video recorder, or some new computer gizmo, you get with it a leaflet or booklet pleading 'Read Me First', or bearing large friendly letters or bold type saying 'IMPORTANT - follow the instructions carefully'. This book should be similarly supplied to all those entering France with anything more durable than a 5-day return ticket. – It is worth reading even if you are just visiting briefly, or if you have lived here for years and feel totally knowledgeable and secure. But if you need to find out how France works then it is indispensable. Native French people probably have a less thorough understanding of how their country functions. – Where it is most essential, the book is most up to the minute.'

Living France

A comprehensive guide to all things French, written in a highly readable and amusing style, for anyone planning to live, work or retire in France.

The Times

Covers every conceivable question that might be asked concerning everyday life – I know of no other book that could take the place of this one.

France in Print

A concise, thorough account of the Do's and DONT's for a foreigner in Switzerland – Crammed with useful information and lightened with humorous quips which make the facts more readable.

American Citizens Abroad

'I found this a wonderful book crammed with facts and figures, with a straightforward approach to the problems and pitfalls you are likely to encounter. The whole laced with humour and a thorough understanding of what's involved. Gets my vote!'

Reader

'A vital tool in the war against real estate sharks; don't even think of buying without reading this book first!'

Everything Spain

'We would like to congratulate you on this work: it is really super! We hand it out to our expatriates and they read it with great interest and pleasure.'

ICI (Switzerland) AG

Important Note

Ireland is a diverse country with many faces, two languages and continuously changing rules, regulations (particularly regarding business, social security and taxes), interest rates and prices. In particular, a change of government in Ireland can have far-reaching effects on many aspects of life. I cannot recommend too strongly that you check with an official and reliable source (not always the same), and obtain expert legal advice before making any major decisions or undertaking an irreversible course of action. However, don't believe everything you're told or read, even, dare I say it, herein!

Useful addresses and references to other sources of information have been included in all chapters and **Appendices A, B and C** to help you obtain further information and verify data with official sources. Important points have been emphasised in bold print, some of which it would be expensive or even dangerous to disregard. **Ignore them at your peril or cost!**

Note

Unless specifically stated, the reference to any company, organisation or product in this book doesn't constitute an endorsement or recommendation. None of the businesses, products or individuals mentioned in this book have paid to be mentioned.

Contents

1. FINDING A JOB

17

Economy	17
Job Market	18
Salary	23
Women	25
EU & Non-EU Citizens	26
Qualifications	27
Job Hunting	28
Government Employment Service	30
Recruitment Agencies	31
Contract Jobs	32
Part-Time Jobs	33
Temporary, Casual & Seasonal Jobs	33
Voluntary Work	35
Self-Employment & Starting a Business	36
Training & Work Experience	47
Au Pairs	49
Language	50

2. EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

53

Equal Rights	54
Contracts	54
Place of Work	55
Salary & Benefits	55
Holidays & Leave	58
Health & Insurance	61
Joining & Leaving a Company	62
Other Conditions	65

3. PERMITS & VISAS

69

Entry Requirements	70
Visas	71
Work Permit	75
Spousal/Dependant Work Permit	78
Registration	78
Residence	79

4. ARRIVAL

81

Immigration	81
Customs	82
Finding Help	85
Checklists	85

5. ACCOMMODATION

89

Temporary Accommodation	89
Relocation Agents	89
Renting	91
Buying Property	93
Regions	102
Estate Agents	114
Purchase Procedure	115
Moving House	117
Home Security	119
Electricity	120
Gas	125
Heating	126
Water & Waste	127
Refuse Collection & Recycling	128

6. POSTAL SERVICES

131

Business Hours	132
Delivery & Collection	132
Rates & Services	133
Registered Post	134
Other Postal Services	134
Non-postal Services	135

7. TELEPHONE

139

Telephone Companies	139
Installation & Registration	139
Using the Telephone	141
Operator Services	142
Charges	143
Bills	145
Public Telephones	146
Mobile Telephones	146
Directories	147
Internet	148
Moving House or Leaving Ireland	149
Malicious Calls	149

8. TELEVISION & RADIO

151

Television	151
Video & DVD	156
Radio	156

9. EDUCATION

161

The Education System	163
Choosing a School	170
State Schools	171
Private Schools	173

Vocational Training & Apprenticeships	174
Higher Education	175
Further Education	179
Language Schools	181

10. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

185

Student, Senior & Tourist Tickets	185
Trains	186
Buses & Coaches	189
Ferries	191
Taxis	192
Airlines	193

11. MOTORING

197

Importing a Vehicle	197
Car Hire	199
Buying a Car	200
Vehicle Licensing & Motor Tax	202
National Car Test	203
Driving Licences	205
Vehicle Insurance	207
Rules of the Road	209
Speed Limits	211
Driving Offences	212
Traffic Police	212
Irish Roads	213
Road Signs	215
Irish Drivers	216
Accidents	216
Parking	217
Car Crime	219
Fuel	220
Garages & Servicing	221
Motoring Services & Organisations	221
Disabled Drivers	221
Mopeds & Motorcycles	222
Cyclists & Pedestrians	222

12. HEALTH

225

Emergencies	227
Public Healthcare	228
Private Healthcare	230
Doctors	230
Hospitals, Clinics & Health Centres	232
Dentists	235
Opticians	235
Hearing Tests & Treatment	237

Medicines	237
Alternative & Complementary Medicine	238
Births & Deaths	238
Children's Health	240
Help for the Disabled	240
Counselling	241
Drinking, Smoking & Illegal Drugs	241
Sexually Transmitted Diseases	243

13. INSURANCE

245

Insurance Companies	245
Insurance Contracts	247
Social Insurance Contributions	248
Social Welfare	250
Pensions	253
Critical Illness Insurance	258
Personal Accident Insurance	259
Personal Liability Insurance	259
Private Health Insurance	259
Other Health Insurance	263
Dental Insurance	264
Household Insurance	264
Holiday & Travel Insurance	268

14. FINANCE

271

Financial Representation	272
Irish Currency	272
Importing & Exporting Money	273
Banks & Building Societies	274
Mortgages	278
Income Tax	283
Value Added Tax	291
DIRT	292
Property Tax	292
Capital Gains Tax	293
Capital Acquisitions Tax	294
Wills	295
Cost of Living	296

15. LEISURE

299

Tourist Information	299
Accommodation	300
Attractions	306
The Arts	309
Eating & Drinking	316
Nightlife	320
Gambling	321
Libraries	322

16. SPORTS

325

Sports Centres, Gyms & Clubs	326
Gaelic Sports	327
Angling	329
Boating	331
Golf	332
Horse & Greyhound Racing	334
Horse Riding	336
Rugby	336
Soccer	337
Swimming	337
Walking & Rambling	338
Other Sports	338

17. SHOPPING

345

Prices & Payment	346
Shopping Hours	346
Local Shops & Markets	347
Supermarkets	347
Department & Chain Stores	348
Shopping Centres & Retail Parks	348
Second-Hand & Charity Shops	349
Online & Home Shopping	349
Food	350
Alcohol & Tobacco	350
Newspapers, Magazines & Books	351
Clothing	352
Furniture & Furnishings	352
Household Goods	353
VAT-free & Shopping Abroad	353
Receipts, Guarantees & Right	355

18. ODDS & ENDS

357

Citizenship	357
Climate	357
Crime	358
Defence	360
Geography	360
Government	362
Legal System & Advice	365
Marriage & Divorce	366
National Anthem, Arms, Flag & Holidays	367
Pets	368
Police	370
Population	371
Religion	373

Social Customs	374
Time	374
Tipping	374
Toilets	375

19. THE IRISH **377**

20. MOVING HOUSE OR LEAVING IRELAND **383**

Moving House	383
Leaving Ireland	384

APPENDICES **387**

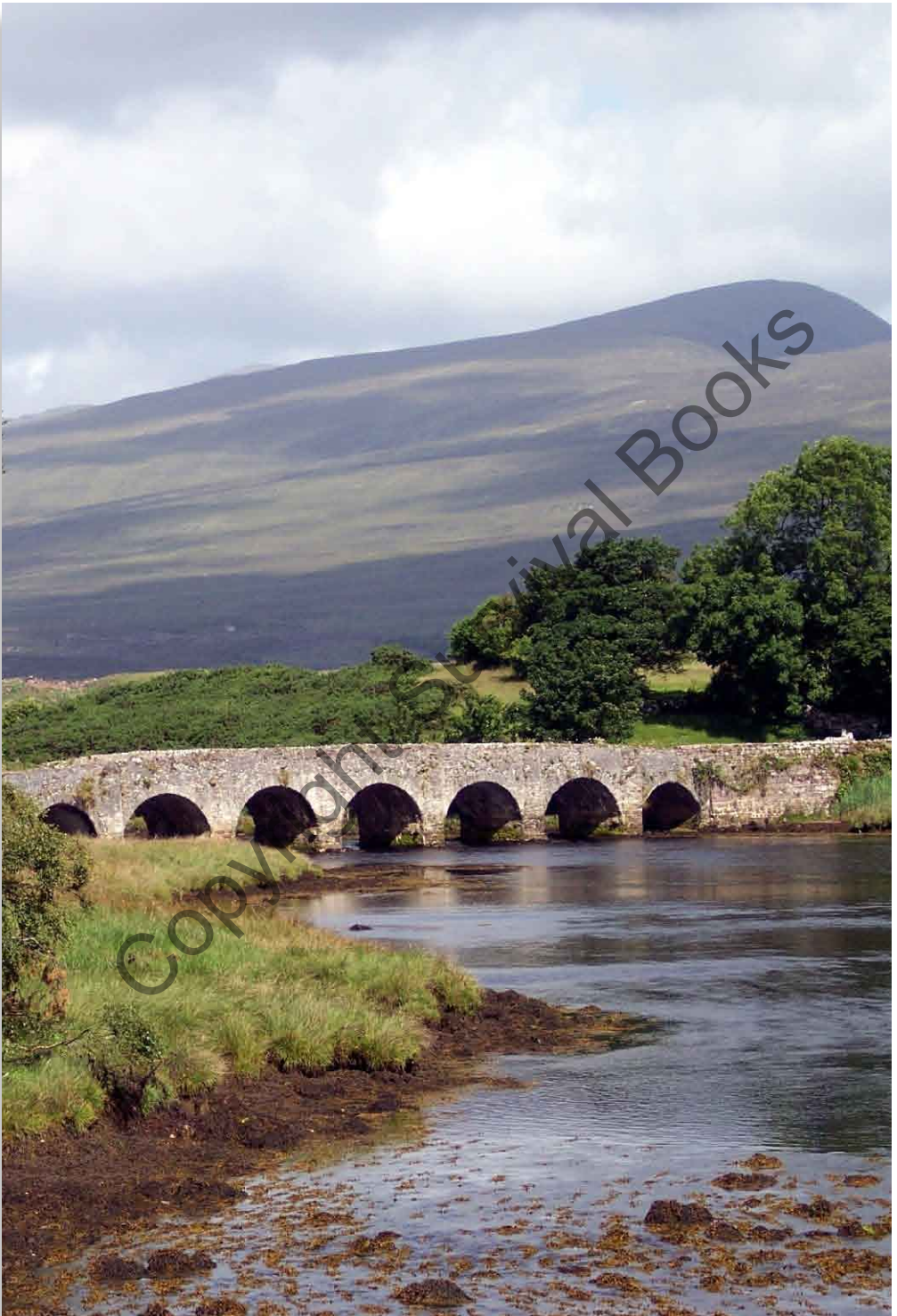
APPENDIX A: Embassies & Consulates	387
APPENDIX B: Newspapers & Magazines	392
APPENDIX C: Useful Websites	395
APPENDIX D: Weights & Measures	397

INDEX **401**

Copyright Survival Books

Authors' Notes

- ◆ Frequent references are made in this book to the European Union (EU) which comprises Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Rumania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK. The EU countries plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway comprise the European Economic Area (EEA).
- ◆ Times are shown using am (Latin: ante meridiem) for before noon and pm (post meridiem) for after noon, e.g. 10am and 10pm.
- ◆ Prices are shown in Euros and should be taken as estimates only, although they were mostly correct at the time of publication and are unlikely to change significantly overnight. Unless otherwise stated, prices quoted include value added tax (VAT) at 4.8, 13.5 or 21 per cent.
- ◆ His/he/him/man/men, etc. also mean her/she/her/woman/women, etc. This is done simply to make life easier for both the reader and the author, and isn't intended to be sexist.
- ◆ Spelling and vocabulary are British English; American English words are given in brackets where they differ significantly from British English.
- ◆ Key Irish (Gaelic) words and phrases are shown in italics, and warnings and important points are shown in bold type.
- ◆ The following symbols are used in this book: ☎ (telephone), 📠 (fax), 🌐 (Internet) and ✉ (email).
- ◆ Lists of embassies and consulates, further reading and useful websites are contained in **Appendices A, B and C** respectively.
- ◆ For those unfamiliar with the Irish system of **Weights and Measures**, conversion tables (Imperial/metric) are included in **Appendix D**.
- ◆ Map of the four provinces, counties and a communications map of are shown at the end of the book.



Newport, Co. Mayo

Introduction

Whether you are already living or working in Ireland or just thinking about it – this is THE BOOK for you. Forget about those glossy guide books, excellent though they are for tourists; this amazing book was written especially with you in mind and is worth its weight in shamrocks. Furthermore, this updated and fully revised 3rd edition is printed in full colour. ***Living and Working in Ireland*** is designed to meet the needs of anyone wishing to know the essentials of Irish life – however long your intended stay, you'll find the information contained in this book invaluable.

General information isn't difficult to find in Ireland; however, reliable and up-to-date information specifically intended for foreigners living and working in Ireland isn't so easy to find, least of all in one volume. Our aim in publishing this book was to help fill this void, and provide the comprehensive, practical information necessary for a relatively trouble-free life. You may have visited Ireland as a tourist, but living and working there is a different matter altogether. Adjusting to a different environment and culture and making a home in any foreign country can be a traumatic and stressful experience, and Ireland is no exception.

Living and Working in Ireland is a comprehensive handbook on a wide range of everyday subjects and represents the most up-to-date source of general information available to foreigners in Ireland. It isn't, however, simply a monologue of dry facts and figures, but a practical and entertaining look at life in Ireland.

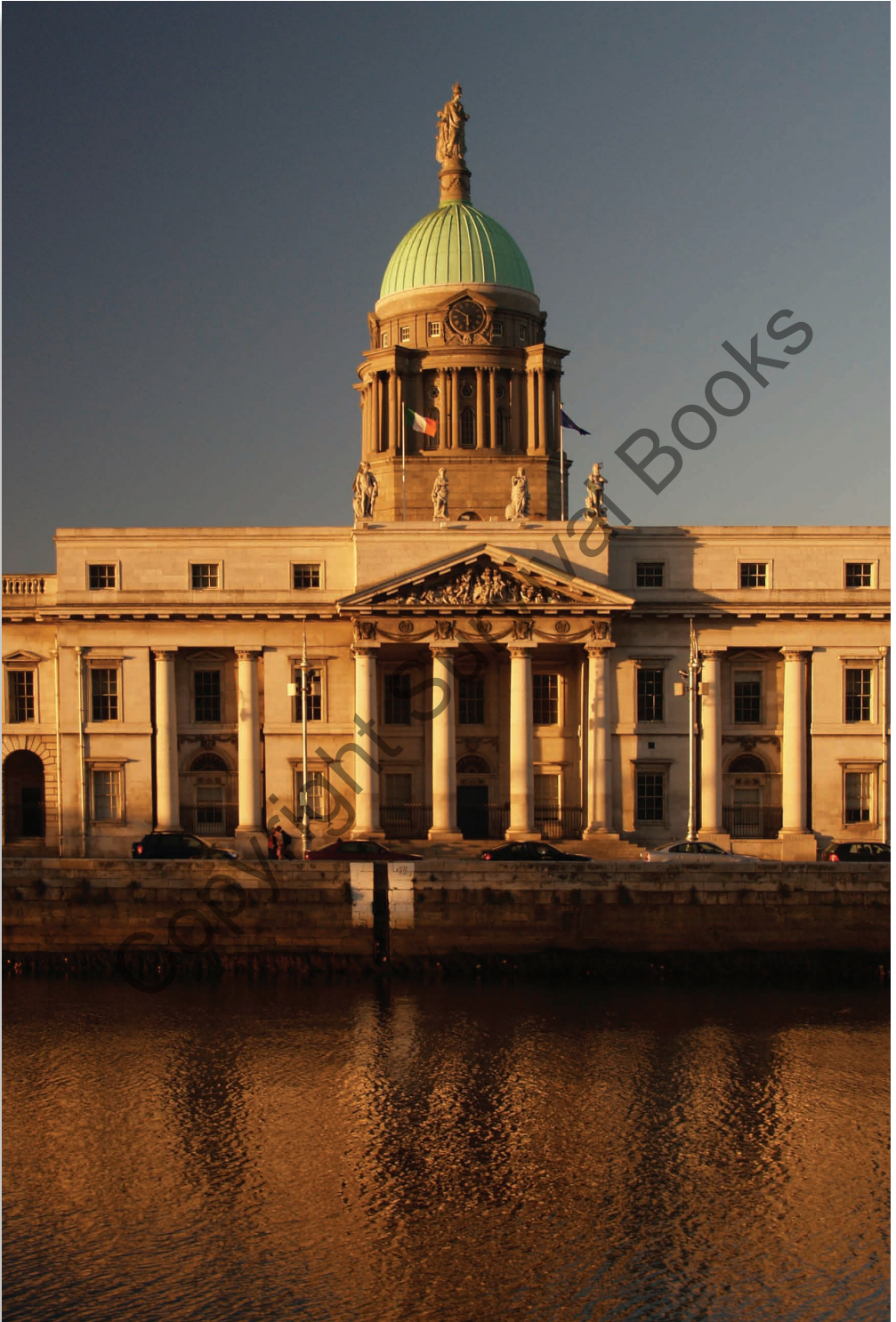
Adapting to life in a new country is a continuous process, and although this book will help reduce your 'rookie' phase and minimise the frustrations, it doesn't contain all the answers (most of us don't even know the right questions to ask). What it will do, is help you make informed decisions and calculated judgements, instead of uneducated guesses and costly mistakes. Most importantly, it will help you save time, trouble and money, and repay your investment many times over.

Although you may find some of the information a bit daunting, don't be discouraged. Most problems occur only once and fade into insignificance after a short time (as you face the next half a dozen). Most foreigners in Ireland would agree that, all things considered, they love living there. A period spent in Ireland is a wonderful way to enrich your life, broaden your horizons, and, with any luck (and some hard work) you may even please your bank manager. I trust this book will help you avoid the pitfalls of life in Ireland and smooth your way to a happy and rewarding future in your new home.

May the road rise to meet you!

Joe Laredo

September 2008



Custom House, Dublin

1.

FINDING A JOB

Ireland is one of the most open economies in the world in terms of trade in goods and services and in foreign investment, boasting a business-friendly regulatory environment, moderate tax rates and a flexible labour market. But although Ireland is one of the few countries in the world which is keen to attract new workers from abroad – most countries positively discourage them – it isn't necessarily easy to find a job there. Ireland has a relatively small labour market and there's a lot of competition for the best paid jobs; although in certain industries where skilled staff are in short supply, it's possible to pick and choose from an abundance of vacancies (see below).

ECONOMY

The Irish economy is the envy of Europe. In common with most other developed countries, Ireland suffered the ravages of unemployment in the last century and its economy went into a deep recession in the '60s, from which it only recovered in the '90s. That recovery, of course, has been nothing less than spectacular, with the result that the 'Celtic Tiger' has become the fastest growing economy in Europe and among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and, in terms of 'international competitiveness' is now ranked among the world's leading countries; indeed, the OECD recently described its economic performance as 'exemplary'.

Since 1994, when its unemployment rate had reached a staggering 15.7 per cent, Ireland has created hundreds of thousands of jobs, although since its all-time low of 3.8 per cent in early 2000, unemployment has risen by around 4 per cent per year and reached a nine-year high of 5.7 per cent in mid-2008, prompting fears of a recession; the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) predicts that the economy will contract by 0.4 per cent in 2008 before resuming expansion – of around 2 per cent – in 2009, but that unemployment will rise by 60 per cent by the same year.

The driving forces of Ireland's growth have changed in recent years. In the mid to late '90s,

growth was driven by strong performance in exports, which grew up to 20 per cent per year. While exports have remained at a high level, growth since 2000 has largely been driven by increases in domestic spending by individuals and in construction by the government and private businesses. However, internationally-trading businesses continue to play a major role in economic growth.

In the ten years to 2004, Irish gross national product (GNP) growth averaged over 7 per cent per annum in real terms (more than double that of the US and almost three times that of countries in the euro zone). The Irish economy continued to perform well until 2007, when annual growth was 6 per cent, but the first half of 2008 saw the 'end of an era', as the country's budget deficit nearly quadrupled (to €5.6bn). The determining factor was the sudden reversal of fortunes in the construction sector, a key plank in the 'Celtic Tiger' boom that saw 70,000 homes being built annually. Only half that number are predicted in 2008, and property prices dropped by around 10 per cent in the first half of the year. The current 'crisis' is exacerbated by weakening consumer confidence and tightening credit, following the US sub-prime crisis.

Other threats to Ireland's growth include the strength of the euro against foreign currencies such as the pound and the dollar, increasing

wage costs (which have risen faster since 1998 than those in any other EU country), and the price of waste management, insurance and electricity (the latter costing businesses some 40 per cent more than in the UK, for example). Improvements in social services and infrastructure have lagged behind economic development and will need to be accelerated if Ireland is to continue to attract the qualified labour force it needs to sustain growth.

Public transport, and especially bus services, are in need of improvement, and state education needs additional funding to tackle the high 'drop-out' rate (i.e. children leaving school with no qualifications) and create better out-of-school-hours care facilities and work incentives – rather than benefits and hand-outs – so that more women and single parents (of either sex) can join the workforce.

Older people also need encouragement and assistance to find jobs, as fewer than 40 per cent of over-55s have an upper-secondary school qualification compared with 75 per cent of 25- to 34-year-olds; an increase in spending on research and development (R&D) is required to foster innovation; and the plethora of funding agencies need better co-ordination to maximise their effectiveness.

Protection is another barrier to economic progress, and increased competition is particularly needed in the electricity and telecommunication markets (which are still dominated by state-owned enterprises) and the retail trade, although the recent abolition of the Groceries Order, which set minimum prices for non-perishable groceries, is a step in the right direction; the so-called Competition Authority in fact has no authority to enforce competitive practice.

The spiralling increase in the cost of property (see page 98) must be brought under control if the economy isn't to stagnate or decline.

The government is aware of all the above shortcomings and, in 2006, took steps to rectify them, including an increase in research funding, changes to the primary school

curriculum, plans to create 50,000 childcare places by 2010 and, most radically, a planned budget deficit from 2006 to 2008 in order to simulate growth.

Nevertheless, Ireland now faces an unprecedented challenge to its economic development, as many parts of China, India, South-east Asia and Central Europe are now developing the types of high-tech manufacturing and service activities – including electronics, software, financial and other services and pharmaceuticals – that have driven Ireland's growth over the last 15 years. As a result, the country is likely to specialise even more in high-value niche areas, particularly in high-tech goods, including office and telecommunication equipment, and chemicals.

JOB MARKET

Over the last decade there have been radical changes in the Irish job market. Most significantly, there has been a major shift away from agriculture (though agricultural production is increasing) towards high-tech manufacturing and, especially, service industries, which employ 900,000 people or 45 per cent of the workforce. Overall, employment in the services sector has increased by some 5 per cent annually in recent years, the largest increases being in personal services, security and other protection services, professionals and craft workers, while manufacturing has been in decline.

Until recently, the construction industry has also experienced accelerating growth: according to the Central Statistics Office, employment in construction increased by some 80 per cent in the five years to 2007, but has fallen by almost 12 per cent in the year mid-2007 to mid-2008.

A government analysis of employment trends in six key sectors – engineering, internationally traded services, IT hardware, IT software, medical devices and pharmaceuticals – published in May 2006, identified the three most 'dynamic' sectors as IT hardware and software and internationally traded services, while employment in engineering had declined from its peak in 2000; although even in the IT hardware sector, there had recently been net job losses.

Although many industrial workers have been retrained, not all have been able to make the necessary transition, and job vacancies in tele-services, software and electronics manufacturing, nursing and healthcare, pharmaceuticals and medical products, automotive and aerospace engineering, construction, retailing and, especially, engineering have multiplied in recent years, as have business and financial services, despite significant annual increases in overall employment (of around 2.5 per cent or 50,000 people).

The *FÁS/ESRI Employment and Vacancies Survey* indicates the four-year trend in job opportunities. The latest survey, published in April 2008, revealed a 3 per cent decrease (to 7 per cent) in the number of firms reporting vacancies – the lowest vacancy rate since mid-2005 – the majority of the decrease being in the industry and services sectors (both down 4 per cent) – although the services sector was the only one that recorded an improvement in employment prospects. The vacancies most difficult to fill were mechanics and sales staff (in the retail sector), quantity surveyors, managers and estimators (in construction), engineers, managers and general operators (in industry) and accounting and legal personnel (in services).

Among Ireland's top companies (in terms of their market value) are four financial institutions (Allied Irish Banks, Bank of Ireland, Anglo Irish Bank Corporation and Irish Life & Permanent),

CRH and the Grafton Group (building materials), the Elan Corporation (pharmaceuticals), Independent News and Media, the Kerry Group (food production) and Ryanair (airline).

The Great Place to Work Institute is a market research company that produces an annual review (published by *The Irish Independent*) of the 50 'best' companies (with more than 50 employees) to work for in Ireland – on the basis of a survey of employers and employees designed to ascertain how well they get on together! The 'best' company in 2007 (the latest year for which a survey has been published) was O2, followed by (in alphabetical order) Airtricity, Brightwater, the Children's University Hospital, DePuy (Ireland), Diageo Ireland, GE Commercial Aviation Services, Google Ireland, Intel Ireland and PEI. A list of all 50 companies and further details can be found on www.greatplacetowork.ie/best/list-ie-2006.htm.

The job market is particularly attractive for graduates, among whom unemployment is only around 3 per cent, as Irish employers continue to employ significant numbers of graduates, particularly in areas such as engineering, business and IT. Statistics might suggest that it is also attractive to foreigners. According to the mid-2008 *Quarterly National Household Survey* published by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), an astonishing 90 per cent of all new jobs in Ireland are currently being filled by foreign workers, and the number of non-

Irish workers reached 352,000 (up from 283,000 in 2006). This is misleading, however, as a foreigner must be highly qualified to find a job in Ireland – even more so than a native – and anyone arriving in Ireland looking for a job should expect to find stiff competition from the locals.

The Irish workforce is well educated, well trained and well motivated and you shouldn't expect employers to favour you simply because you've



uprooted yourself and your family and set up home in a foreign land; in fact the opposite may be the case, as hiring and promotion practice is somewhat old-fashioned in that the 'old boys' network still operates in a number of areas and managers have limited autonomy when it comes to recruiting staff. Even well qualified local graduates cannot always walk straight into a job.

It's also important to note that many young (and not so young) people still leave the country each year in search of better employment opportunities overseas. If an Irish person cannot find a job in his place of birth, it's bound to be more difficult for a foreigner.

On the positive side, although some people have difficulty in finding employment, there are relatively few stories of abject failure, and only a small number of new migrants with good job skills fail to find a job (the unemployment rate among skilled migrants is much lower than the national average). Most people who are prepared to work hard and adapt to the Irish way of doing things find that they do better in their job or career in Ireland than they would at home

It's essential to have a plan of action for finding a job and to do your homework before arrival and – if necessary – be prepared to change your plans as you go along.

As commuting times, costs and parking problems have increased, particularly in Dublin (where a parking space can cost an employee thousands of euros per year), there has been a big increase in the amount of tele-working (some 15 per cent of employees now work from home during normal office hours). Some employers have brought work close to their staff, or indeed prospective employees: high-tech design and consulting companies, for example, are setting up satellite offices in different parts of the country, closer to universities or industrial centres.

Whereas only a few decades ago, many young people sought a 'job for life', today people in their

'20s and '30s don't expect to stay with the same employer for much more than two years (though some employers are now offering three and five-year 'packages' in an attempt to recoup their investment in recruiting and training new staff). Ireland has also witnessed a move away from restricted job definitions to more generalised role descriptions.

Tele-services

Tele-services include technical support for computer and software customers, selling financial and marketing services of other goods, and making reservations (e.g. hotels, flights). Since 2000, Ireland has become the European leader in call centres, with over 60 companies setting up operations employing some 10,000 people.

Companies in this sector include American Airlines, AOLBertelsmann, Best Western, Citibank, Compaq, Corel Corporation, Dell, DER, Digital Equipment, Gateway 2000, Hertz, IBM, ITT Sheraton, KAO Infosystems, Korean Airlines, Lufthansa German Airlines, Oracle, Radisson Hotels, Sitel, United Airlines and UPS.

Candidates must be fluent in English and at least one other European language (German is preferred, then French, Italian and Spanish). A Diploma in Tele-Services can be taken.

Software

Ireland is the world's largest exporter of software (having overtaken the US in 2000).

From a handful of companies a decade and a half ago, there are now over 900 software firms in Ireland (130 of them foreign-owned) exporting over €16 billion worth of products and services. Five of the world's ten largest software companies have development or production facilities in Ireland, and 60 per cent of all software packages sold in Europe are produced in the country.

However, the industry currently faces a number of possible threats, including the possibility of recession in the US, the largest



market for Irish software, and the fact that internet-based services are likely to become increasingly important, which will make location less of a factor, thus eroding the advantages that Ireland has built up.

The software industry is concentrated mainly in the Dublin area, with much smaller clusters in Limerick, Galway and Cork, and very little anywhere else.

Multinational companies in this sector include IBM, Intel, Liberty IT, Microsoft, Nortel Networks, Northbrook Technologies, Openwave and SAP, and Irish companies include Baltimore Technologies, Datalex, IONA Technologies, Parthus Technologies, Riverdeep and Trintech.

Almost 80 per cent of employees in this sector are graduates. The key person in software manufacture is the developer/engineer, who creates new products. A computer-science degree isn't necessary, but maths and languages are useful, as well as technical skills and some sort of technology-related qualification. In particular, there's a huge demand for C++ and Java/DB developers, systems administrators, location software testers and IT analysts. More information is available from the Irish Software Association (☎ www.software.ie).

Electronics

Electronics manufacturing is another rapidly expanding business sector, employing over 60,000 people. Companies include Alps Electric, American Power Conversion, Analog Devices, Apple Computers, AT&T, Avid Technology, Bootstrap, Courms, Cabletron Creative Labs, Connaught Electronics, Cornel Electronics, Dovatron, EICON, EMC, Ericsson, Europlex Manufacturing, Fujitsu Isotec, General Electric, General Instruments, Hewlett Packard, Hi-Tech Electronics, Hitachi-Koki, Hormann Electronics, IBM, Intel, Irish Printed Circuits, Kostal, Lake Communications, LG Group, Lucent Technologies, Madge Networks, Matsushita Kotobuki, Maxtor, Mentec International, Mitsumi, Mitsubishi

Chemical, Motorola, Nortel, Northern Telecom, Philips, Quaestor Analytic, Quantum, SCI, Seagate Technology, Sensormatic, Siemens, Sigma Wireless Technologies, Silicon Systems Design, Stratus, Sun Microsystems, 3Com, Trintech Manufacturing, Westinghouse and Xilinx.

Ireland's seven universities and 12 institutes of technology recently increased their student intake in an attempt to cope with the expected demand for people with electrical, mechanical, production, manufacturing and engineering skills and knowledge of metals and plastics. A minimum qualification is Leaving Certificate maths (or the equivalent) and there are opportunities for specialists and multi-skilled workers.

Nursing & Healthcare

There's an acute shortage of nurses, midwives and junior doctors in Ireland, where there are over 5,000 nurses from non-EU countries (especially the Philippines). The nursing shortage is particularly acute in the Dublin area and the government recently announced measures aimed at attracting back nurses who had left the profession (11,000 nurses are registered as 'inactive') or work abroad and encouraging those who work part-time to work full-time.

In other parts of the country, doctors are in short supply and an extra 1,000 consultants are also needed. Specialist nurse training courses are being created in Cork, Waterford and Limerick, and fees for 'back to nursing' courses have been abolished (students on the four-week course are even paid a salary!). Agencies specialising in nursing recruitment include the Alliance Nursing Agency in Dublin (☎ www.alliancenurses.ie) and Kate Cowhig International Recruitment (☎ www.kcr.ie), which also recruits other healthcare workers.

Pharmaceuticals & Medical Products

Ireland is a major base for the development and manufacture of pharmaceuticals and medical products but, although it's an important sector, it represents only around 10 per cent of total industrial employment and is dominated by foreign multinationals. Nine of the world's top ten pharmaceutical companies and 13 of the world's top 15 medical products companies

have plants in Ireland. The medical devices and diagnostics industry employs 19,000 people and accounts for 7.5 per cent of Ireland's manufacturing base.

Pharmaceuticals companies include Akzo Pharma, Bristol-Meyers Squibb, Elan, Eli Lilly, E. Merck, FMC, Forest Laboratories, Fujitsawa, Ivax, Johnson & Johnson, Leo Laboratories, Schering-Plough, SmithKline Beecham, Warner Lambert, Wyeth Medica and Yamanouchi. Medical products companies include Abbott, Allergan, Bausch & Lomb, Baxter, Bayer Diagnostics, Becton Dickinson, Beiersdorf, Boston Scientific, Braun, CF Bard, Hollister, Howmedica, Mallinckrodt, Millipore, Olympus, Organon Teknika, Puritan Bennett, Sherwood Medical, Welch-Allyn American Home Products and Vistakon.

Caution

At the retail level, there's a ban on foreign-trained pharmacists (even if they're Irish-born) starting chemists' shops: if you're trained abroad, you must buy a business that has been trading for at least three years.

Automotive & Aerospace Engineering

Another growing sector in which designers, engineers and toolmakers are required is automotive and aerospace engineering. Companies include ABB, Alcatel Cable, Alcoa, Allied Signal, AO Smith, Beru, Betatherm, Bijur Lubrication, Bruss, Cooper Industries, Crown Equipment, Dahlstrom, Donnelly Mirrors, Elasto Metall, Emerson Electric, Fujikura, General Monitors, General Motors, General Signal, Groschopp, Henniges, Jacobs Engineering, Kostal, Kromberg & Schubert, Lapple, Legrand, Liebherr, Menvier Swaine, Mitsubishi Belting, Moog, Ohshima, Packo, Pauwels, Pratt & Whitney, Radiac Abrasives, Sifco Turbine, Simon Engineering, Snap-Tite, Thermo King, Trac Tech, Volex, Wavin, Westinghouse, Wilo and Woco.

Financial Services

The financial services sector employs almost 50,000 people, and half as many again work in associated services. More than 1,000

of the world's leading financial institutions have established operations within Dublin's International Financial Services Centre (IFSC), which was founded in 1987 and has since become one of the prime locations in the EU for the financial services industry. Activities include banking; asset, fund and corporate treasury management; financing; securitisation; insurance and leasing.

Over 7,000 people are now employed at the IFSC, and there are opportunities for junior fund administrators and fund managers as well as customer service, IT and e-commerce staff. The 'big five' financial services companies are Arthur Andersen, Deloitte & Touche, Ernst & Young, KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers. Competition among financial institutions for staff is intense, and salaries and perks can be generous, although there's no shortage of applicants, as financial services jobs generally offer considerable security.

Construction

Until the start of 2008, the Irish construction industry had been growing steadily since the mid-'90s and it accounts for almost a quarter of GNP.

Some 300,000 people are involved in construction – almost 12 per cent of total employment.

The industry is focusing increasingly on major projects, such as road construction and shopping centres. With planned improvements to roads, railways, airports and water treatment plants, growth is expected to continue for several more years, although it's expected to slow. Opportunities exist for school-leavers (e.g. plant operators), apprentices (e.g. electricians, joiners, plumbers, carpenters and painters) and graduates (e.g. architects and surveyors). Although the sector is suffering a relative recession, there are vacancies nationwide in some disciplines – especially for managers, quantity surveyors and estimators.

Retailing

The boom in consumer spending in the last decade has seen a record number of new retail outlets opening and jobs increasing annually, although this is expected to slow in the next few years. Recruitment in the fast moving consumer goods' (FMCG) sector is growing steadily, with particular demand for



average increases of 4.4 per cent in manufacturing industries, 6.3 per cent in the public sector and 6.4 per cent in the construction industry; indeed, income per capita in Ireland is among the highest in the world. Larger companies generally pay higher wages than smaller businesses (which also often expect employees to work longer hours); for a similar job you might expect to earn 30 per cent more in a company with over 500 staff than in a company with fewer than 50 staff.

sales and marketing professionals, principally at brand management, category management and marketing management levels, in both domestic and international markets.

Teaching

There's a demand for second-level teachers, especially of chemistry, French, Irish, IT, maths and religious studies, and for first-level teachers. Your qualifications must be acceptable to the Teaching Council (www.teachingcouncil.ie). Information about vacancies may be available from the principal teachers' union, the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (www.asti.ie).

Other Sectors

Other areas in which growth is expected in the early part of the century, albeit at a slower rate than those listed above, are consumer products, tourism, agriculture and fishing (especially food processing, which accounts for over a quarter of Ireland's food and drink exports), telecommunications, teaching, accountancy, food production and catering. There's a particular demand for personal assistants and secretaries – especially legal secretaries. As with pharmacy (see above), there are restrictions on a number of professions, including law, medicine, dentistry and veterinary practice, e.g. regarding entry, fees, advertising, training and the recognition of foreign qualifications.

SALARY

Average salaries have been rising rapidly since the mid-'90s and in 2005 overtook the EU

– especially in the rank of middle management, where job content rather than title is the principal factor affecting earnings. Similarly, in sales jobs, the most important factor is performance, and high performers can expect generous remuneration. At representative level, salaries tend to be similar across sectors and companies, as responsibility is evenly shared.

It isn't immediately obvious what salary you should command in Ireland, as wages and salaries aren't usually quoted in job advertisements. As trade unions are still influential in Ireland, wages are often negotiated on a collective basis and are therefore broadly similar in different industries and areas. Regional differences in salary are generally smaller than differences between industry sectors. Whereas the best paid sectors used to be mining and the chemical industries, it's now IT and financial services which enjoy the highest pay, though chemical and pharmaceutical manufacturing is still well rewarded.

Other above average sectors are communications (including telecommunications and transport); food, drink and tobacco processing; medical appliance manufacturing; oil and gas exploration (there will be a particularly large bonus for the first person to find oil in Ireland!); and construction.

Among the worst paid sectors are material manufacturing (including metal, plastics, textiles, rubber, leather, glass and pottery), printing and publishing, electrical and electronic engineering, and distribution. Bigger companies tend to pay better than

smaller ones. In terms of departments, the best paid managers are those in production and manufacturing, followed by those in IT, administration and marketing or sales, finance and accounting, and finally human resources (HR). The best executive jobs tend to be in marketing followed by sales, finance and technical departments.

As far as it's possible to generalise, average annual salary ranges for various positions are shown in the table below. The average public servant earns around €45,000 per year.

Average Annual Salary

Position	Salary (€)
Senior Managers	40,000 to 100,000
Middle Managers	35,000 to 50,000
Junior Managers	30,000 to 40,000
Executives	25,000 to 40,000*
Sales People	20,000 to 40,000*
Non-executives	10,000 to 15,000

* excluding bonuses and commission

Starting Salaries

The average graduate starting salary is around €27,250. Generally, those with good science or technology (especially medical and paramedical) qualifications can expect higher starting salaries than those without. The highest starting salaries (over €28,000) are in the armed forces, education, engineering and IT, as well as some construction-related jobs, and positions requiring degrees in mathematics and geology/earth sciences. Then come other science and computing-related posts, and jobs requiring qualifications in humanities, social work and social care.

The lowest starting salaries for graduates (under €25,000) are associated with art and design, business studies, hospitality, information services and psychology. As far as regional variations are concerned, the highest starting salaries (averaging €27,500) are in Leinster, which includes Dublin.

According to a survey undertaken at the 2008 Graduate Recruiters' Conference (run by Graduate Careers Ireland, www.gradireland.com), a postgraduate qualification has an effect on salary in only around 25 per cent of cases.

The average graduate is entitled to 23 days' paid holiday in his first year of employment.

Bonuses & Benefits

In areas where there are staff shortages, it has become common for companies to offer not only attractive salaries but also a range of other incentives to attract (and retain) employees. The most popular (i.e. most widely offered) benefits are company pension schemes, bonuses and private health insurance. Variable pay (i.e. a relatively low basic salary with substantial bonuses, known as risk-income) is becoming increasingly popular. Some companies will offer this kind of package only to their executives and heads of department, while others, particularly in the IT sector, apply the principle more or less across the board. In these cases, personnel at all levels will typically receive up to 40 per cent of their salary in the form of performance-related payments and share options.

Around 16 per cent of managers and 18 per cent of executives receive cash bonuses – up to 25 per cent of basic salary for senior managers and around 15 per cent for executives – and share options are given to 21 per cent of managers and 12 per cent of executives. In fact, share purchase schemes are cited as one of the biggest reasons for staff staying with an employer.

A common benefits package (offered by almost half of Irish companies) is a flexible or 'flex' programme, where employees can choose from a variety of benefits offered according to their circumstances, although there may be a number of 'core' benefits that apply to all.

Employers in the financial services, banking and insurance sectors offer preferential loans and mortgages, while others offer relocation assistance, which can exceed €60,000. Other benefits include pensions, holidays, insurance and company cars (though

the last has declined due to increased tax penalties. Dell Computers has even resorted to an internal lottery to attract and retain staff at its manufacturing plant in Limerick; prizes are awarded weekly and range from bicycles to holidays and even cars. Peripheral perks may include free courses or personal training classes: Xerox, which has a major manufacturing centre near Dublin, has an Open Learning Centre and a Virtual Learning Environment, through which staff can teach themselves a variety of skills, from languages to driving.

Since January 2004, benefits-in-kind have been subject to PRSI and the Health Levy, and these charges should be set against the value of the benefits you're offered.

Another recent innovation in remuneration is employee referral bonuses, whereby employees are rewarded for recruiting staff. Many companies are effectively using their entire workforce as recruiters. Referral bonuses vary considerably: the minimum is generally around €1,500, while some firms have been known to pay €7,500 or more for key placements.

Many companies are so desperate to find suitably qualified and skilled staff that it isn't uncommon for graduates to ask prospective employers what the company has to offer them. The demand for middle and senior managers, especially in the financial and technology sectors, has led to annual salary increases of up to 10 per cent, without taking into account other benefits such as share options and equity stakes.

Minimum Wage

A national minimum wage was introduced in Ireland on 1st April 2000 which, far from being an April Fool, was considerably higher than the UK minimum. The current rate for 'experienced adult workers' is €8.65 per hour. Other categories of worker, including those under 18, those in their first two years of employment and those undergoing training, are subject to various other minimum rates, the lowest being the illogically named 'sub-minimum wage' of €6.06 per hour (70 per cent of the 'full' minimum wage) for workers under 18. In sectors covered by a Joint Labour Committee, higher minimum wages apply.



WOMEN

Traditionally restricted to nursing, teaching, domestic service and clerical work (if they weren't working as nuns), Irish women began to participate more fully in the labour force in the '70s (until 1977, married women were forbidden to work in the civil service), but it wasn't really until the '90s that they achieved any measure of equal representation with men. The growth in service industries in particular created additional career opportunities, and in the six years from 1991 to 1997 the number of full time working women in Ireland grew more than in the previous 20 years, while many more took up part-time employment.

The number of working mothers almost doubled between 1987 and 1997 and 65 per cent of women aged 25-54 are now in employment (which, paradoxically, has led to a national shortage of childcare facilities!). Nevertheless, despite the fact that the last two Irish Presidents have been female, women are still greatly outnumbered in senior positions.

Under EU law, discrimination on grounds of sex or marital status is illegal except in