
Once again a Land of Emigrants: Ireland's Dismal Prospects

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Introduction

Throughout the 19th and 20th century emigration from Ireland was a major feature of the national history. Then in the mid-1990's Ireland witnessed a dramatic reversal of migration trends and became a favoured destination from continental Europe, parts of Africa and Asia for the first time in its history. This period was to last a little more than a decade. The financial crisis and the economic downturn caused a slowdown in inflows and initiated a new emigration pattern. Ireland has thus experienced two remarkable changes in its migratory patterns within a decade and moved from experiencing large-scale emigration to receiving substantial inflows and then back to significant outflows. With this unique experience, Ireland has become a new laboratory for the study of migration. The purpose of this analysis is to provide an insight into the factors and circumstances that led to reversals of migration trends and more particularly the new surge in emigration, and examine the far-reaching changes and their potential consequences on Irish society. It will allow us to emphasize the close link between migration trends and the supply of labour with the demand for both highly skilled and unskilled workers.

Since the return of emigration is quite a recent phenomenon, there are few accurate analyses available. The latest census dates back to 2006 and the next one will take place in 2011. Aggregate figures in intercensal periods are provided but they have to be treated as estimations. The data that can be relied upon are collected by the Central Statistics Office for the Mid-term reviews, the Quarterly Economic Commentaries and the Quarterly National Household Surveys. There are also other sources which may help analyse migration trends such as the Live register, which integrates applications for unemployment benefits, the PPS numbers (social security numbers) allocated to non-Irish nationals, the number of

work permits issued, the data provided by the airport authorities in passenger inflows and outflows, the emigration-related data from police authorities or such units as Migration watch along with the figures from the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship, not to mention such big venues as the Down Under Expo or the Working Abroad Expo which provide information and advice to people willing to emigrate. For the purpose of this paper I have also interviewed two prominent economists from the Economic and Social Research Institutes (ESRI), an independent research team which regularly produces estimates in the form of quarterly commentaries, mid-term reviews along with working papers, Alan Barrett and John Fitzgerald specialised in macro-economics and labour economics.

Emigration: a major feature of Irish history

Emigration is a central feature of Ireland's modern history. Until the recent past the only form of migration the country knew was outward - with thousands of men and women leaving every year to seek work elsewhere. Before the economic boom the natural increase in population was continually offset by out-migration on a scale which was relatively higher than in any other European country.

The first major migration of the modern period followed the overthrow of the Gaelic order in the 18th century. Ireland had the highest rate of emigration of any European country over the 19th and the 20th century. In the years between the Great Famine of the 1840s and the First World War, Ireland experienced a drastic drop in population - the overall population decreased by one third. Emigration declined between 1890 and 1935 and then resumed. The 1950s under the leadership of Sean Lemass and Ken Whitaker saw the end of protectionist policies and an opening up of the Irish economy to foreign investors from the multinational corporate sector. There followed a dramatic drop in out-migration. Then in the 1980s, in the wake of Ireland's membership of the European Community the restructuring of traditional industry along with unwise economic management led to a substantial loss of jobs. A dramatic rise in unemployment followed and an even more dramatic return to high emigration rates. There were then huge outflows from Ireland. According to Alan Barrett¹ a total outflow of

¹ Alan Barrett, Economic and Social Research Institute, Interview 29th May 2009.

200 000 people left Ireland to seek their fortune abroad during that period which has sometimes been labelled as “the lost decade”.

The longevity of Irish emigration- over 300 years- is quite unusual compared with other European migration flows. It led to the formation of the Irish diaspora which is referred to as part and parcel of the Irish nation in the Irish constitution².

The Irish diaspora contains about 80 million people on the whole, which is over thirteen times the population of the island of Ireland itself. It consists of all Irish emigrants and their descendants in countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, Argentina, New Zealand, Mexico, South Africa, Brazil, Caribbean states along with continental Europe³.

The big shift

In the mid-1990s, the economy of Ireland experienced a rapid turnaround and began to experience the highest growth rates in Europe. As a consequence of the new prosperity, in the year 1996 the population outflows were reversed and net inflows began. The inflows which started primarily were made of returning Irish emigrants, commonly referred to as expats mostly from Australia, America and Canada. Then they included roughly equal proportions of non-Irish immigrants and former Irish emigrants. In the late 1990s as more and more foreign workers flooded to benefit from the job opportunities, these inflows have generally increased and the national mix has shifted from being 50 percent non Irish to being about 20 percent Irish⁴. 1997 is the year when the inflows of immigrants became quite significant. In 2004 which marked the fifth enlargement of the European Union there was an acceleration in the inflow due to the ten new member states of the EU being given full access to the Irish labour market⁵.

² Article 2 of *Bunreacht na hÉireann* (Constitution of Ireland), which was amended in 1998 after the signature of the Good Friday Agreement includes a reference to the Irish diaspora. [furthermore, the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage.]

³ In the United States 44 million Americans claim Irish ancestry. In the United Kingdom 10% of the British population claim one Irish grandparent. According to the 2006 census by Statcan, Canada's Official Statistical office, the Irish represent the 4th largest ethnic group with 4,354,155 Canadians with full or partial Irish descent which amounts to 14% of the nation's total population. Another large Irish ancestry group is to be found in Australia with 2 million people, i.e. 9.0 per cent of the Australian population. There are an estimated 500,000 people of Irish ancestry in Argentina and 90,000 Irish descendants of people who fled Ireland during the potato famine live in Mexico.

⁴ Alan Barrett, David Duffy, IZA DP No. 2838 *Are Ireland's Immigrants Integrating into its Labour Market?* June 2007.

⁵ Ireland was one of only three existing members of the EU to allow full access to its labour market to the EU's new citizens from the date of accession on May 1st 2004. The other two were Sweden

Between 2004 and 2006, 160,000 of them settled in Ireland⁶. Ireland's population, 4,232,900 according to the 2006 census⁷, was transformed, with a percentage of foreign-born residents rising from 7% in 2002 to an estimation of 15% in 2008⁸. Immigrant communities were established across the country, in both urban areas and smaller towns and places, which were previously known only for being stop-offs between cities, began to expand⁹. Dublin, even earned the nickname of Dublinski as roughly 180,000 Poles, Czechs and other Eastern Europeans moved there in search for work. Ireland then witnessed a concomitant surge in population growth and economic growth.

Economic growth and immigration

These dramatic changes were the result of a combination of factors or ingredients associated with the emergence of the Celtic Tiger which have been both endogenous (developing or originating within Ireland) or exogenous (coming from outside).

Among endogenous factors, it is agreed that Irish economic growth was driven by a progressive industrial policy under the form of various fiscal and investment incentives which attracted large-scale foreign direct investment and generated substantial exports. The new industrial policy relied on a series of National Partnership Agreements between employees, employers, and government which played a key role in wage moderation, and resulted in a dramatic reduction in days lost in industrial disputes. Even more influential was the low corporate tax for manufacturers tolerated by Brussels, which was raised from 10% to 12.5% in the 1990s. Other factors such as the development of new, high value added sectors – pharmaceuticals, ICT and financial services – political and economic stability and the government's investment in education and skills played a substantial role. The presence of a young, flexible, English speaking labour force made Ireland an attractive place for foreign investors.

Among the exogenous factors, the large scale FDI (Foreign Direct Investment), especially American, accounted for 64% of employment by foreign

and the United Kingdom. The 12 other member states imposed a two-year ban on the new Europeans.

⁶ *The Spectator*, 28 January 2006. "Invasion of the New Europeans. Immigrants from the East are honest and hard-working says Anthony Browne, but many more have arrived than the government predicted. Should there be a limit?"

⁷ According to the ESRI estimates of 22nd September 2009 it would have gone up to 4,459,300.

⁸ According to the 2006 census 85,3% of the residents were born in Ireland and 14.7% were born outside.

⁹ Ruaridh Nicoll, *The Observer*, Sunday 10 May 2009, "End of the road, The roar of the Celtic Tiger".

companies¹⁰. The American economy which grew rapidly during the 1990s had a huge impact on the multinationals which had settled in Ireland where corporate earnings rose rapidly. Combined with low inflation, low unemployment and a favourable competitive exchange rate dollar/punt (up to 2002), the strong profits sent the stock market surging. EU financial transfers have definitely been a factor, however overestimated¹¹. Payments under the CAP and the Structural and Cohesion Funds, which contributed to a broad spectrum of infrastructural and program areas, have been significant, especially in the late 1980's and early 1990's, when the level of net transfers peaked at 5-6% of GDP. The dramatic increase in the growth of Ireland's exports can partially be attributed to the injection of billions of pounds worth of European structural funds and the efficient management of the National Debt.

Most of these elements go back a long time. The conditions for rapid economic growth began in the 1950s when the economy opened up with tariffs and quotas phased out, when subsidies and tax breaks came in and major improvements in education took place. It's only when all the elements came together that they created the boom which came along with large migrant inflows and a steep rise in population. One should not forget to mention luck as well which helped Ireland find its place in a globalized market at the right time.

The decade 1991-2000 was marked by massive job creation—nearly half a million new jobs, which amounts to 43% of the total labour force and between 1996 and 2008. Ireland became an attractive place for foreigners in search of jobs. There was a positive net migration rate.

¹⁰ Marie-Claire Considère-Charon, *Irlande une singulière intégration européenne*, Paris, Economica, 2002.

¹¹ *ibid.*

Table 1: Inflows and outflows between 2000 and 2008

Year	Immigrants	Emigrants	Net migration
1992	40,7	33,4	7,4
1993	34,7	35,1	-0,4
1994	30,1	34,8	-4,7
1995	31,2	33,1	-1,9
1996	39,2	31,2	8,0
1997	44,5	25,3	19,2
1998	46,0	28,6	17,4
1999	48,9	31,5	17,3
2000	52,6	26,6	26,0
2001	59,0	26,2	32,8
2002	66,9	25,6	41,3
2003	60,0	29,3	30,7
2004	58,5	26,5	32,0
2005	84,6	29,4	55,1
2006	107,8	36,0	71,8
2007	109,5	42,2	67,3
2008	83,8	45,3	38,5
2009	57,3	65,1	-7,8

Source : Central Statistics Office, Components of the annual population change 1987-2009, Population and Migration Estimates, April 2009

This table shows that from 1996 to 2007 the annual stock of new immigrants kept increasing and there was a positive net migration rate. The first positive net migration rate started in 1992 then switched back to negative and the significant immigration of non nationals definitely started in 1996-1997. From 1996 onwards, there has been a return to Ireland of Irish born emigrants from the 1980's and since 2004 and the accession of the ten new member states, there has been a marked increase in immigration from the central European states¹².

Until 2008 immigration seemed set to be the dominant force in 21st century Ireland, just as emigration was dominant in the 19th century.

The dramatic downturn : a domino effect

The year 2008 signalled a dramatic downturn in Ireland's once booming economy and virtually every single indicator has worsened at an alarming rate. What used to be the engine of economic growth – construction and high tech sectors – has been severely hit by the crisis. The property bubble is largely blamed for the crisis. According to John Fitzgerald of the Economic and Social Research

¹² The United Kingdom, Sweden and Ireland were the only countries to allow full free movement from day one of accession, which meant inflows from the new member states. However, as regards Bulgaria and Romania which joined the EU in 2006 transitional measures were put in place for two years and a work permit was required for immigrants from the latest entrants.

Institute the crisis is mainly due to bad policy and because the government didn't control the housing market¹³. The level of activity has been retrenching sharply, which has opened up a large potential public deficit and consequently a jump in the cost of financing Irish sovereign debt.

The crisis that originated in the United States has meant a sharp decrease in American investment which was the key to many of the most successful Irish ventures. Consequently a series of relocations such as Dell¹⁴ and the fall of exports that followed suit, have completely derailed the Irish economy. A substantial number of multinationals in pharmaceuticals and electronics have relocated to low cost economies in Latin America or Asia¹⁵. The dramatic downturn has had multiple consequences for Ireland. According to the OECD employment outlook of 2009¹⁶, from December 2007 to July 2009, 166,000 individuals joined the ranks of the unemployed and the unemployment rate rose by 7.8 percentage points to reach 12.5%, the second-highest level in the OECD after Spain and the highest percentage increase in the unemployment rate witnessed during the current crisis. There is no doubt that former immigrants and refugees usually constitute a particularly vulnerable group. According to the ESRI Quarterly Economic Commentary Summer 2009¹⁷, the unemployment rate among non-Irish nationals is now 15%, while the figure for Irish nationals is 9%, which clearly indicates a rapid deterioration in job prospects for non-nationals in the first three months of 2009.

There is evidence to show that the rate of unemployment among migrants is higher than among natives, but there has been some convergence towards natives who are forced to leave the country in order to find employment suited to their skills. The departure of high-skilled nationals will be quite detrimental to the

¹³ In the year 2008 100,000 new homes were built compared to 180,000 in Britain whose population is more than 12 times larger, *Telegraph*, "Ireland's Celtic Tiger economy is dead, and its cubs are thinking of emigrating", Nick Meo in Dublin, 4th Oct 2008, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ireland/3135607/Irelands-Celtic-Tiger-economy-is-dead-and-its-cubs-are-thinking-of-emigrating.html>

¹⁴ In January 2009, computer multi-national Dell announced that it was cutting 1,900 jobs out of 3,000 at its plant in Limerick over the next 12 months and moving all production of computer systems for customers in Europe, the Middle East and Africa from Limerick to Poland. As it is estimated that another 10,000 jobs in sub-supply companies rely on Dell business, economists have warned that each job at Dell might underpin another four or five Irish jobs. *RTÉ News*: 1900 jobs lost at Dell in Limerick, Thursday, 8 January 2009 23:01. www.rte.ie/news/2009/0108/dell.html

¹⁵ There has been two closures in the city of Cork which have deeply affected the local highly skilled workforce : a Motorola plant making software and a Sensomatic electronics plant. Finfacts, Ireland's business and finance Portal, Motorola to shut Cork software centre with loss of 350 jobs. By Finfacts Team, Jan 29, 2007, http://www.finfacts.com/irelandbusinessnews/publish/article_10008861.shtml, "US electronics firm Tyco Sensomatic to move 320 jobs from Cork to low-cost overseas location", By Finfacts Team, Sep 25, 2008.

¹⁶ <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/61/55/43707134.pdf>, accessed 1st October 2009.

¹⁷ ESRI, Quarterly Economic Commentary, Summer 2009.

economic future of the nation. It is commonly agreed that the worst is still to come with an unemployment rate nearing 16% next year, about the same rate that Ireland had in 1987, one of the worst years in 20th century Ireland¹⁸.

The impact of the crisis on demographics

During the decade of the Celtic Tiger, immigrants flowed in by thousands in search for jobs while Irish nationals were returning home lured by the country's promises. The financial crisis disrupted the migration patterns which were reversed again. Ireland, which was the first country to enter into recession (two quarters of negative growth) is now confronted with the prospect of rapidly increasing Irish emigration for the first time in 30 years, a grim reminder of the dark decades in Irish history which generated the Irish diaspora. Since the search for work is one of the primary reasons for migration, high levels of unemployment at home will be a disincentive to stay there. Since the crisis erupted there has been a net resumption of emigration. The demographic shift definitely took place between April 2008 and April 2009 with an estimated negative net migration rate of -7,800 in April 2009. The figures above reveal that the total number of immigrants into the State between April 2007 and April 2008 had fallen by 26,000 to 83,800, while the number of emigrants had shown a marginal increase on the previous year to 45,300 (Australia and New Zealand attracting the largest proportion of these).

Table 2 : Population and Migration Estimates between April 2007 and April 2008

	April 2007	April 2008	April 2009
Natural increase	38,800	44,000	45,100
Net migration	67,500	38,500	-7,800
Population change	106,100	83,100	37,300
Population at	4,339, 000	4,422,100	4,459,300

Source : CSO, Population and migration estimates 2009, 22nd September 2009.

As can be seen on table 2 the downward trend had emerged in 2007 with a net migration estimated to have fallen from 67,300 in the year ending April 2007 to 38,500 before the number of emigrants outgrew the number of immigrants by 7,800 in 2009.

Given the situation of anaemic economic growth in Ireland, there will be a rising share of the working-age cohort who will opt for emigration. This new surge of emigration should continue to be massive according to ESRI economist

¹⁸ <http://www.cso.ie/census/documents/PDR%202006%20Tables%2019-30.pdf>, accessed 7th May 2009.

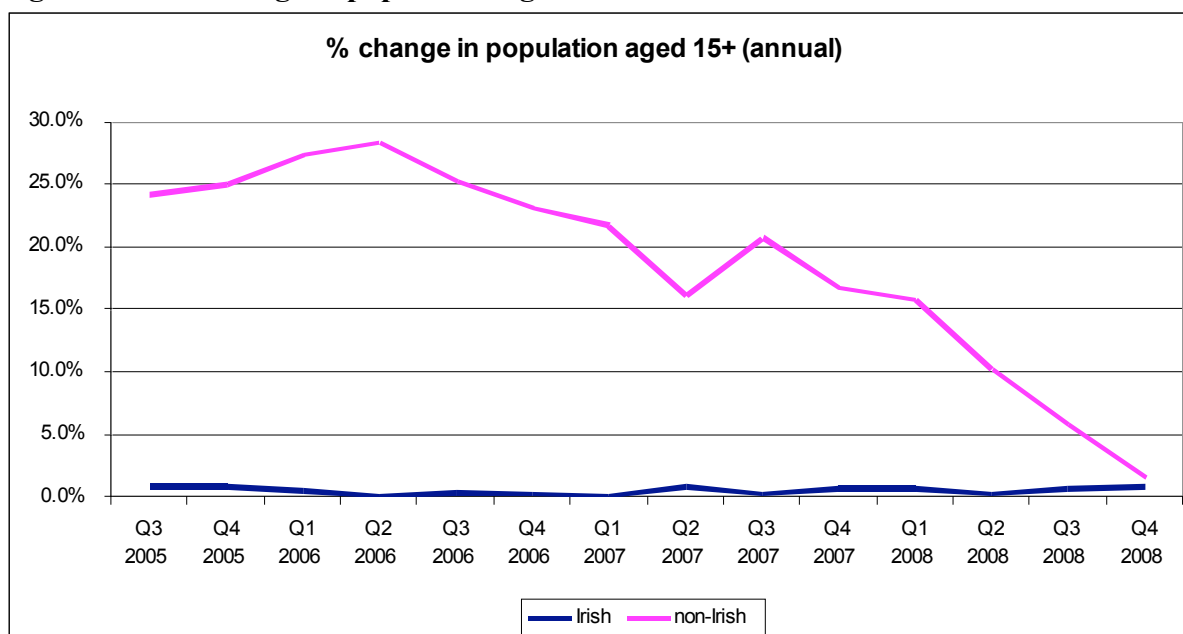
Alan Barrett¹⁹ who expects a lot more non-nationals to return home from Ireland, mostly to Eastern Europe.

Who is more likely to emigrate?

Given the fact that the rate of unemployment loss is higher among non-nationals than nationals, we can assume the more likely to leave first are the foreign workers.

Another way of finding out which groups are the most likely to leave Ireland is to look at the sectors which have been most severely hit by the crisis and therefore where the rate of unemployment loss is highest. The three sectors that have suffered the most from the crisis are the construction sector, the catering sector-hotels and restaurants, and the wholesale and retail sector. In those three sectors the victims have been first and foremost the foreign born workers where they were highly represented. The graph below reveals that there has been a steady deceleration in population growth rates among non nationals. After a small rise in the third quarter of 2007 the downward trend in the number of non-nationals has been quite striking while the growth rate among nationals seems fairly stable.

Figure 1: % of change in population aged 15+ Irish and non Irish



Source : CSO, Quarterly economic Commentaries, Q3 2005 to Q4 2008

As regards the rate of unemployment loss per sector for nationals and non nationals between, the fourth quarter of 2007 and the fourth quarter of 2008 give

¹⁹ Alan Barrett, Economic and Social Research Institute, Interview 29th May 2009.

us some clear indications. Migrant unemployment surged in the early months of the crisis, but slowed substantially as many migrants returned to their countries of origin. Recent migrants from the new EU Member States (Romania and Bulgaria) were particularly hard hit. It appears that the people more likely to lose their jobs have been the least experienced or those in the lower skilled occupations. One interesting point is that the only sector where they were sharply overrepresented was hotels and restaurants and not construction as one could have assumed even though a lot of Poles and people from the Baltic states were working in the building industry²⁰. Employment among the low-skilled fell almost twice as fast as total employment (over the year to the first quarter of 2009). Eastern Europeans have often lost their jobs in shops and bars.

According to the Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI)²¹, a considerable number of migrants fear their work permits won't be renewed or that they will be made redundant. There has also been growing uncertainties about Ireland's naturalisation process²². The lack of clarity around the expense and slow processing times are causing real hardship for migrants, according to Senior Solicitor Catherine Cosgrave. However in August 2009 the government announced its intention to ease restrictions on migrant workers who have recently been made redundant while recognizing their valuable contribution to Ireland in recent years²³. The economic recession has also signalled the end of the French exodus of young undergraduates or graduates to Ireland. Laurent Girard-Claudon, Director of Approach People, declared that he had lost 40% of its turnover and was now conducting most of his missions in France²⁴.

The website éan²⁵ offers a selection of reports from Irish emigrants who came back home during the years of the Celtic tiger and are experiencing bitter disillusionment. Elizabeth Palmer for CBS Evening News reports a sense of

²⁰ MCA Newsletter No. 2: "After the Boom: Migration and the Irish Construction Sector", Trinity Immigration Initiative, Employment Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin, July 2009.

²¹ <http://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/>, accessed 12th May 2009.

²² It appears that Ireland's cost, lengthy processing times and high rate of refusals compares unfavourably with other countries, such as the UK, Canada and Australia.

²³ Immigrant Council of Ireland, "Press Release Easing of restrictions recognises migrant workers positive contribution and provides welcome relief", Friday August 28, 2009, http://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/press_detail.php?id=103

²⁴ *Nouvel Observateur*, 29 janvier 2009, « Un exil massif : Irish blues à Dublin ».

²⁵ <http://www.ean.ie/category/return-migration/> accessed 7th May 2009.

betrayal among three returned emigrants from Holland, Canada and the United States²⁶ “enticed back from abroad by the boom, and ambushed by the bust”.

The age groups which are more likely to emigrate are usually the 25 to 45. According to Seve MacLarnon from the Down Under Expo, 8 out of 10 inquiries about emigrating are from people who are in their thirties and forties²⁷. The young Irish people have been particularly hit by the crisis whether they be in the high skilled bio-tech sectors IT and electronics sectors which made the reputation of the Celtic Tiger. The idea of “riding out the recession” is steadily gaining ground²⁸.

Temporary and part-time workers, migrants and low-skilled workers have also been more severely hit by the crisis. According to the OECD employment outlook²⁹ registered unemployment among temporary and part-time workers increased more than twice as fast as that of the total workforce over the year to July 2009.

Which destinations?

When looking at how the current crisis differs from the previous experiences one can immediately say that there are few opportunities for emigration given the fact that this is a global crisis. According to Alan Barrett the rate of employment loss exceeds that of outflow which means that a significant proportion of migrants appear to remain in spite of job losses, at least initially³⁰.

Some nationals still consider emigration but the problem is to pick up the right destination. In the seventies and eighties the UK, the United States, Australia, New-Zealand and Canada were the most common destinations. The options that present themselves to Ireland's potential emigrants, whether they be in the financial services sector or in the building industry are quite restricted. Working Abroad Expos have been set up throughout the country giving information on visas and jobs and education opportunities. Advice was also provided on which jobs were in most need and in which parts of the globe, as well

²⁶ CBS Evening News: “After Decade-Long Boom, Ireland's Economy Goes Bust, And Emigrants Feel Betrayed”.

DUBLIN, Ireland, March 7, 2009 by Elizabeth Palmer for CBS Evening News.

²⁷ Telegraph, 4 October 2008, Nick Meo in Dublin, “Ireland's Celtic Tiger economy is dead and its cubs are thinking of emigrating”.

²⁸ Irish Examiner 2009, Destination anywhere, Thursday, March 19, 2009. Noel Baker finds the idea of riding out the recession in sunnier climes is steadily gaining momentum. <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/idqlkfqlsn/#ixzz0SmdWaGCU>, accessed March 26th 2009.

²⁹ <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/61/55/43707134.pdf>, accessed 1st October 2009.

³⁰ Alan Barrett, Economic and Social Research Institute, Interview 29th May 2009.

as advice on mainly they could be got. There are still a few selected destinations which seem to be managing the economic crisis mainly Canada, New Zealand and Australia. Among these destinations Australia³¹ seems to rank first. The number of new additions by country of birth has nearly doubled between 2007 and 2008³² while the number of Irish people who applied for Working Holiday Visas in the second half of 2008 increased by 52% compared with the same period in 2007. Even though the requirements are getting very tight with a points-based system with particular emphasis on certain skills needed by the Australian economy or incentives for jobs in specific states such as the Northern territory, there are definite skill shortages, and therefore opportunities for Irish people³³. New-Zealand has the same points system and is currently seeking teachers, physiotherapists, health professionals, media workers and retail workers. Irish people can apply for a job in New-Zealand while being in Australia.

Canada³⁴ looks quite promising as well. According to Stephen MacLarnon Canada hasn't been badly hit by the recession thanks to a strong banking regulatory system which a new Irish commission would like to use as a model. It takes in the world's largest per capita immigration numbers at around 250,000 people a year and it looks as though an increasing proportion will be from Ireland as this is the first time. Canada has featured in a major exhibition event like the Working Abroad Expo³⁵. The next Working Abroad expos are advertised on the net. There will be one in Dublin on 19th and 20th September and the next one in Belfast on 22nd and 23rd September³⁶.

Potential emigrants can also consult éan, the emigrant advice network which also has a website³⁷.

³¹ The figures for Australia can be found in the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's annual report for 2007-08 - <http://www.immi.gov.au/about/reports/annual/2007-08/pdf/outcome2-outputs.pdf>

³² Australian Government, Department of immigration and citizenship, Immigration update, July to December 2008 Table 1.6. Permanent additions by country of birth. Accessed 23rd May 2009.

³³ *Irish examiner*, art. cit.

³⁴ The figures for Canada can be found in the annual report of the Citizenship Commission - <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/cit-ann-report-2007.asp> All inquiries have to be addressed to the Canadian High Commission in London. There were 38 occupations the Canadian government wanted to attract in areas such as financial services, construction, healthcare teaching and cooking. (*Irish Times* 23rd March 2009 Nurses, taxi drivers and laid off staff explore options Kitty Holland.

³⁵ In an article from *The Economist* dated May 14th 2009 Don't blame Canada A country that got things right, the journalist was saying : "All of Canada's main banks were profitable in the quarter ending January 31st when market conditions were at their worst. None has needed government investment" adding that the country's financial system had been praised by Barack Obama.

³⁶ http://www.workingabroadexpo.com/a_z_exhibitors.html accessed June 9th 2009.

³⁷ <http://www.ean.ie/category/return-migration/> accessed May 23rd 2009.

As regards the question whether emigration will be temporary or permanent the complexity of the crisis along with the uncertainties as to its length make it extremely difficult for the new potential emigrants to plan ahead. There is however the belief that the depth of the downturn is such that it will take time for Ireland to recover and larger economies are likely to recover more quickly. There is no feeling of a lost decade as in the 1980s but in the best ESRI scenario the first signs of recovery will appear in 2011.

Scandinavia and more particularly Norway with its considerable natural resources is also attracting Irish people who have been made redundant. Finally further destinations such as Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates can be targeted.

As regards the United States even though job prospects are quite limited there Taoiseach Brian Cowen has obtained an expanded system of visa approval on the basis of a reciprocal agreement between Ireland and the USA, to facilitate up to 10,000 Irish workers a year and allow them to stay two years instead of one.

Conclusions

This paper has attempted to show that Ireland may be experiencing a demographic transition, that is changing the size and age structure of its population, carrying significant economic implications. It has revealed the close link between economic development and migration patterns. When dealing with Irish migration flows one should not overlook Ireland's place within a much larger English-speaking world, nor the influence of earlier Irish history and culture upon migration trends. Even though emigration generated for those who left various feelings ranging from frustration and powerlessness, resignation to anger, not to mention a sense of being disloyal to their native country, for a long time it was considered as a necessary evil, a stop-gap solution to a huge unemployment problem. However in the current global crisis, emigration cannot be seen as the safety valve it once was. A declining workforce with the negative consequences in terms of productivity and dependency ratio will be quite detrimental to the nation. It will further weaken economic development, generate a fall in output and productivity and also slash the country's fertility rate. There is an urgent need for economic reforms to restore Ireland's competitiveness and create a sizeable number of jobs. A prolonged recession would mean harsh times for the Irish nation.