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Where in the world can you get a job?

John Meagher on the people who emigrate and this weekend's Working Abroad fair at the RDS

Mairead Fleming does not hesitate for even a moment. "Canada," she says. "That's where I would emigrate to if I had to."

Fleming is director of Brightwater, the Irish recruitment agency, and she is consistently struck with the wealth of jobs available in Canada, at a time where opportunities are drying up elsewhere.

"Canada is very big right now," she says.

"It hasn't been affected by the worldwide recession in the way that Ireland and the UK have been. There are a lot of engineering roles there. The banking sector is very stable.

"There are plenty of opportunities for accountants and that's good news for people who worked in the 'big four' firms here who didn't get their contracts renewed. Yes, Canada is the place to go to right

Canada will be well represented among the exhibitors at the Working Abroad fair which takes place in Dublin's RDS today and tomorrow.

"The Canadian Ambassador to Ireland, Patrick Binns, has spoken about Canada's need for more than 200,000 skilled immigrants," organiser Stephen McLarnon says.

"And there is a lot of Irish interest in that country right now, particularly among white-collar workers.

"We used to be called the Down Under Expo, but we broadened our remit to include Canada because there is such interest in the country at the moment.

"We anticipate a very big attendance at the expo because obviously a great number of people are assessing their situation

during this difficult economic time and planning a move abroad.

"Obviously, we'll get under-30s who want to go travelling for a year and are looking into that, but there will be lots of people who are having to seek work abroad because of financial circumstances," McLarnon said.

Australia remains a big draw. "In the past 12 months, 22,000 people under the age of 30 have travelled to Australia," he adds. "That's up by a third on the previous 12-month period. Western Australia seems to be especially strong at the moment in areas like mining.

"One of the reasons why the country is doing well is that its biggest trading market is China, and China continues to experience growth. Something that might work to our advantage is that Australia -- and New Zealand -- has an ageing workforce."

McLarnon says Ireland's workforce is well placed to take advantage of opportunities in both Canada and Australia.

"As a nation, we still have a reputation for high education and a strong work ethic. I talk to people from abroad in the recruitment area all the time and they talk about the qualities of Irish workers.

"That said, some younger graduates can have a poor work ethic. They have grown up in the Celtic Tiger years and have lived through an instant-gratification culture.

"Many of them have had quite a shock because they thought that work would be readily available when they qualified, and it's not."

Employees in the construction business have been hit especially hard. Paraic Kelly, who runs the constructionjobs.ie recruitment website, says there are opportunities abroad -- it's just a case of having to seek them out.

"There are jobs in areas like oil and gas exploration, but they require a specific set of skills that can be very different to what they would have been used to on building sites here.

"But for those willing to upskill, there are rewards to be had, but

that said, the work environments can be harsh, if you're on an oil rig for two or three weeks at a time.

"Twelve months ago, we would have seen opportunities in construction in the UK, but that's really fallen by the wayside, with the exception of the Olympic site in London. Construction has been hit everywhere, including Canada where there was a lot of work to be had a year ago."

For those keen on a sense of adventure mixed with trepidation, there are significant employment opportunities in Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran. A cursory search on jobs site, Monster.ie, reveals over 100 jobs in Afghanistan for such trades as carpentry and waste management.

Earlier this week, a car dealer based in Iran and seeking sales personnel advertised in Irish newspapers -- the company is planning to sell US imports there.

It is the kind of work and life experience more likely to appeal to the age group most heavily affected by the recession -- people aged between 25 and 34.

The most recent figures show that there has been a 40pc increase among this age profile seeking unemployment benefit. Anecdotal evidence suggests this is the group most likely to look abroad for work, often as they are unencumbered by family and fiscal commitments.

Piarras Mac Einri, director of the Irish Centre for Migration Studies at University College Cork, says people are less likely to emigrate once they pass their mid-30s, as they will often have put down strong family and other roots by this stage in their lives.

"Culturally speaking and historically, we have been one of the most mobile of peoples. And that continues to be reflected with the economic situation today."

Mairead Fleming puts it succinctly: "People are realistic. They will go where the work is. But it's not all doom and gloom -- there are more jobs at home than there were six months, or so, ago.

"People who thought they would have to emigrate are finding that they're able to get the sort of work they want at home after

all."

The Working Abroad Expo takes place at the RDS, Dublin, from 11am today and tomorrow. Admission €10.

www.workingabroadexpo.com