A Castlebar girl is helping to put construction workers arriving in the UK on the right track. The past 12 months have seen a noticeable increase in the number of people leaving Ireland to find work in the UK, where the economy is still fragile but offers more opportunities for construction workers than Ireland at present.
Along with the challenges of finding employment, new arrivals have to deal with practical issues before they are eligible to work in the UK.

This includes opening a bank account, registering for tax, applying for a national insurance number, obtaining construction safety cards and other organisational nightmares.
For the uninitiated, this can be a serious headache and delays starting work.

However, help is at hand thanks to a new free resource centre, the CIS Club, which was set up primarily to assist those moving from Ireland to the UK to work in construction. CIS stands for Construction Industry Scheme.
Michaele Rooney who hails from Turlough, Castlebar, is the senior compliance manager at the CIS Club.
The centre was set up in the past year by Ardent Tide, a construction services company, to ensure Irish workers are provided with good practical advice on what they need to do to start working in the UK.

The original concept came from Michaele, who is a daughter of Michael and Patricia Rooney, and who has first-hand experience in dealing with new arrivals.
She explains: "Nearly everyone who arrives into the UK, be it from home, Poland, Romania or wherever, has overlooked something.
"Most forget to bring proof of their last address, such as a phone bill or bank statement, as this is very important in getting a bank account opened. And if you haven't got a bank account it is difficult to be paid in these more compliant times!
"When I came over myself I wasn't exactly sure what to do and I found a lot of Irish people didn't really know what details they needed to have.
"That is where the idea came up about the website."

With the seeds sown in her head, Michaele approached Dermot O'Grady, the founder and managing director of Ardent Tide, whose mother hails from Ballaghaderreen, and the CIS Club developed from there.
Michaele is keen to point out that there are key differences when working in the UK construction industry compared to working in Ireland.
There are a much greater proportion of individuals working on a freelance self-employed basis in the UK than in Ireland, which means workers will need to register with the tax office as soon as possible to avoid excessive taxes being deducted from their pay.
There is also a big drive towards competencies and health and safety, which means you are not allowed work on certain sites without the necessary documentation.
"All too often Irish lads were unable to get work on sites (or paid) because they didn't have the necessary documentation or they were not properly registered for tax," she says.
"We decided to set up the CIS Club to give people good practical advice on what they need to do and ideally some of the leg work can be done before leaving Ireland."

Michaele attended Davitt College in Castlebar before graduating from Sligo IT after studying business studies. She moved to London in 2008 and started working with Dermot's company, which is based in Cricklewood, in March 2009.
Michaele says that although the opportunities in London are better than Ireland at the moment she does miss Castlebar and her friends and family back home.
"The move to work in London is a lot easier nowadays and for many it is seen as a necessary but temporary measure to gainful employment. Flights are now fairly cheap so it is easy to come back to Mayo when feeling a little home-sick."
The trend at the moment is that a lot of young people are moving over, but also many older people who previously lived in the UK are now returning there for work purposes.

People who'd like some pointers can call or visit their offices as well as looking at their website, www.cisclub.co.uk, which gives some practical advice split into simple categories and steps for before you leave Ireland, when you arrive in the UK, living there and when you decide to move on.
The CIS Club has found a way to cater for the Irish construction worker that is clear and informative without any cost or hidden agenda.