

Joint Research Programme between the ESRI and the Shared Island Unit of the Department of the Taoiseach

The Economic and Social Opportunities from Increased Cooperation on the Shared Island

Annual Report for 2022

*For Submission to ESRI Director and Secretary General Department of the
Taoiseach and Steering Committee Members*

October 2023



Roinn an Taoisigh
Department of the Taoiseach



Background and Context

In December 2020, the Department of the Taoiseach and the Economic and Social Research Institute commenced a new research programme on the economic and social opportunities from increased co-operation on a shared island.¹ The purpose of the research programme is to produce research outputs which will add to understanding of current and potential linkages across the island of Ireland in a range of economic, social and environmental domains. Last year, the research focussed on aspects of the health and education sectors from an all-island perspective, cross-border services trade, and enhancing attractiveness to high-value foreign direct investment across the island of Ireland. This annual report provides an overview of activities under the programme during its second year.

Composition of the Steering Committee

The programme of research is governed by a Steering Committee comprising an independent chair, two senior staff members from both the ESRI and the Department of the Taoiseach. The Steering Committee provides high-level oversight and determines the work plan for the programme. Table 1 below show members of the Steering Group during the 12 months to end-December 2022.

TABLE 1: Members of the Steering Group, December 2021

Member	
Anne Barrington	Chair
Aingeal O'Donoghue	Department of the Taoiseach, Shared Island Unit
Eoghan Duffy	Department of the Taoiseach, Shared Island Unit
Adele Bergin	Programme Co-Ordinator, ESRI
Fran McGinnity	ESRI

Agendas, material presented and circulated as well as minutes are available from the Secretary to the Steering Committee. Other researchers and colleagues from the ESRI and the Department attended various steering committee meetings including Yvonne Jackson (Department of the Taoiseach), Bróna Olwill (Department of the Taoiseach), Lisa-Dee Collery (Department of the Taoiseach), Mary Carroll (Department of the Taoiseach), Seamus McGuinness (ESRI), Niall Farrell (ESRI), Muireann Lynch (ESRI), James Laurence (ESRI), Helen Russell (ESRI), Sarah Curristan (ESRI), Emer Smyth (ESRI) and Jeanne Sutton (ESRI). The Steering Committee met on six occasions in 2022. For 2022, four research projects were agreed in the areas of renewable energy supports, productivity, early childhood care and education on the island of Ireland and comparing migrant integration in Ireland and Northern Ireland. In addition, to support the understanding of and engagement with the joint research programme, scoping papers for each research project were undertaken.

¹ See <https://www.esri.ie/current-research/the-economic-and-social-opportunities-from-increased-cooperation-on-the-shared> and <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/645ff-shared-island-research/> for more details. The Director of the ESRI, Prof Alan Barrett, introduces the research programme here: <https://youtu.be/vTGTW4rKNYA>

Research Outputs

Published Outputs

Five main research outputs were published under the programme in 2022 – (i) report on the primary care systems in Ireland and Northern Ireland (March 2022), (ii) report on comparing the education and training systems in Ireland and Northern Ireland (April 2022), (iii) scoping papers on the four topics for 2022 (May 2022), (iv) report on productivity (November 2022) and (v) the report on All-island coordination of energy infrastructure and renewable energy supports (December 2022). The published reports are listed in the table below together with short abstracts to provide some background and context on the work. All research outputs are available to download on the ESRI website. The Shared Island unit website² provides an overview of the research programme and the ESRI programme webpage³ provides additional details on the programme, researchers involved, dissemination events held, press releases and research reports.

² www.gov.ie/sharedisland/research

³ <https://www.esri.ie/current-research/the-economic-and-social-opportunities-from-increased-cooperation-on-the-shared>

AN ANALYSIS OF THE PRIMARY CARE SYSTEMS OF IRELAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE PRIMARY CARE SYSTEMS OF IRELAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND

SHEELAH CONNOLLY, AOIFE BRICK, CIARÁN O'NEILL AND
MICHAEL O'CALLAGHAN



Authors: Sheelah Connolly (ESRI) Aoife Brick (ESRI), Ciarán O'Neill (QUB), Michael O'Callaghan (UL)

Summary: The report examines the primary health care systems of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The analysis also sought to identify what comparable data are currently available on the two healthcare systems.

A key distinction between the healthcare systems of Ireland and Northern Ireland is the absence of a universal healthcare system in Ireland. In Northern Ireland, all residents are entitled to a wide range of health and social care services that are almost entirely free at the point of use, while in Ireland, a majority of the population pay out of pocket for a range of healthcare services, including general practitioner (GP) and other primary care services. Relative to Northern Ireland, a significantly higher proportion of the population in Ireland are covered by private health insurance. Despite these differences, both systems are currently facing similar challenges including increasing demand for healthcare services, increasing expenditure and workforce shortages.

Dissemination: the dissemination of the work was supported by a press release⁴ and a webinar⁵. The research was reported on by the BBC, the Journal, Breaking News.ie, Irish Examiner, Irish Mirror, Belfast Telegraph, The Independent, the Irish Independent, the Irish Examiner, Newstalk and Kildare FM.

⁴ Available at: <https://www.esri.ie/news/esri-publishes-report-examining-primary-healthcare-on-the-island>

⁵ More information including the slides and video of the event are available at: <https://www.esri.ie/events/webinar-shared-island-an-analysis-of-the-primary-care-systems-of-ireland-and-northern>

A North-South comparison of education and training systems: lessons for policy

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A NORTH-SOUTH COMPARISON OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS: LESSONS FOR POLICY

EMER SMYTH, ANNE DEVLIN, ADELE BERGIN AND SEAMUS
MCGUINNESS



Authors⁶: Emer Smyth, Anne Devlin, Adele Bergin, Seamus McGuinness

Summary: The report is the first study to systematically compare systems and outcomes in the two jurisdictions from primary to third level. It explores a range of issues including educational attainment, educational inequalities, skill development and labour market outcomes in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Dissemination: the dissemination of the work was supported by a press release⁷ and a webinar⁸ including an opening address by Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD and a panel discussion with Prof Terri Scott (Pro Vice Chancellor, Ulster University), Prof Anne Looney (Executive Dean at Dublin City University Institute of Education) and Peter Osborne (Chair, Centre for Cross Border Studies; Board of the Integrated Education Fund). The research was reported on by the Irish Times, Irish Examiner, Belfast Telegraph and Newstalk.

In addition to interviewing 35 policy stakeholders, the report drew on input from an online consultation with stakeholders to document commonalities and differences between the education systems in Ireland and Northern Ireland.⁹

Further dissemination of this report includes:

⁶ Professor Tony Gallagher (Queen's University Belfast) was an advisor to this research.

⁷ Available at <https://www.esri.ie/news/esri-research-examines-educational-systems-and-outcomes-in-ireland-and-northern-ireland-from>

⁸ More information including the slides and video of the event are available at: <https://www.esri.ie/events/webinar-shared-island-a-north-south-comparison-of-education-and-training-systems-lessons-for>

⁹ <https://www.esri.ie/events/shared-island-unit-education-consultation>

Ulster University co-hosted an event at the Belfast Metropolitan College where the key findings from the report were presented, together with a Q & A session and a panel discussion with Prof Terri Scott (Pro-Vice Chancellor Academic Operations & Portfolio Development, Ulster University), Mark Langhammer (Regional Secretary (NI), National Education Union), Dr Noel Purdy (Director, Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement (CREU) at Stranmillis College; Chair of Fair Start report on Educational Underachievement in Northern Ireland) and Grace Boyle (President, Ulster University Students' Union).¹⁰

Findings from the report were also presented at the 2022 workshop of the European Research Network on Transitions in Youth (TIY).

¹⁰ <https://www.esri.ie/events/shared-island-a-north-south-comparison-of-education-and-training-systems>

Scoping Papers



Authors: Helen Russell, Frances McGinnity, Emer Smyth, Sarah Curristan, James Laurence, Seamus McGuinness, Adele Bergin, Niall Farrell and Muireann Lynch

Summary: This report brings together scoping papers for each research project conducted under the programme. They set out the focus for the research work; key questions, issues and knowledge gaps; the policy context, North and South, and the research design and methods. They are intended to support understanding of and engagement with the research programme.

Dissemination: Dissemination was supported by a press release¹¹ and social media campaign. Prof Alan Barrett wrote an opinion piece on the research programme published in the Irish Times.¹² The research was reported on in the Irish Times, ITV and various regional outlets.

¹¹ Available at: <https://www.esri.ie/news/shared-island-unit-esri-set-out-new-research-areas-for-2022>

¹² <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/shared-island-impact-of-education-on-ni-s-human-capital-must-be-addressed-1.4886247>

Modelling Productivity Levels in Ireland and Northern Ireland



Authors: Adele Bergin, Seamus McGuinness

Summary: This study examines sectoral productivity differences in Ireland and Northern Ireland and attempts to understand these by identifying the key determinants of productivity in both economies. While some existing studies have compared Northern Ireland's productivity to that of GB regions, we believe that this is the first comprehensive study to compare productivity in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Dissemination: the dissemination of the work was supported by a press release¹³ and a webinar¹⁴ including a response by Dr David Jordan (Queen's University Belfast)¹⁵. The research was reported by TheJournal.ie, The Irish Times, Newstalk, BBC, ITV, The Echo, the Irish Independent, RTE, AOL, the Belfast Telegraph, The Irish Examiner, The Independent, The Daily Mail, Evening Standard, Irish Mirror and various regional outlets.

Further dissemination of the productivity research in 2022 includes a presentation to the Labour Employer Economic Forum Shared Island group meeting.

¹³ Available at <https://www.esri.ie/news/new-esri-research-compares-productivity-levels-in-ireland-and-northern-ireland>

¹⁴ More information including the slides and video of the event are available at: <https://www.esri.ie/events/shared-island-productivity-levels-in-ireland-and-northern-ireland>

¹⁵ Dr Jordan's response to the report is available here: <https://www.esri.ie/publications/modelling-productivity-levels-in-ireland-and-northern-ireland>

All-island coordination of energy infrastructure and renewable energy supports

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ALL-ISLAND CO-ORDINATION OF ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE AND RENEWABLE ENERGY SUPPORTS

CATHAL MENTON, GENARO LONGORIA, NIALL FARRELL
AND MUIREANN LYNCH



Authors: Cathal Menton, Genaro Longoria, Niall Farrell and Muireann Lynch

Summary: This research project quantifies the impact of renewable energy policy co-ordination in the Single Electricity Market of Ireland. Renewable energy targets are determined independently by both jurisdictions on the island. To date, renewable electricity targets have been similar in each jurisdiction. The primary contribution of this paper is to identify the impact of continued alignment, as compared to a counterfactual where the levels of renewable targets are unaligned.

Dissemination: the dissemination of the work was supported by a press release¹⁶ and a webinar¹⁷ including a response Derek Scally (Energia). The research was reported by The Irish Independent, The Irish Times, BBC, Business Plus, RTE, Belfast Telegraph and various regional outlets.

¹⁶ Available at <https://www.esri.ie/news/new-research-shows-aligned-renewable-energy-targets-for-ireland-and-northern-ireland-supports>

¹⁷ More information including the slides and video of the event are available at: <https://www.esri.ie/events/launch-of-the-shared-island-unit-funded-paper-all-island-coordination-of-energy>

Forthcoming Research

Two other studies were completed during 2022 and were planned for publication in early 2023. Below are some more details on these research studies.

Early Childhood Education and Care in Ireland North and South by Sarah Curristan, Frances McGinnity, Helen Russell and Emer Smyth

This research draws on survey and administrative data, as well as in-depth interviews with key policy stakeholders to document the nature of early years provision in Northern Ireland and Ireland. It explores the use of different forms of early care and education in both jurisdictions, and how this varies for different groups of families. It also compares young children's cognitive and social outcomes, using cohort studies, and discusses the challenges related to early years provision. Key findings from this report were presented to the Steering Committee in July, the report was submitted to the Steering Committee and for peer review in September. An online launch and webinar are planned for January 2023.

Comparing migrant integration in Ireland and Northern Ireland, by Frances McGinnity, James Laurence and Emily Cunniffe

This research compares the composition of the migrant populations, migrants' employment profile, migrant-origin young people's academic outcomes and well-being, as well as attitudes to migrants in both jurisdictions. It also considers migrants' experience of the border in Ireland in the context of Brexit. Key findings from this report were presented to the Steering Committee in July, the report was submitted to the Steering Committee and for peer review in November. An in-person event is planned for early 2023.

Future projects under the programme

A number of potential projects spanning a range of areas including: student mobility, digital technologies and skills, housing supply, the impact of COVID-19, gender equality in the labour market, social attitudes and generational change, subjective wellbeing, poverty and social exclusion, climate policy and green technologies, the contribution of FDI to a low-carbon economy and the role of school ethos, together with brief research proposals, has been compiled and were discussed at the Steering Committee in November.