

# ESRI ANNUAL REPORT 2020



The Council is the Institute’s overall governing body and acts as its board of directors. In association with the Director and staff, the Council is responsible for the development of the Institute’s research strategy. The Council meets quarterly and is supported by its three sub-committees: Audit and Risk, Business and Operations, and Governance and Nominations. Section 6 provides a short biography of Council Members.

## *The Council*

### **MEMBERS AT 31 DECEMBER 2020**



***Mr S. O’Driscoll,  
President and Chairperson***



***Professor A. Barrett,  
Director***

MR SEAN O’DRISCOLL, President and Chairperson

PROFESSOR ALAN BARRETT, Director

MR PADRAIG DALTON, Director General, Central Statistics Office

MR JOHN MARTIN, former OECD Director

MR GABRIEL MAKHLOUF, Central Bank of Ireland

MR DAVID MOLONEY, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Mr RONAN MURPHY, former PwC, current board member of Davy, ICON PLC and Greencoat Renewables PLC

PROFESSOR ROWENA PECCHENINO, Maynooth University

DR ORLAIGH QUINN, Secretary General of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

MR PAT RABBITTE, former Minister and former leader of the Labour Party, and Chairperson of Tusla – Child and Family Agency

PROFESSOR SALLY SHORTALL, Newcastle University

*\*Mr Padraig McManus, stepped down as President and Chairperson of the ESRI in May 2020.*

*\* MS EMER GILVARRY, Partner, Mason Hayes & Curran, stepped down from the Council in May 2020.*

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) aims to produce economic and social research on key issues facing Ireland and to communicate research results to inform public policymaking and civil society. The Council of the ESRI supports this work by setting and overseeing the Institute's strategic objectives, establishing the required quality standards and ensuring that the independent analysis provided by the Institute remains relevant to the economic and social issues facing policymakers in Ireland. While the Council is responsible for internal governance, Council members play no role in preparing or commenting on specific research.

This Introduction sets out the Council's views on how the Institute maintains its reputation as a centre for excellence in independent policy-focused research. It also includes a brief overview of the Institute's governance and its research output in 2020, the second year of its 2019-2023 research strategy.

## **Independence and funding**

The Institute's research strategy reaffirms the importance of the ESRI's commitment to producing research that is independent, objective and of high quality. Independence is assured through the contractual relationships between the Institute and its clients and underpinned by a policy of publishing research, regardless of the findings or source of funding. Quality, objectivity and independence are further supported by a rigorous peer review system, which is examined regularly by the Council, and by peer reviews of the Institute itself.

In recent years, the Institute has focused on building financial sustainability through multi-annual programmes of research funded by a number of government departments and agencies. The Council acknowledges the importance of the continued support from government in the form of the annual grant-in-aid which is provided by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. It recognises the significant contribution of many government departments and agencies that funded research programmes in 2020. The other major sources of research funding for the Institute come from competitive funding processes, both in Ireland and in the EU.

The Council also recognises the contributions of individuals and companies that are subscribing ESRI members. These membership subscriptions support the work of the Institute and contribute to ensuring its independence.

## **Council governance**

The Council of the ESRI continues to ensure that its standards of corporate governance operate to the highest level. There is a high level of awareness regarding where potential conflicts of interest can arise and a strong commitment to ensuring that Council membership is appropriately balanced. The Council's Governance and Nominations sub-committee monitors the membership to ensure that the Council has the requisite skills, broad sectoral coverage and gender balance.

Normally, Council membership is for a three-year period, with a renewal being common for a further three years. Council members are not paid any fees for their membership of the Council. Members are nominated through a formal process and elected at the Institute's AGM.

In 2020, Pádraig McManus stepped down as Chairperson and was succeeded by Sean O'Driscoll. John Martin, Rónán Murphy and Rowena Pecchenino served on the Audit and Risk sub-committee; Emer Gilvarry, David Moloney, Sean O'Driscoll, Pat Rabbitte, Sally Shortall and Alan Barrett served on the Business and Operations sub-committee. Emer Gilvarry, Pádraig McManus and Alan Barrett served on the Governance and Nominations sub-committee.

Both Pádraig McManus and Emer Gilvarry retired from the Council in 2020. As mentioned above, Pádraig served as chair from 2016 to 2020. Emer chaired the Business and Operations sub-committee. We would like to take this opportunity to thank them both for their enormous contribution to the Council.

### **Research outputs in 2020**

The COVID-19 crisis was the dominant feature of all our lives in 2020 and this was true for the Institute. Like so many agencies, the Institute moved to a remote working model in March 2020 and remained in this situation into 2021. In spite of the disruption, the research output of the Institute remained strong in 2020 and researchers continued to publish in a wide range of outlets. This included 70 articles in peer reviewed journals, 51 reports and 11 book chapters. In addition, 31 Research Bulletins were published in which journal article content was presented in a succinct, accessible manner. Work-in-progress was disseminated in 42 Working Papers.

While the research output is too broad to provide a comprehensive overview, we will point to a limited number of important outputs here. Further details are available on our website ([www.esri.ie](http://www.esri.ie)) and in our annual Review of Research.

From early in 2020, the Institute re-oriented its research agenda and worked to contribute to the broader understanding of the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis and the policies needed to mitigate those impacts. In the case of some of our research programmes, the inputs into the policy sphere were very direct. For example, the Health team supported the work of National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) through their work on modelling the demands on the healthcare system arising from COVID-19. Our Behavioural Research Unit also supported NPHE, for example, by developing clearer insights into how public health messaging could be most effectively communicated. Our Tax, Pensions and Welfare team undertook analysis of the costs and distributional impacts of the new COVID-related payments.

The *Quarterly Economic Commentary (QEC)* continued to provide analysis of developments in the Irish economy as well as short-term forecasts for key economic indicators. Clearly, the economic disruption caused by COVID-19 and the lockdown were the dominant themes, but Brexit remained a key issue in 2020 as uncertainty over the trade deal between the UK and the EU continued.

Other strands of research also provided important insights into how the crisis was impacting upon different groups. For example, the challenges for disadvantaged children, younger workers and women all featured in ESRI research and the associated reports will help to direct policy in the coming months and years as we work to redress the negative impacts of the crisis.

### ***Growing Up in Ireland (GUI)***

In late 2018, a decision was taken jointly by the ESRI, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and the then

Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) that the *Growing Up in Ireland* study would be transferred to the CSO after 2022. This decision recognised that the study is now of such importance that it should become more embedded in the State's official data collection systems. On foot of this decision, discussions began in 2019 between the three agencies on how the transfer would be managed in such a way that the study's richness was maintained.

Work on the logistics of the transfer of GUI continued in 2020 and a decision was taken whereby some of the activities done under GUI at the ESRI will transfer to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. Work on the study itself also continued in 2020. While the COVID-19 crisis impacted on the plans for the next wave of data collection, an additional online survey of the participants was undertaken to gain insights into life for children and young people in the extraordinary circumstances of 2020. Initial results were published in early 2021 and it is clear that the data will be an invaluable resource when designing and targeting policies to mitigate the impacts of the crisis.

## **People**

The Council would like to commend the Institute's staff whose expertise and commitment enables the Institute to continually identify new solutions to policy challenges. It was a very challenging year for the staff and the Council would like to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts made by all staff members in ensuring the continued successful operation of the Institute. The Council would also like to thank the government departments and state agencies who support critical research programmes, ESRI members who provide valuable ongoing support, and the many stakeholders who engage with the work of the Institute. Such support enables the Institute to work towards realising its vision of being 'the leading source of independent, high-quality socio-economic research in support of informed policy for a better Ireland'.

## **Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014**

The Institute is committed to the implementation of policies and actions which are consistent with the duties conferred on public bodies by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. The Institute has commenced a process to review equality and human rights issues relevant to its purpose and functions.

## **Protected Disclosures Act 2014**

There were no protected disclosures made to the ESRI in 2020.

Finally, it was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Laurence Crowley in December 2020. Laurence served on the ESRI Council from 2007 to 2015, and as Chair from 2011 to 2015. Laurence oversaw many changes at the Institute, including the appointment of its current Director, several strategies and peer reviews, and significant changes in the personnel, structure and funding of the Institute. His immense experience and calmness in challenging times proved invaluable to the Institute.

Sean O'Driscoll  
Chairperson

Alan Barrett  
Director

## 2. SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2020

The implementation of the Institute’s research strategy ensures that the Institute continues to strive for an enhanced performance in our work.<sup>1</sup> The strategy outlines the Institute’s priority actions for the period in the context of the Institute’s mission, vision, goals and values. These were developed by the Council in agreement with the staff, following a comprehensive strategic process in 2019. Our goals of *research excellence and relevance*, *effective communications* and *policy impact* are being pursued through sets of strategic actions related to: research; funding; dissemination and communications; *Growing Up in Ireland*; human resources; and business processes. These goals and actions help to ensure that the Institute stays focused on its key role as a centre for excellence in policy-focused research in Ireland in the economic and social domains.

The Council oversees the implementation of the research strategy through twice-yearly reports to the Business and Operations sub-committee. The reports cover the research agenda across the 11 research areas, as well as the implementation of the strategic actions.

This section briefly sets out the progress made in 2020 in delivering on the actions designed to meet our goals.

### 2.1 Research

Our Research Strategy includes an action point to ‘continuously review emerging issues for Ireland in the policy and academic spheres’ in an effort to ensure that our research remains relevant. At the outset of the pandemic, we worked to re-orient our research agenda and we can now list almost 50 publications on COVID-19. These publications have covered macroeconomics (*Examination of the sectoral overlap of COVID-19 and Brexit shocks*), business (*COVID-19 pandemic and SMEs revenues in Ireland: What’s the gap?*), and social issues such as poverty (*Child poverty in Ireland and the pandemic recession*).

In addition to our published work, ESRI researchers have contributed directly to the policymaking process around COVID-19 with significant inputs into two NPHET sub-groups – (1) Behavioural Change and (2) Epidemiological Modelling Advisory Group.

### 2.2 Funding

The Institute’s grant-in-aid is a key foundation in our funding. For this reason, the decision to increase the grant-in-aid in Budget 2021 was very welcome. The increase of €225,000 brings the grant to €3 million for 2021 and it has been agreed that the extra funding will be directed towards social issues such as inequality.

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<sup>1</sup> A copy of the ESRI’s *Research Strategy 2019-2023* can be downloaded at <https://www.esri.ie/publications/esri-research-strategy-2019-2023>.

The most notable stream of new funding which was agreed in 2020 was from the Shared Island Unit in the Department of the Taoiseach. Part of the remit of the Unit is to undertake research on issues such as the all-island economy and the potential to enhance social policy delivery through an all-island approach. The Department will provide €400,000 to the Institute over the two-year period 2021-2022 and projects are planned for the first stage of the programme on cross-border trade in services and access to primary healthcare.

In addition to this new funding stream, 2020 also saw the extension of some existing research programmes. The Department of Finance and the Revenue Commissioners renewed their programme on Macroeconomics, Taxation and Banking. The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications renewed their programme on modelling climate and the economy. The Environmental Protection Agency also renewed our joint research programme with a substantially increased budget.

### **2.3 Dissemination and communications**

Throughout the pandemic, we have maintained a strong programme of webinars and we will mention some examples here. In October we held the annual Post-Budget Briefing where the SWITCH-based distributional analysis of Budget 2021 was presented. In November we co-hosted our annual event with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Health Service Executive on 'Environment, Health & Wellbeing'. In December, we held a joint webinar with colleagues from the Department of Agriculture to launch a study on *Gender balance at work: A study of an Irish Civil Service department*.

The Institute also maintained a high media profile in 2020, in part through the Behavioural Research Unit and its work for NPHET. There were also 11 newspaper/magazine articles by ESRI researchers published in 2020.

### **2.4 Growing Up in Ireland (GUI)**

Our Research Strategy 2019-2023 was published before the decision to transfer the GUI to the CSO/DCEDIY. Hence, our actions on GUI now focus on ensuring that the transfer is successful for the staff and for the ongoing value of the longitudinal data. However, we can report on the roll-out of an extra round of data collection aimed specifically at the impact of COVID-19 on children and their families, the results of which were published in Q1 2021. We can also report on the publication of two new studies in which the GUI data were used – *Talking about sex and sexual behaviour of young people in Ireland* and *Arts and cultural participation among 17-year-olds*.

### **2.5 Human resources**

Given the pandemic, the main focus with respect to HR in 2020 was looking after staff in the changed working environment and ensuring that they were safe, supported and connected. At a practical level, we conducted remote ergonomic assessments of home offices and supplied equipment as needed such as screens. We also worked with line managers to ensure that staff felt



connected to their colleagues and to the Institute more broadly. We conducted staff surveys to learn more about staff needs.

## 2.6 Business processes

The pandemic also dictated activity under this heading especially with regard to IT. A Business Continuity Plan was in place and was put into operation in March 2020. As this BCP was predicated on a limited time-period out of the office, it needed to be developed while in operation and this was achieved. Of particular importance was continued access to CSO data. We were very grateful to colleagues in the CSO for their assistance on this whereby the interruption to data access was minimal.

## 3. RESEARCH IN 2020

This section provides an overview of our research activities and findings for 2020, with brief summaries of research across the 11 research areas. Further details on the research and the researchers involved are available on the ESRI website ([www.esri.ie](http://www.esri.ie)).

### 3.1 Behavioural Economics

#### *RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS:*

- A review of evidence for using behavioural science to fight COVID-19, which included an extensive literature search of relevant behavioural interventions and studies of crises, was published at the start of the pandemic in Ireland.
- An experimental pre-test of *COVID Tracker*, Ireland's COVID-19 contact-tracing app, was carried out before its launch, with a large sample of smartphone users.

The Behavioural Science research area uses controlled laboratory, online and field experiments to investigate decisions and behaviours across multiple policy areas. For the Behavioural Research Unit (BRU), 2020 was dominated by work on COVID-19.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the team produced a rapid review of relevant evidence, ranging from tests of practical interventions designed to increase handwashing to how best to galvanise support for collective public action. This review was the first international paper to be published on how to use behavioural science to support the COVID-19 response.

Pete Lunn, the head of the BRU, joined the Behavioural Change Subgroup of NPHET, which resulted in a series of research studies from the team, funded by the **Department of Health**. The studies were designed to investigate different aspects of the public response to the pandemic. This stream of work was turned around very rapidly, using online data collection. It led to papers on: testing effective ways to promote social distancing; measuring public expectations; trialling communications to support people needing to self-isolate; measuring public understanding of the Test-and-Trace

system; comparing public and expert perceptions of the riskiness of different social activities; and gauging the reliability of self-reports of compliance with public health guidelines.

One additional study involved pre-testing different versions of *COVID Tracker*, Ireland's contact-tracing app. The online study randomised participants to download one of eight different versions of the app, which varied in their 'call to action' and description of how the app worked and stored data. The results demonstrated better public engagement with some versions. These findings fed directly into the design and successful launch of the app.

In addition to work on COVID-19, the BRU completed an experimental study, funded by the **OECD**, that involved undertaking a laboratory experiment in Ireland and Chile. The study showed that consumers in both a developed and an emerging economy were vulnerable to exploitation through personalised pricing (varying prices charged to different customers based on background characteristics or internet search histories), regardless of the strength of online regulatory disclosures.

The BRU also completed an online pre-test of explanatory 'primers' designed to explain time-of-use (ToU) tariffs to residential electricity consumers, funded by the **Commission for the Regulation of Utilities**. The study demonstrated generational differences in how consumers respond to the potential financial and environmental benefits of ToU tariffs. It also showed that presenting tariffs as graphical clocks made consumers more likely to make mistakes. The findings are being used to assist consumers during the rollout of smart meters across the country.

## 3.2 Competitiveness, Trade and FDI

### *RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS:*

- The speed of government interventions to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic was mainly determined by countries' health system capacity, demographic structure and economic factors. Boosting the health system capacity would be important to reduce the cost of lockdown measures aimed at containing a pandemic.
- Private investment in green technologies and innovations with environmental benefits could improve the competitiveness of enterprises in the medium term.

ESRI research in this area focuses primarily on structural and microeconomic factors and policies underlying competitiveness and economic growth in Ireland and other European countries in the context of international economic integration.

In 2020 research in this area addressed the following themes: government interventions to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic; the effects of Brexit on inputs from Northern Ireland on Irish exports to the EU; the effects of green investments and innovations on enterprise competitiveness; the impact of public R&D grants on the performance of Awardees. Research on COVID-19 examined the speed with which governments across the world introduced administrative measures to contain the spread of the pandemic. The results indicated that governments in countries with a weaker health system capacity, and governments in countries with a larger share of elderly populations,

were faster to start lockdown measures. The highest level of containment measures was reached at a slower speed in larger and in more open economies. Taken together, the results suggested that boosting the health system capacity would be important to reduce the cost of lockdown measures aimed at containing a pandemic.

Research funded by the **Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland** examined the effects that Brexit could have on inputs to production in Ireland that are sourced in Northern Ireland. Detailed trade data were used to map the Northern Ireland inputs into Irish exports to the EU, other countries the EU has a free-trade agreement with, and the rest of the world. The results highlighted a potential risk to supply-chain integration on the island that could arise if Brexit were to result in a change in how these inputs were classified by other countries engaged in free-trade agreements with the EU. Further research on Brexit examined the overall trade exposure of Ireland and the particular Customs status accorded to Northern Ireland under the Withdrawal Agreement. Research funded by the **Environmental Protection Agency** found that investments in equipment for pollution control and in equipment linked to cleaner technologies improved in the medium term a range of enterprise performance outcomes, including their output, employment, productivity, export intensity and energy intensity. The effects were found to be stronger for enterprises that were larger, foreign-owned and more productive, and in low-tech industries such as the food industry. Further research in this area found that enterprises that introduced innovations with environmental benefits improved their export participation.

A study commissioned by the **Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation** found that grants from the Enterprise Ireland Research, Development and Innovation Programme have boosted the innovation and economic performance of awardees. Five years after receiving R&D grants, the awardees recorded substantial increases in their R&D expenditures, employment, output and export sales.

### 3.3 Education

#### *RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS:*

- The innovation shown by teachers and learners during the pandemic shows the significant potential of digital technology to improve how students learn at second level.
- The use of digital video in initial teacher education showed that the digital video footage was highly supportive in pre-service teachers' weekly self-reflection and in developing their self-reflective practice.

The Education research area covers all levels of the Irish educational system, including early childhood education, primary, second level, and further and higher education.

Research in 2020 focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic for second-level students, policy and provision for students with additional needs, the experiences of students in Educate Together schools, the role of schools in shaping health behaviours, arts and cultural participation, and the role of digital technologies in learning and wellbeing.

In collaboration with researchers in the Energy, Environment, and Infrastructure research area and as part of a programme funded by the **Department of Environment, Climate and Communications**, and **ComReg**, researchers surveyed and interviewed second-level principals to understand the challenges for schools during the first period of COVID-related school closures. The report showed the impact of inequality in terms of digital access and socio-economic disadvantage. A review of research, as part of a research programme with the **Department of Children, Equality, Diversity, Integration and Youth**, highlighted the impact of the pandemic on the broader wellbeing of children and young people.

Inclusion has been an important strand of ESRI education research, with new primary research for the **National Disability Authority** reviewing the provision across countries of specialist community living and personal assistance supports for people with disabilities. Work was initiated for the **National Council for Special Education** on two large-scale studies: an evaluation of the School Inclusion Model and a longitudinal study on post-school pathways among young people with special educational needs. Both studies will be important in shaping provision for students with additional needs in primary and second-level schools, and across the post-school landscape. Funded by **Educate Together**, new research on second-level schools in this sector pointed to the inclusivity of their school climates and their focus on student-centred learning, but highlighted some challenges given that many schools are located in temporary premises.

A number of studies drew on secondary analysis of *Growing Up in Ireland* data, including research on the role of early mobile phone ownership in shaping child development, and gender stereotyping in perceptions of boys' and girls' maths performance. As part of a research programme with the **HSE** undertaken with a researcher in the Health area, two reports showed the influence of schools on the likelihood of young people engaging in different health behaviours (such as drinking, smoking and exercise/diet) and on their access to information about sex and relationships. Another study, funded by the **Arts Council**, showed the way in which the school attended influenced 17-year-olds' access to curricular and extracurricular arts and culture, with DEIS schools playing an important role in bridging the social gap.

Education researchers continued to be involved in a range of work for the **European Commission**, including critically assessing education policy developments as part of the **Directorate General for Education and Culture's Network of Independent Experts in Education and Training**.

### 3.4 Energy, Environment and Infrastructure

#### RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS:

- Visiting green space is associated with positive outcomes for general, cardiovascular, and mental health. The marginal health impacts are greatest at relatively low visit levels. For instance, increasing the number of green-space visits to just once per month is associated with a 4-percentage point increase in the probability of experiencing good mental health and wellbeing.
- The COVID-19 crisis is estimated to have reduced 2020's GDP by approximately 13 per cent, whereas, from an environmental perspective, economy-wide CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are expected to

decrease by 9.5 per cent. These reductions are anticipated to reverse as the pandemic is brought under control.

Research in this area is funded through several multi-annual research programmes.

Energy and Climate research is funded by the **Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), Commission for Regulation of Utilities, ESB, Ervia, Gas Networks Ireland, EirGrid, SSE Ireland, Viridian, Terra Solar, Science Foundation Ireland (SFI),** and the **Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland**. Research related to the environment, including fisheries and water quality, is funded by the **Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage (DHLGH), the Environmental Protection Agency,** and **Inland Fisheries Ireland**. Research on electronic communications networks and services is funded by the **Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg)** and **DECC**.

The ESRI's research programme on Climate, Energy and the Economy focused on an analysis of the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on Irish emissions, the economy and households, and investigating the impacts of transition to a low-carbon economy on labour and employment.

The Energy research programme spans market design and regulation, energy services, energy infrastructure, and the interface with society and the environment. Research during 2020 found that regulations limiting the expansion of onshore wind generation (e.g. set-back distances) leads to relatively low increases in overall system-level costs, though there are substantial regional variations. In terms of public acceptance of energy infrastructure, attitudinal factors shape people's preferences more consistently than any of the socio-demographic characteristics. The wastewater treatment sector is among the largest electricity consumers in the economy, and ongoing research finds that integrated management of both the electricity and wastewater systems could yield substantial benefit for the combined systems. Other research includes the profitability of battery storage in electricity markets, the accuracy of wind energy forecasts, and a literature review on heat pumps in the context of a low-carbon transition.

The research programme on Environmental Economics, funded by the **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**, was renewed for a further two-year period in June 2020. An EPA research report was published in November, summarising the results of the research conducted over the period 2018-2020.

Additional papers on the association between rents and commuting; on the links between public park attributes, visits and health; and on the effects of charges and efficiency information on consumer car choices were also published in 2020.

A new three-year phase began of our Communications research programme funded by **DECC** and **ComReg**. A study was conducted during the first COVID-19 school-building closures, starting in March 2020, to investigate how digital connectivity, applications and devices may have mediated some effect of the sudden transition to distance education for second-level schools. This led to a report in June 2020 focusing on the relationship between student engagement during the lockdown and availability of high-speed broadband in school catchment areas.

The Water research programme, in collaboration with DHLGH, undertook an evaluation of public initiatives to change behaviours that affect water quality, and work is currently underway on behaviours within local authorities and the agriculture sector. Fisheries research in 2020 focused on anglers' 'catch and release' choices, as well as angling demand.

### 3.5 *Growing Up in Ireland*

#### *RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS:*

- 13-year-olds hold lower expectations than their parents about their educational career: only half of young people compared to over three-quarters of their mothers say they expect the young person to go on to higher education.
- Young people become less involved in cultural activities as they prepare for the Leaving Certificate and leave school: there is a marked decline in reading for pleasure and taking music/drama/dance lessons between 13 and 17 years of age.

*Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) is the national longitudinal study of children in Ireland. It is funded by the **Department of Children, Equality, Disability Integration and Youth** (DCEDIY) and is jointly managed by the Department and the Central Statistics Office.

The research is conducted by a consortium of independent researchers at the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Trinity College Dublin. Activity in this area involves ongoing data collection on two cohorts of children and young people, and the publication of detailed research findings by members of the GUI team and other researchers at the ESRI. The research examines developmental outcomes for children and young people, and investigates how these vary between different groups in society and according to earlier circumstances and experiences.

The year 2020 saw the completion of a successful pilot survey of 13-year-olds and their parents as a preparation for the main fieldwork phase in 2021. The survey methods were adapted to reflect the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions. Recognising the strong impact of the pandemic and associated restrictions on children and young people, GUI researchers organised a survey on their experiences during the crisis. With the assistance of the Central Statistics Office, a web-based survey was completed in December 2020. The results will be published in 2021.

The 2020 Annual Conference in October was a virtual event, attracting a large international audience (with 349 registered). It mirrored the usual in-person event, with an address from the Minister, Dr Roderic O'Gorman T.D., three parallel sessions of 27 talks from researchers using *Growing Up in Ireland* data, and a keynote address. The keynote address was delivered by Professor Emla Fitzsimons of UCL, Director of the UK's Millennium Cohort Study: 'Mental health among young people: longitudinal evidence from the UK'. There was also, for the first time, an award for the best paper with a public policy focus, which was won by Dr Gretta Mohan, ESRI.

ESRI researchers presented papers on a wide range of topics at the conference, including the effect of the Great Recession on socioeconomic inequalities in childhood obesity; the role of parents in mediating the relationship between media consumption and child mental health from 3-9 years;

socioeconomic disadvantage in access to supports for young people with disabilities; social inequality, gender, home learning activities and cognitive outcomes from early to middle childhood; risk and protective factors for mental health and wellbeing during childhood and adolescence; the influence of caregiver's migration status on a child's use of healthcare services; difficulties in the transition to second-level education – social background and gender gaps in Scotland and Ireland; the effect of parental educational expectations on socioemotional and academic outcomes among 17/18-year-olds with disabilities in Ireland; socioemotional wellbeing and school social mix; and the dynamics of child poverty in Ireland.

### 3.6 Health and Quality of Life

#### RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS:

- Expenditure on public hospital services is projected to rise from €5.9 billion in 2018 to between €10.8 and €14.3 billion by 2035 in nominal terms. Increasing input costs, especially pay, make up most of the projected rise in expenditures. Reducing current waiting-list backlogs and maintaining waiting times is estimated to require an additional €212 million on average per annum between 2021 and 2025.
- Four-in-ten 17-year-olds had not spoken to their parents about sex and relationships. Young people who had discussed sex and relationships with their parents at age 13 were more likely to use contraception at first sex. Therefore, initiatives to support parents in developing positive communication skills may be expected to have broader benefits in terms of discussions about sex and relationships.

Health research was carried out on several areas of health service reform and public health during 2020.

The ESRI research programme in Healthcare Reform, funded by the **Department of Health**, published two major reports, one projecting expenditure for public hospitals in Ireland from 2018 to 2035 and a second comparing Irish healthcare expenditure to that of other countries. Three supporting reports were also published covering baseline demand for and utilisation of services, including public hospitals, mental health, and disability.

Research on the links between the environment and health, as part of the research programme with the **Environmental Protection Agency**, continued, with the programme extended for a further two-year period in June 2020. Papers on the characteristics of biodiversity data recorders; on the links between footpath availability, green space and obesity; and on the relationship between air pollution and asthma were published.

The research programme with **HSE Health and Wellbeing** finished in 2020. Two ESRI reports, on clusters of health behaviours among young people, and on sexual health information and behaviours, were published in 2020. Both made extensive use of the *Growing Up in Ireland* data. The first report found higher rates of drinking/smoking among young people whose parents are occasional or regular smokers. The latter report found a clear gender divide in reports of ease of discussions with parents about sex; young women found it easier to talk to their mothers, while

young men found it easier to talk to their fathers. However, nearly 60 per cent of young men found it difficult or very difficult to talk to their fathers about sex.

A three-year (2018–2020) project funded by the **Health Research Board (HRB)**, examining the potential cost, outcomes, and challenges of alternative approaches to achieving universal healthcare, continued in 2020. A further **HRB**-funded project, in collaboration with RCSI, examining the costs of cognitive impairment post-stroke and interventions to ameliorate it, continued with a major conference in November 2020.

The **Irish Cancer Society**-funded project on barriers and challenges to returning to employment following a cancer diagnosis continued in 2020 when a paper was published examining the effect of insurance status on hospital waiting times. The report was launched in early 2021.

The **HRB**-funded project on Inequalities in Access to GP Care concluded in 2020. Papers published looked at: the impact of free GP care on the mental health of older people; the health effects of energy poverty among children; and the impact of prescription drug payments on the health of children. The **HRB**-funded project on Mortality, conducted in collaboration with The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA), continued in 2020, with papers on data linkage methods and discrepancies between mortality registration and survey end-of-life data released in 2020.

### 3.7 Labour Markets and Skills

#### *RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS:*

- Jobseekers who engaged with SICAP employment supports were approximately 18 per cent more likely to have progressed into employment or self-employment after three to six months than similar individuals who had not received such supports.
- Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic 22 per cent of employees in Ireland were in essential occupations. ESRI analysis stressed the need for effective childcare supports for essential employees battling the pandemic.

During 2020, research was undertaken on a range of issues and several new publications were either released or finalised.

The team launched research – funded by the **Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD)** and managed by **Pobal** – evaluating labour-market activation supports administered to job-seekers who are furthest from the labour market. Two studies, funded by the **Low Pay Commission**, were completed and are awaiting publication, examining (a) the impact of minimum wage changes on average labour costs, and (b) a comparative study of minimum wages in Europe. A third study was also commenced, examining the employment impacts of recent minimum wage rises using a new administrative dataset.

The team also completed two COVID-19 related studies during the year. The first examined the incidence and characteristics of essential workers in Ireland. The second assessed Irish employees' ability to work from home. A report on minimum-wage policy in Ireland and the implications of the



COVID-19 pandemic for minimum-wage employment was also published, as was a study on the employment impacts of automation, funded by **Cedefop**. Researchers continued to provide regular reports on Ireland's labour-market progress to the **European Commission's European and Employment Policy Observatory (EEPO)**. A study funded by the **Pensions Authority**, looking at the impact of retirement on spending and the different effects by household type and gender, was published. Finally, throughout 2020 the team continued to publish academic papers in leading international and national journals.

Several new research programmes commenced during the year. Work began on a new programme, funded by **DRCD**, that will undertake monitoring and evaluation studies relevant to departmental activities. The team also began work on a new **Pobal** programme, which will initially focus on issues such as childhood disability and the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on deprived areas. Work began on a new **Fáilte Ireland**-funded programme, which involves an initial study modelling tourism demand. Finally, a new programme was signed with the **Department for Employment and Social Protection** and work has begun on a project recalibrating the PEX statistical profiling model.

### 3.8 Macroeconomics

#### *RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS:*

- A paper analysed the short-run, three-month impact of the pandemic on rental affordability and missed payments for a specific cohort of the private rental sector in Ireland.
- An examination of sectoral exposure to both the COVID-19 and Brexit shocks assessed the risk that the impact of a hard Brexit on an economy weakened by dealing with COVID-19 could make the previously estimated effects of Brexit worse.

Understanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy dominated the work of the macroeconomic research programme in the ESRI in 2020, in the light of the widespread restrictions limiting activity in many sectors.

How the pandemic would affect overall economic indicators was the subject of two investigations undertaken as part of the ongoing joint research programme between the ESRI, the **Department of Finance** and the **Revenue Commissioners**. The first examined a range of scenarios on how severe the economic impact might be under a range of epidemiology scenarios. This was updated and expanded to examine the interaction of the effects of the pandemic with a number of Brexit scenarios as more information became available on how the pandemic was evolving. As part of this research programme, an examination of the potential overlap and interactions of the pandemic and Brexit scenarios was also conducted at a sectoral level. This found that the sectors that had been most severely affected by the pandemic restrictions were relatively less exposed to the potential negative trade impacts of Brexit. A range of scenarios investigated how the small and medium enterprise sector would be affected by COVID-19. This work highlighted the role of expenditure reductions and cash reserves in aiding firms to absorb some of the reductions in turnover, but identified substantial uncovered losses that became greater the longer the economic restrictions lasted. Other work under this programme found that the Irish tax structure was more supportive of economic activity than in many other comparable countries.

The joint research programme with the **Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government** was officially extended for a second three-year term in 2020. Research in the programme was published on the impact of the credit gap in the Irish mortgage market; the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan scheme was reviewed; and future structural demand in the Irish housing sector at a county level was analysed. A particular focus of research in 2020 was on COVID-19; a number of papers explored the short- and long-term impact of the pandemic on the Irish housing and rental markets. A general paper examined the impact of COVID-19 on the housing market, while a report examined the impact of the pandemic on affordability in the rental market. Work in the programme also examined the structural demand for housing at a regional level. The ESRI continued to produce the quarterly rent index for the **Residential Tenancies Board** through 2020. This index determines which Local Electoral Areas are designated as Rent Pressure Zones.

The *Quarterly Economic Commentary* (QEC) continued to provide analysis of recent economic developments in the Irish economy as well as short-term forecasts for key economic indicators. As with publications in other areas of the Institute, a significant focus of the *Commentary* was on the impact of COVID-19 on the Irish economy. Research was produced on the potential joint impact of COVID-19 and Brexit on Irish GDP in 2021 and beyond. Other research assessed the impact of the pandemic on debt sustainability and the role European institutions have played in facilitating the extraordinary fiscal measures taken during the year. Additional research explored the dichotomy of the impact of the pandemic on the Irish domestic and traded sectors and a comparison between the recessions brought about by COVID-19 and the global financial crisis. Additional work in the macroeconomic area examined issues concerning a Northern Ireland border poll.

### 3.9 Migration, Integration and Demography

#### RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS:

- Examining the early impact of the pandemic, researchers found East European workers more exposed to COVID-19 job loss than Irish nationals and some ethnic minority groups to COVID-19 infection, though not to deaths from COVID-19.
- A report investigating international practices on civics and language requirements linked to naturalisation and policy implications for Ireland found that, if the goal is to promote migrant integration, requirements should focus on learning opportunities, such as courses, rather than tests.

Research in the area of Migration, Integration and Demography is conducted under a number of strands. The first strand relates to the ESRI being Ireland's National Contact Point (NCP) for the European Migration Network (EMN), funded by the **European Commission** and the **Department of Justice**.

An EMN Ireland report highlighted that increased numbers of migrants have been granted protection under various schemes in recent years while another looked at admission schemes for migrant start-ups and entrepreneurs. Like all EMN Ireland outputs, these studies fed into an EU-wide analysis. Another EMN Ireland report found that Ireland has relatively favourable conditions for acquiring citizenship by naturalisation, but highlighted processing delays and lack of clarity on some

eligibility conditions. EMN Ireland also contributed to a series of EMN/OECD papers (EMN Informs) on the impact of COVID-19 on the migration of essential workers, international students, residence permits and migrant unemployment.

A second strand of research in the area falls under the research programme on Integration and Equality, funded by the **Department of Justice** until end September 2020, now funded by the **Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth**. Four reports were published in 2020. One report analysed Census 2016 microdata on first-generation migrants from over 100 countries of birth. Coming from a country with many asylum applicants is associated with poorer labour-market outcomes for migrants. Black migrants fare worse in the Irish labour market when compared to white migrants, but this is not true for Asian migrants.

Researchers also participated in an international COST network, funded by **Horizon 2020**, which included presenting at a policy dialogue event in Brussels.

In addition to topic reports the *Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2019: Ireland*, a review of asylum and migration policy developments, was published.

### **3.10 Social Inclusion and Equality**

#### *RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS:*

- The use of flexible work options has a positive effect on perceptions of support for work-life balance in an Irish civil service department. Yet over a third of workers believe that using flexible work options negatively affects their chances of promotion.
- The report *Hidden versus revealed attitudes* found that people in Ireland mask negative attitudes to black immigrants to Ireland, but not to Muslim immigrants. Those with third-level qualifications are more likely to mask negative attitudes than those with lower levels of education.

Research on social inclusion and equality investigates factors influencing access to the material and other resources required to participate in economic and social life and the processes that lead to inequalities in opportunities and outcomes.

Funded by the **Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission**, a report published in July investigated the gap between attitudes people reveal in public and what they express anonymously, using the first list experiment in Ireland. In this research programme, work continued on monitoring decent work and adequate housing, and included a consultation event on adequate housing in March.

A report funded by the **Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP)**, published in November, found that the receipt of payments and services tied to housing, childcare and primary healthcare contributes to reduced material deprivation, and that the effect is greatest among the most vulnerable. Research on disability among preschool children was undertaken with **Pobal**, to inform the ongoing development of the AIM childcare programme. Finally, work began on a new research programme with the **National Disability Authority**, examining the experiences of

persons with disabilities across a range of key policy areas, including personal assistance services to support community living and employment patterns of this group.

A journal article from the equality area found that children who engaged in frequent home learning activities had higher vocabulary scores, and that these activities can help compensate somewhat for social disadvantage in vocabulary.

Work was also carried out on the gender pay gap, including collaboration with Professor Paula England, NYU, to add an Irish dimension to her Geary Lecture and the subsequent journal article ‘Has the Gender Revolution Stalled?’ The article examines changes in gender inequality since 1970, across multiple indicators: educational attainment, employment, segregation in fields of study, occupational segregation, and pay. Two presentations on the causes of and policy solutions to gender inequalities in pay were made to the Citizens’ Assembly on Gender Equality. A report on gender balance in the civil service, funded by the **Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine**, found that, while men occupy the majority of senior positions in the civil service, they are more likely than women to perceive gender bias in promotional competitions.

ESRI researchers also participated in the advisory board of an LSE-based project titled ‘Social Policies and Distributional Outcomes’.

### **3.11 Taxation, Welfare and Pensions**

#### *RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS:*

- Research on the impacts of COVID-19 related unemployment found that household income would have fallen by an average of 7 per cent with no government intervention. Thanks to the initial policy response in the form of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP), wage subsidy and standard-rate VAT cut, household income fell instead by 3 per cent, with stabilisation of income inequality – a significant feat given the job losses experienced.
- In a major modelling development, SWITCH, the ESRI tax and benefit model, was updated to a new, more flexible platform and was rolled out to government users during the summer. This will allow for the monitoring of the ongoing effects of COVID-19 on incomes and income inequality and for the analysis of the role which can be played by income protective policies to play as the pandemic continues.

This research area examines the design of the tax, welfare and pensions system, with a focus on the effect it has on redistribution and incentives to work. Much of this work uses SWITCH – the ESRI tax and benefit model – to simulate the impact of reforms on households.

Research in this area was supported by funding from the **Departments of Social Protection, Health, Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth** and **Finance**, as well as through the grant-in-aid provided by the **Department of Public Expenditure and Reform**.

The model provided a useful tool to examine the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on incomes and inequality, and the role of social welfare policies and employment supports in protecting incomes. In

a major modelling development, the model was updated to a new, more flexible platform. It was rolled out to government users during the summer. It will continue to be a useful tool, both in government and at the ESRI, in monitoring the ongoing effects of COVID-19 on incomes and income inequality, along with playing a role in the development of tax-benefit policies.

Research launched as part of the ESRI's annual 'Budget Perspectives' conference was strongly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. One paper launched as part of the conference estimated the initial impact that COVID-related job losses had on family incomes and the public finances. Another paper assessed the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on consumption and its implications for indirect tax receipts in 2020. Further research looked at the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on child poverty. Finally, the conference examined research on minimum-wage policy in Ireland over the past 20 years and surveyed the recent evidence on the economic impacts of a minimum wage.

The annual post-Budget analysis also focused on the overall impact of COVID-19 on incomes. It found that pandemic-related unemployment could have decreased household income by an average of 7 per cent across the population but, thanks to tax and benefit policy changes enacted, household income fell instead by 3 per cent on average. Losses were sharpest at the higher end of the income distribution. Income inequality would have increased substantially but was stabilised due to COVID-related interventions. While much less costly than pre-Budget COVID-19 policies, Budget 2021 was also progressive in its impact, with above-average gains for the bottom two-fifths of the income distribution and lower than average gains for those at the upper end.

During the year a variety of other topics were also examined as part of the programme. These include work investigating the distributional impact of planned carbon-tax increases and income adequacy in retirement in Ireland. The drivers of income inequality over the Great Recession were also examined, along with the distributional impact of tax and transfers over the lifetime.

## 4. RESEARCH AREA COORDINATORS AT 31 DECEMBER 2020

- **Behavioural Science** (Professor Pete Lunn)



- **Competitiveness, Trade and FDI** (Professor Iulia Siedschlag)



- **Education** (Professor Selina McCoy and Professor Emer Smyth)



- **Energy, Environment and Infrastructure** (Professor John Curtis and Professor Seán Lyons)



- **Growing Up in Ireland** (Professor Emer Smyth and Professor Dorothy Watson)



- **Health and Quality of Life** (Professor Seán Lyons, Dr Anne Nolan, Dr Maev-Ann Wren)



- **Labour Markets and Skills** (Professor Seamus McGuinness)



- **Macroeconomics** (Professor Kieran McQuinn and Professor Martina Lawless)



- **Migration, Integration and Demography**  
(Professor Frances McGinnity and Dr Emma Quinn)



- **Social Inclusion and Equality** (Professor Frances McGinnity and Bertrand Maître)



- **Taxation, Welfare and Pensions** (Dr Claire Keane)



## 5. STAFF AT 31 DECEMBER 2020

### **Director**

Alan Barrett

### **Economic Analysis**

Matthew Allen-Coghlan

Peter Barlow

Adele Bergin

Cathal Coffey

John Curtis

Kelly De Bruin

Anne Devlin

Abian Garcia Rodriguez

Míde Griffin

Gianluca Grilli

Elish Kelly

Dana Kirchem

Ilias Kostarakos

Janez Kren

Martina Lawless

Genaro Longoria

Muireann Á. Lynch

Seán Lyons

Ciarán Mac Domhnaill

Seamus McGuinness

Kieran McQuinn (Head of  
Division)

Konstantina Maragkou

Stefano Meneto

Gretta Mohan

Eoin Monaghan

Conor O'Toole

Arya Pillia

Paul Redmond

Iulia Siedschlag

Rachel Slaymaker

Constantine Spandagos

Miguel Tovar Reaños

Petros Varthalitis

Adele Whelan

Aykut Mert Yakut

Weijie Yan

### **Social Research**

Martina Barjaková

Aoife Brick

Elaine Byrne

Eamonn Carroll

Sheelah Connolly

Emily Cunniffe

Merike Darmody

Karina Doorley

Shannen Enright

Hannah Julienne

Claire Keane

Conor Keegan

Ciarán Lavin

Pete Lunn

Bertrand Maître

Selina McCoy

Evie McCullough

Frances McGinnity

Alyvia McTague

Georgiana Mihut

Kieran Mohr

Anne Nolan

Seamus O'Malley

Michał Polakowski

Ivan Privalko

Emma Quinn

Mark Regan

Barra Roantree

Deirdre Robertson

Helen Russell

Anne Sheridan

Emer Smyth (Head of  
Division)

Shane Timmons

Dora Tuda

Brendan Walsh

Maev-Ann Wren

### ***Growing Up in Ireland***

Elizabeth Burke

Caroline Goodwin

Lisa Kelly

Eoin Keogh

Rebecca McClintock

Eoin McNamara

Aoife Murphy

Aisling Murray

Desmond O'Mahony

Amanda Quail

Bernadette Ryan

Fionnuala Waters

Dorothy Watson (Head of  
Division)

### **Corporate Resources**

Eleanor Bannerton

(Operations and Strategy  
Manager)

Claire Buckley (HR  
Manager)

Sarah Burns

Paul Carroll

Bernice Clancy

Liz Coyle

Lliana D'Emidio

Maria Fitzgerald

Dave Gorman

Adrienne Jinks

Rachel Joyce

Mark Magee

Francis McEvoy

Clare O'Neill

Charlie O'Regan (Head of  
Finance)

Fiona Owens

Stephen Sammon

Jeanne Sutton

Livia Turzo

Kevin Worrall



## 6. ESRI COUNCIL – BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

### **Sean O’Driscoll**, President and Chairperson

Sean O’Driscoll was appointed President and Chairperson of the ESRI on 27 May 2020. Mr O’Driscoll joined the Council of the ESRI in February 2017. He is a former Chair and Chief Executive of the Glen Dimplex Group and a former Partner in KPMG. He is a Member of the Trilateral Commission and of the Ireland 2040 Delivery Board. He is a former Director of Allied Irish Banks, former member of the National Competitiveness Council of Ireland and a former member of a number of other Government appointed Advisory Groups. Mr O’Driscoll is the recipient of an OBE and a Légion d’Honneur Award.

### **Alan Barrett**, Director

Alan Barrett first joined the ESRI in 1994 and became Director of the Institute in July 2015, at which point he joined the Council. During his time with the Institute, he was seconded to the Department of Finance (2001-2003) and to The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) at Trinity College Dublin (2011-2013). He was a member of the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council from 2011 to 2015. He is a Member of the Royal Irish Academy, a Research Fellow with IZA (Institute for Labor Economics) in Bonn, Germany and an Honorary Fellow of the Society of Actuaries in Ireland. He is also a member (ex officio) of the Climate Change Advisory Council.

### **Pádraig Dalton**, Director General, Central Statistics Office

Pádraig Dalton joined the Council in July 2012. He is a career statistician who joined the Central Statistics Office in November 1991, taking up the position of Director General in May 2012. He is a member of the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC), which provides professional guidance to the European Statistical System (ESS) for developing, producing and disseminating European statistics. He is also Chair of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) High Level Group on the Modernisation of Official Statistics and is an ex-officio member of the National Statistics Board (NSB).

### **John Martin**, former Director for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, OECD

John Martin joined the Council in February 2015. He was Director for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs at the OECD from 2000 to early 2013. From 2005 to 2017, he was a member of the French Prime Minister’s Employment Policy Council. He is a member of the National Statistics Board of Ireland and Chair of the Labour Market Advisory Council. His other professional roles include the following: Adjunct Research Fellow, UCD Geary Institute for Public Policy; IZA Research Fellow; Policy Associate of the Leverhulme Centre for Research on Globalisation and Economic Policy at the University of Nottingham. In 2013, he was awarded the Presidential Distinguished Service Award for the Irish Abroad by the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins.

### **Gabriel Makhoul**, Central Bank of Ireland

Gabriel Makhoul joined the ESRI Council in 2020. He is Governor of the Central Bank of Ireland, chairs the Central Bank Commission, is a member of the Governing Council of the European Central Bank, a member of the European Systemic Risk Board, and is Ireland’s Alternate Governor at the

International Monetary Fund. Before joining the Central Bank of Ireland, he was Secretary to the New Zealand Treasury and the Government's chief economic and financial adviser. In addition, he was New Zealand's Alternate Governor at the World Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, Asian Development Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. He was also co-chair of the Trans-Tasman Banking Council. Previously Gabriel worked in the UK civil service where his roles ranged from policy on domestic and international tax issues through to large-scale operational delivery. He has also chaired the OECD's Committee on Fiscal Affairs and was responsible for the UK's Government Banking Service.

**David Moloney**, Acting Secretary General, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

David Moloney joined the Council in November 2010. He is the Acting Secretary General of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform since January 2021. He is head of the Labour Market and Enterprise Division of the Department, with responsibility for various expenditure areas including Social Protection, Housing, Enterprise and Agriculture and for the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES).

**Rónán Murphy**, former Senior Partner, PwC and current board member, Davy, ICON PLC and Greencoat Renewables PLC

Rónán Murphy joined the Council in February 2017. He is a non-executive director of Davy and ICON PLC and Chair of Greencoat Renewables PLC. He is also Chairperson of Business in the Community Ireland. Mr Murphy was previously Senior Partner of PwC Ireland, a position he was elected to in 2007 and was re-elected to for a further four-year term in July 2011. He joined PwC in 1980 and was admitted to the partnership in 1992. In 1995, he joined the firm's Leadership Team and held a number of operational leadership roles, prior to being appointed as Partner in Charge of the firm's Assurance practice in 2003, a position he held for four years. Mr Murphy was a member of the PwC EMEA Leadership Board from 2010 to 2015. He completed a Bachelor of Commerce and Master's in Business Studies at University College Dublin before qualifying as a Chartered Accountant in 1982. He is a founding member of the British Irish Chamber of Commerce.

**Rowena Pecchenino**, Professor of Economics, Maynooth University

Rowena Pecchenino joined the Council in February 2017. She is Professor of Economics at Maynooth University. After earning her PhD from the University of Wisconsin she joined the Department of Economics at Michigan State University, where she went on to be Professor and Department Chair. At Maynooth University she has served as Head of the Department of Economics, Finance and Accounting and Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences. She has been a member of the Irish Research Council, the Department of Health and Children Expert Group on Resource Allocation and Financing in the Health Sector, has just stepped down as President of the Irish Economic Association, and is Section Chair of Scholars at Risk Network – Ireland. She has published and continues to conduct research in a number of distinct fields in economics, from defence economics to Irish economic history to the conjunction of economics and theology. She has published widely in journals such as the *American Economic Review*, *The Economic Journal*, and the *Journal of Public Economics*.

**Orlaigh Quinn, Secretary General of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment**

As Secretary General of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Dr Orlaigh Quinn advises Government and leads the Department and its 16 offices and agencies in promoting the creation of high-quality and sustainable full employment; by championing enterprise, supporting and incentivising a competitive and innovative research and enterprise base, negotiating international trade agreements and promoting fair and competitive employment and markets. A career civil servant, she has held leadership positions across several public bodies; spearheading reform of Ireland's public and civil service at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, and as Head of Corporate and Head of National Pensions in the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. She has also led on EU and International Affairs and served as an expert adviser on employment and social policy at the European Commission. She is a former Visiting Research Fellow of Trinity College Dublin and holds a Master's in Public Management and a Doctorate in Governance from Queen's University Belfast. She is the author of two books on public policy topics.

**Patrick Rabbitte, former Minister and former leader of the Labour Party, Chairperson of Tusla – Child and Family Agency**

Patrick Rabbitte joined the Council in February 2017. He is a former Irish Labour Party politician who served as Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources from 2011 to 2014. He was Leader of the Labour Party from 2002 to 2007 and Minister of State for Commerce, Science and Technology from 1994 to 1997. He is Chairperson of Tusla – Child and Family Agency.

**Sally Shortall, Professor, Duke of Northumberland Chair of Rural Economy, Newcastle University**

Sally Shortall joined the Council in May 2015. She is the Duke of Northumberland Chair of Rural Economy, Newcastle University. She has served as an expert advisor to the UK Food Standards Agency, the European Parliament, the European Commission and the OECD. She was recently Principal Investigator on a report on women in agriculture in Scotland for the Scottish Government, who have set up a Task Force to consider implementation of the recommendations of this report. Ms Shortall served two terms as President of the European Society for Rural Sociology (2015-2019) and is currently the First Deputy Vice President of the International Rural Sociology Association. Her research interests include rural women, rural development theory and practice, community and stakeholder engagement in policy practice and how evidence is used to inform policy.

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