

PEER REVIEW REPORT 2022

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ESRI PEER REVIEW REPORT 2022

Published February 2023

Available to download from www.esri.ie

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Whitaker Square, Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Dublin 2

ABOUT THE ESRI

The mission of the Economic and Social Research Institute is to advance evidence-based policymaking that supports economic sustainability and social progress in Ireland. ESRI researchers apply the highest standards of academic excellence to challenges facing policymakers, focusing on 11 areas of critical importance to 21st Century Ireland.

The Institute was founded in 1960 by a group of senior civil servants led by Dr T.K. Whitaker, who identified the need for independent and in-depth research analysis to provide a robust evidence base for policymaking in Ireland.

Since then, the Institute has remained committed to independent research and its work is free of any expressed ideology or political position. The Institute publishes all research reaching the appropriate academic standard, irrespective of its findings or who funds the research.

The quality of its research output is guaranteed by a rigorous peer review process. ESRI researchers are experts in their fields and are committed to producing work that meets the highest academic standards and practices.

The work of the Institute is disseminated widely in books, journal articles and reports. ESRI publications are available to download, free of charge, from its website. Additionally, ESRI staff communicate research findings at regular conferences and seminars.

The ESRI is a company limited by guarantee, answerable to its members and governed by a Council, comprising up to 14 members who represent a cross-section of ESRI members from academia, civil services, state agencies, businesses and civil society. The Institute receives an annual grant-in-aid from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to support the scientific and public interest elements of the Institute's activities; the grant accounted for an average of 30 per cent of the Institute's income over the lifetime of the last Research Strategy. The remaining funding comes from research programmes supported by government departments and agencies, public bodies and competitive research programmes.

Further information is available at www.esri.ie.

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FOREWORD

In 2010, the Council of the Economic and Social Research Institute decided that a peer review of the Institute should be undertaken, and that such reviews would be undertaken on a regular basis in the future. The Council also decided that all peer review reports would be published. Following a Covid-related delay, the third peer review has now been completed and the members of the peer review team have provided this report, which contains their findings and recommendations.

The mission of the ESRI is ‘to produce economic and social research on key issues facing Ireland and to communicate research results to inform public policymaking and civil society’. Given the Institute’s objectives in both research excellence and policy impact, it was important that the peer review team was comprised of leading figures in the policy and research domains. It was also important that the team brought both national and international perspectives to the task of assessing the ESRI. We were honoured that six distinguished individuals¹ accepted our invitation to form the peer review panel, bringing a wealth of experience and insight.

The Council was extremely pleased to read the positive assessment that has been provided by the peer review team. For example, the report notes how the ESRI ‘is a very strong and respected brand in Ireland based on a very positive perception of the quality and independence of its research output’. It goes on to say that ‘a high level of trust is placed in the thoroughness, professionalism and independence of (the ESRI’s) work by virtually all stakeholders’.

The report also contains references to the ESRI’s funding structures and to possible weaknesses in those structures. Again quoting the report, the ESRI is described as a ‘critical resource for the State’ and hence ‘its position as an independent trusted voice in both short-term and longer-term cross-functional research should be given greater protection’.

The Council of the ESRI will soon begin its deliberation on our strategy for the five-year period beyond 2023 and this report will provide an invaluable input. We also plan to act on the recommendation of the panel and to take a ten-year horizon on the ESRI’s future direction.

To conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the peer review team for their professionalism and dedication in conducting the review. The time input was considerable, as the team engaged extensively with our staff and

¹ Niamh O’Donoghue (Co-Chair) – Former Secretary General of the Department of Social Protection; Aidan O’Driscoll (Co-Chair) – Former Secretary General of the Department of Justice and the Department of Agriculture; Bea Cantillon – Professor of Social Policy at the University of Antwerp; Holger Görg – Professor of International Economics at the University of Kiel; Gemma Tetlow – Chief Economist at the Institute for Government in the UK; Philippe Van Kerm – Professor of Social Inequality and Social Policy at the University of Luxembourg and the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research.

stakeholders and with the Council, too. The extent and depth of thought and reflection is evident in the report, and is much appreciated.

Sean O'Driscoll

Chair

SECTION 1

Background

The content of this report has been written by the peer review panel and has not been edited by the ESRI. During the review process, the ESRI provided descriptive text, some of which the panel has incorporated into their report. In places, the panel reflects the views that were expressed to them. Overall, the views, observations and conclusions are those of the panel.

This is the third of a series of periodic peer reviews of the Economic and Social Research Institute, which are intended to inform the strategic direction of the Institute. The first such review of the ESRI was undertaken in 2010, followed by the second in 2016.

The members of the peer review panel were:

Niamh O'Donoghue (Co-Chair) – Former Secretary General of the Department of Social Protection

Aidan O'Driscoll (Co-Chair) – Former Secretary General of the Department of Justice and the Department of Agriculture

Bea Cantillon – Professor of Social Policy at the University of Antwerp

Holger Görg – Professor of International Economics at the University of Kiel and Acting President of the Kiel Institute for the World Economy

Gemma Tetlow – Chief Economist at the Institute for Government in the UK and formerly with the Institute for Fiscal Studies

Philippe Van Kerm – Professor of Social Inequality and Social Policy at the University of Luxembourg and the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research

The review team was asked to assess the extent to which the Institute is achieving its objectives in the context of the mission set out in its Research Strategy 2019–2023. Specifically, the team was asked to address the following questions where the implied benchmark is similar for institutes elsewhere in Europe:

1. **Research:** Is the Institute achieving its goals in terms of the quality of the research, its relevance to the issues confronting Ireland and its impact on policy debates and policy choices? (A specific issue that was raised by one council member is whether the increased output in recent times has conflicted with quality.)
2. **Funding:** Is the Institute making good use of its funding streams and is it maximising the potential for additional revenue generation while

maintaining an ethos grounded in academic excellence and widespread dissemination?

3. **Dissemination and Communications:** Is the work of the Institute being brought to the attention of its various audiences in a way that maximises the impact of the research, both academically and in policy discussions.

The panel was also asked to take a forward-looking perspective and to discuss, for example, if the Institute needs to alter its research agenda.

SECTION 2

Context

The ESRI was founded in 1960 to conduct independent research to inform public policy in Ireland. The Institute works to support the policymaking process in Ireland through the production of ‘economic and social research on key issues facing Ireland and to communicate research results to inform public policy making and civil society’². Since its formation, the Institute has remained committed to independent research and it publishes all research reaching the appropriate academic standard, irrespective of its findings or who funds the research.

Research is conducted across 11 key policy areas in accordance with the ESRI Research Strategy 2019–2023. In addition, the Institute has led on the design and implementation of the National Longitudinal Study of Children (Growing Up in Ireland) and has played a significant role in The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA).

The research findings of the ESRI are widely disseminated in books, journals and peer-reviewed reports. ESRI staff members communicate research findings at regular conferences and seminars. In addition, in recent times there has been an increase in the number of requests for ESRI experts to appear before Oireachtas committees and to appear on media of various forms.

The ESRI brings together leading experts from different disciplines to work together across several research initiatives. Their expertise is widely recognised in public life. Researchers are represented on the boards and advisory committees of several national and international organisations.

There are currently about 110 people working in the ESRI across four divisions. Of this number, over 80 are engaged in research. This number is made up by approximately 41 permanent members of staff with different levels of expertise and seniority. This number is supplemented by a group of approximately 42 employees on fixed term contracts – postdocs, research assistants and research analysts.

The ESRI is a company limited by guarantee, answerable to its members and governed by a Council made up of interested individuals drawn from the academic, public and private sectors. Although incorporated as a private body, the Institute is deemed to be a public body for certain purposes.

² Mission of the ESRI as set out in the Research Strategy 2019–2023.

SECTION 3

ESRI Funding Model

The Institute receives a grant-in-aid from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, which amounts to approximately 25 per cent of the Institute's income in recent years. This grant-in-aid supports some of the public good activities of the Institute, including:

- maintenance of the tax-welfare microsimulation model (SWITCH), the macroeconomic model, and models for short-term economic forecasting;
- researcher appearances before parliamentary committees, membership of commissions, expert groups and briefing the media;
- production of high-quality research for publication in scientific journals.

Most of the remaining funds come about from research programmes in partnership with government agencies and departments in the form of either 'programme' or specific project funds; income received for Growing Up in Ireland, the National Study of Children; commissioned research projects mostly for public bodies; and competitive research grants (SEAI, HRB, IRC).

Whilst there has always been a 'membership' programme, this has expanded in recent years with the advent of Whitaker Patrons and Corporate Membership. Funds raised through this mechanism contribute to the Institute's overall income.

SECTION 4

Review Process

4.1 TERMS OF REFERENCE/TIMEFRAME

The terms of reference were agreed by the ESRI Council and provided to the review panel in advance of the commencement of their work.

By agreement, it was determined that the review would include a document review and a site visit in late October 2022 with significant stakeholder engagement over the course of the visit, with a report to the Council at the end of November 2022.

4.2 ORGANISATION

Having been provided with the terms of reference, the panel members were also provided with a significant folio of documents in advance of the visit to Dublin, including:

- brief information about the Institute;
- a copy of the previous peer review;
- ESRI Research Strategy 2019–2023;
- annual Review of Research documents 2019;
- annual Review of Research documents 2020;
- annual Review of Research documents 2021;
- relevant ESRI key performance indicators (KPIs);
- ESRI Publications and Dissemination Policy (V2.4, September 2022);
- summary of programme area funding 2021.

The structure of the site visit was organised by the ESRI in consultation with the co-chairs. To improve the efficiency and scope of its review, the panel was broken into two teams for several sessions. The composition of the teams was as follows:

Team 1 – Economics and Behaviour: Aidan O’Driscoll (Chair), Gemma Tetlow, Holger Görg

Team 2 – Sociology: Niamh O’Donoghue (Chair), Bea Cantillon, Philippe Van Kerm

The schedule and structure of meetings over the course of the two-day visit was agreed in advance with the co-chairs. At the request of the co-chairs, stakeholders

were also invited to complete a short survey in relation to their experiences with the ESRI in advance of the site visit.

The peer review commenced with a preliminary meeting of the panel at 8.00am on 24 October 2022. The panel held a series of meetings over the course of 24 and 25 October, including the following:

- (ESRI) – the chair and members of the ESRI Council, the director and heads of division, the research area co-ordinators of each research area, and a group of junior researchers, representative of a range of research areas;
- (External) – representatives of key external stakeholders, including many government departments, agencies, representative bodies and the media.

The full programme of meetings during the site visit is attached in Appendix 1. The panel had access to the Institute's staff as required and all requests for additional information during the review process were dealt with speedily and professionally.

SECTION 5

Research Areas

The Institute has two research divisions and each in turn is broken up into several research areas:

Economic

- macroeconomics
- competitiveness, trade and FDI
- labour market and skills
- energy, environment and infrastructure

Social

- behavioural
- education
- health and quality of life
- migration, integration and demography
- social inclusion and equality
- taxation, welfare and pensions

A third division deals with the Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) study, where the main task is collecting data for Ireland's longitudinal study of children. The data collection task from this division is due to transfer to the Central Statistics Office in 2023, with other tasks transferring to the Department of Children.

Whilst the work undertaken by the Institute is 'attributed' to the individual areas, in practice a considerable number of projects or topics require a cross-divisional approach involving personnel from the different areas. There are staffing overlaps between programmes and some subject areas are cross-cutting in nature, e.g. Brexit. Within the Economic division, micro and macro work is often complementary – with one feeding into the other – and data sets can be shared. This is generally seen as positive, as it allows for cross-fertilisation of ideas and methods.

In addition, although the number of research areas was determined by the Research Strategy, the emergence of a range of issues since its publication (including the pandemic, the housing crisis, the energy crisis and the Shared Island initiative) have all had significant impact on the activity of the divisions and their output over the last two years.

For each research area, the review team met initially with the senior researchers in the area and then with a variety of stakeholders who were either funders, partners, or consumers of the specific areas of research.

5.1 BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH UNIT (BRU)

The Behavioural Research Unit (BRU) is a multidisciplinary team of behavioural scientists that specialises in applying behavioural science to policy. The ESRI believes that this combination of perspectives is important for producing good research on people's decision making and behaviour. Most of the work employs experiments, conducted in the laboratory, online or in the field (e.g. randomised controlled trials). Initial work in this area focused on consumer behaviour but a deliberate focus on the work of regulators in various policy areas has borne fruit and generated support for behavioural work. While spanning a wide range of policy areas, there has been a particular focus on health, environment and financial services.

The behavioural section of the ESRI was established in 2013 with the title PRICE Lab, reflecting the focus of work undertaken at that time, and in 2018 it was renamed the Behavioural Research Unit due to its then much broader research programme. These developments mirrored a major focus internationally on the value of the insights from behavioural science/economics for evidence-based public policy, and so the development of the PRICE Lab/BRU was timely and part of a global trend.

The BRU has grown significantly in scale and prominence in recent years. This was already happening pre-Covid but accelerated during the pandemic, due to provision of highly relevant research to support policy that targeted aspects of distancing, masking and other behaviour of the public. The very fast turnaround in work funded by the Department of Health during Covid showed what can be done without compromising standards if there is a sound basis of expertise and supporting infrastructure in place. Researchers, independent observers and funders in this area reported a very positive experience in relation to the speed, relevance and quality of this work and its influence on policy and practice.

The currency of much of this work has also led to a significant degree of media engagement, including in the highly pressurised environment around Covid policy debates. Managing this engagement ethically and effectively has been challenging but is widely viewed as having been done extremely well and providing a model on how to engage with ongoing public debate while remaining grounded in the research evidence.

The recognition of the value of this behavioural work for public policy and practice extends well beyond health and, significantly, the BRU has made presentations to many civil and public service groups in the years since its establishment. The Unit had also signed a contract to provide training to civil servants just before the disruption wrought by the Covid pandemic. Both researchers and stakeholders

indicated that there was significant potential in further developing this education and training role, should the ESRI decide to do so. Researchers reported that the Unit is also well connected to other subject areas within the Institute, which enhances the quality of output of both the BRU and the subject matters experts.

While experiencing the same challenge as other areas in finding reputable journals interested in policy-related articles, the BRU has found a receptive audience in, for example, health journals for articles on Covid work. The effort required to prepare such articles is seen by the researchers and the key funders as worthwhile due to the impact on the overall quality of work undertaken.

Building on the reputation already established, and burnished during Covid, there is a clear possibility of making major future contributions on behavioural aspects of key policy areas – for example, climate change mitigation and adaptation and consumer response to inflation. The team is already working on further health-related matters such as obesity and a range of other policy issues. Scaling up the BRU to meet these and other demands will require careful planning and predictable funding to ensure that quality is maintained.

5.2 COMPETITIVENESS, TRADE AND FDI

Research in this area focuses 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. Research topics are focused around three broad themes: international trade, foreign direct investment and innovation and productivity.

Researchers point to three key strengths in this research area:

- the quality of the research output proven by publications in high-impact, peer-reviewed international academic journals and a significant number of citations;
- the ability to win competitive international and national research grants;
- active research collaborations with leading universities and research organisations in Ireland and Europe, in particular in the framework of EU funding projects.

Research in this area has been funded from international competitive research awards mainly from the European Commission and from joint research programmes funded by government departments and agencies, such as the Department of the Taoiseach; the Department of Finance and the Revenue Commissioners; the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment; InterTradeIreland; and the Environmental Protection Agency.

This research area has the smallest overall programme budget but has been more focused and successful in accessing competitive research grants from the EU than

other areas of the ESRI in recent years. This may be due to the background and experience of the area co-ordinator.

Policy impact is in part evidenced by the fact that ESRI work in this area has been cited in policy papers by the European institutions and international organisations. The focus on research collaborations is also notable and includes working with national and international academic partners in competitive funding processes and international research networks. National funding comes from research programmes with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, InterTradeIreland and the Shared Island unit, among others.

The work in this area has perhaps a lower profile in national media than some other work in the ESRI, but, for example, recent work on Brexit trade impacts was a notable exception. Stakeholders confirmed the high quality of work output but, as in other areas, expressed a wish for the policy relevance of research conclusions to be more clearly called out. It was noted that this will be facilitated by reverting to more face-to-face engagement with the policy community in seminars and other networking and direct engagement opportunities as recovery from Covid work patterns continues.

5.3 EDUCATION

Research on education addresses policy issues critical to achieving greater equality of educational outcomes and improving the experience of students, teachers, principals and other stakeholders across the education system. The student voice is placed at the centre of the research, providing important insights into student experiences across the school system, their reflections on choices made and their post-school pathways.

In our engagement with researchers, it was clear that there were a substantial number of positives to the research agenda of the ESRI in this area. It was seen as being extremely high quality, had been published in journals and papers, had significantly informed public policy in this area and had also led to the involvement of the ESRI at European level.

It was also suggested that the lack of 'programme funding' from the Department of Education was seen as a drawback in terms of broadening the research agenda in this area, whereas the existence of a 'programme' of funding from the Department of Children had provided scope to pivot the research agenda as required.

The work on competing for tenders was seen as demanding, particularly now that the field of education research was becoming more competitive. It possibly also reflected the fact that European funding for this research area had diminished in recent years.

In our engagement with funders/consumers, it was clear that the work of the ESRI was held in very high regard. The examples cited included research conducted on

GUI data and work carried out on data collected by other agencies but analysed by the ESRI. It was considered that the ESRI was highly expert, adept at responding to different perspectives and had a track record, profile and reputation for independence and dissemination. It was also agreed that the research produced was highly relevant and influential.

In terms of potential risks, however, it was identified that with the growing competition in this area, it may be time for the ESRI to focus on how they want to position themselves as researchers (early childhood, primary sector, post-primary sector). Given the research activity underway within the Institute, there is a danger that the very breadth of activity undertaken will suggest a lack of specialist knowledge being sought in specific areas.

A further point made related to the use of different research methodologies (particularly relating to direct engagement with children and young people) and it would be a matter for the ESRI to decide whether it wants to develop expertise in these new methodologies or not.

5.4 ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Research in this area combines expertise in economics, engineering and behavioural psychology to examine policy challenges related to climate change, energy security and sustainable use of environmental resources. In engagement with the review team, stakeholders emphasised both the high quality and importance of the work undertaken.

There is a history of energy research at the ESRI that has expanded in the past two decades to cover topics related to climate, particularly carbon taxation. In recent years, the focus on climate has widened dramatically and accounts for a significant share of the area's resources. The inclusion of 'infrastructure' in the title of the research area is largely a legacy of past work but also reflects a small but long-standing research programme on electronic communications. Non-climate-related environmental research broadly covered environment-health outcomes, and work on water quality within the context of the Water Framework Directive.

This research area supports a wide and diverse range of activity on highly sensitive and topical policy areas and draws on a similarly diverse range of funding streams, including some EU funding (Horizon 2020). There are multi-annual research programme agreements in place for each of the four areas: energy, climate, environment and communications. Key funders on energy and climate include several government departments and state agencies, including the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications; the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage; the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI); the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); and the Climate Change Advisory Council. On communications, funding comes from the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications and the Commission for Communications Regulation

(ComReg). Research funding via competitive tendering competitions for specific research projects is mainly from Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), the SEAI and the EPA.

The energy area has a consortium funding approach, which appears to generally work well and offers a possible model to other areas with multiple funders. It is described in the following terms by the energy team:

The Energy Policy Research Centre (EPRC) is a multi-annual research programme focusing on economic and policy issues across the energy spectrum. The Centre was established in the early 1990s and is funded by ESB, EirGrid, Commission for Regulation of Utilities, Energia, the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, Ervia, SSE Group, and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). The research focus of the EPRC is driven by discussion in twice annual steering meetings; on topics where the ESRI has an expertise or capacity to undertake the research; and where sufficient data to enable research is available. At any one time there are multiple research projects underway at various stages of completion.

This model has the considerable virtue of pulling a range of funders together to determine a coherent set of research priorities, but as one funder pointed out, the corollary is that any one agency may feel that their specific requirements are lost in this broader framework.

Despite the obvious importance and topicality of the work in this research area, it was reported that very small numbers of staff are involved in developing and maintaining very important models on climate and energy. While not unique in the ESRI, the threat from such a thin layer of expertise in such important areas of research infrastructure that underpins a range of ESRI analysis and outputs, particularly in the current employment market, is concerning.

The critical importance of ensuring that national energy and climate policies achieve their stated objectives within specified timelines is at the forefront of current national policy debate. It seems clear that the ESRI can play a critical, and arguably unique, role in modelling potential impacts of policy measures and drawing policy-relevant conclusions to provide an evidence base to assist this process. The Institute appears focused on this task, but some stakeholders expressed a desire for a tighter policy focus in the work undertaken, and better and more consistent engagement with the policy community around explaining and debating research conclusions. The latter necessarily involves media work, and some unevenness in this engagement was also noted by stakeholders. These issues are perhaps inevitable in a developing research area in a highly topical policy space.

Finally, a number of stakeholders noted that there is growing interest in the work undertaken by the ESRI relating to climate – both from an economic and behavioural perspective. This was viewed as work that would increase in

importance over the next few years and should perhaps be seen as a research strand in its own right.

5.5 GROWING UP IN IRELAND

Research in this area examines developmental outcomes for children and young people in Ireland, and how these vary between different groups of the population and evolve over time. It is a project where the model was jointly developed with colleagues in Trinity College Dublin. It is a project 'in transition' with responsibility for the survey transferring to the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and the Department of Children at the end of 2022. This is a move that has been planned for several years.

In discussions with the researchers, the transition of GUI provokes certain concerns. On the one hand, the longer-term future of the project is secured through 'ownership' by the CSO and the Department of Children. The researchers indicated that they will be looking to see if there are opportunities for funding to use the data in different ways.

On the other hand, the transition will involve the transfer of some of the key personnel associated with the project to new organisations. In addition, whilst it is expected that the ESRI will continue to have access to the data from the survey, it will no longer have the same control over the questions asked or the data collected. In other words, the 'intellectual leadership' of the project will transfer.

There was some discussion about the transfer of the GUI project to the CSO and the Department of Children and the fact that there is still a lack of clarity about the formal structures post-transition, including the scientific input into the data design.

In our engagement with the funders, it was emphasised to the panel that the transition related to the sustainability and national importance of the infrastructure rather than any concern about the quality of work undertaken by the ESRI. It was indicated that the GUI is a longer-term infrastructure with a balance to be struck between dealing in the moment and building a system that is useful in the longer term.

It was indicated that the funders also commissioned external reviews (in addition to the ESRI review process) of the research output, which guaranteed that quality consistently was high. It was considered that the specific research outputs have improved over time and that the relationship the Institute has with the media meant that these were disseminated very well.

It was stated that the funders see an ongoing relationship with the funders in relation to analyses – there is a wish list of potential issues being considered now – particularly given that there are aspects of the data set which have not yet been analysed. This is a very dynamic area. There are always new ideas being generated

and policy questions emerging where it is possible to use the data available to understand different experiences and conclusions.

It was suggested that whilst historically the costs of working with the ESRI were high relative to some other potential academic partners, you get a very high-quality product in response. However, this was elaborated to suggest that this cost difference has now diminished. It was emphasised that the process of dialogue between the ESRI and the funders was good and worked well.

5.6 HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Research under this heading focuses on policy issues critical to improving population health outcomes and promoting quality of life for people in Ireland. Key issues include appropriate financing models to deliver high-quality healthcare and identifying the causes of persistent inequalities in healthcare outcomes across socio-economic groups.

This research area represents two significant programmes of activity within the ESRI with programmes funded by the Department of Health and the Environmental Protection Agency. There are other ad hoc sources of funding, including the Institute of Public Health. More recently, there has been work commissioned by the HSE, which is expected to translate into a two-year project.

In discussions with the researchers, they indicated that the benefit of well-funded programmes is that the relationship (and trust) between funders and the researchers develops over time. There is ongoing dialogue and exchange of ideas about research projects, and a greater degree of openness to suggestions from the researchers for areas of research. They also indicated a preference for working for funders where a more academic rigour is required and working for a variety of funders (rather than reliance on one source of funding, where there is a risk of withdrawal of funding).

In our engagement with the funders, the importance of the relationship with the ESRI to all was emphasised. The ability of the ESRI to access and match different data sets was seen as particularly important. It was considered that their credibility was second to none. It was indicated that there is occasional tension between short-term research needs and trying to get research completed within the timeframe of the available budget. It was suggested that whilst the researchers are open to critiques and commentaries, occasionally there is insufficient detail about the approach being taken, which can cause misinterpretations.

Given the structure of oversight and dialogue between the funders and the Institute, it was considered that all research output was relevant to the needs of the funders. However, it was also suggested that a focus on more longer-term research and some 'foresight' thinking would be welcome because of the skills and expertise of staff in the Institute. Finally, there was some reference to the fact that

the Institute does not make policy recommendations – but that given that these would be framed on an evidence base, this is something that would be welcome.

5.7 LABOUR MARKETS AND SKILLS

Research on the labour market and skills focuses on a wide range of policy areas examining how workers are faring in the labour market and the skills workers need to meet the needs of an evolving economy. Research topics include pay, unemployment, training and skills.

In addition to meeting the agreed outputs from funding programmes, researchers reported being able to routinely convert their work into articles for high-impact international and national academic journals, which clearly speaks to the quality of work as assessed by peers.

This research area has grown rapidly since 2014. Papers and/or reports have been published on core topics such as minimum wages, education and skills, technological change, emerging technologies, community and regional development and the gender wage gap. Topics as diverse as pensions, disability, constitutional change and development economics have also been covered in some publications.

The very diverse range of research topics pursued in this area reflects, in part, a diversity of funding sources, including the EU. Funding and partnerships with bodies such as the Low Pay Commission, Pobal, the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Community Foundation for Ireland has directed substantial effort to areas such as inequality, poverty, minimum pay, universal basic income and impact assessments of rural development measures. It was noted that a new funding programme has been recently agreed with the Department of Education, which will impact on research activity in the coming years.

The difficulty in accessing up-to-date wage data and consequent dependence on EU statistics on income and living conditions (SILC) and the CSO to provide information has a significant impact on work in this area, both in terms of what can be studied and the timing of reports.

As in other research areas, research topics are decided by an iterative process with the key funders and stakeholders. The work undertaken was highly valued by stakeholders both for its quality and relevance, but a lack of sufficient medium-term thinking about the structural issues facing the Irish labour market was also noted. However, current research in areas such as education and skills mismatches, forecasting the demand for emerging technologies, and labour market impacts of technological change clearly do reflect a medium-term perspective that will be built upon.

5.8 MACROECONOMICS

Macroeconomic research aims to improve understanding of economic growth, the property market, and the relationship between the macroeconomy and the financial sector.

A major feature of macroeconomic research at the ESRI is the development and maintenance of a suite of economic models, including COSMO (COre Structural MOdel). Research on longer-term macroeconomic developments are underpinned by this structural macroeconomic model, which has been extended in recent years to include more detailed fiscal, financial and housing satellite models. In addition to its use within the macroeconomics research area, the COSMO model supports research in several other areas, most notably health research, by providing critical inputs on economic and demographic projections. The macro-modelling work is being expanded into development of a model of the Northern Ireland economy.

This area has a strong research programme with the Department of Finance based significantly on the COSMO model, with Department of Finance staff also directly using the model. In recent times, work has been undertaken on the impacts of Brexit, Covid and the war in Ukraine on the Irish economy. The importance of this work is clear to all involved and a strong working relationship with the Department of Finance is reported by ESRI researchers. Researchers reported that work on developing and maintaining COSMO is largely funded through the grant-in-aid but that applications of the models are mainly funded by the research programme with the Department of Finance.

There appears to be a shared view that COSMO needs more support to keep it up to date and some concern was expressed that the current resourcing of this work may be inadequate. It was noted that the model is no longer used by IFAC, who rented it from the ESRI in the past, and it is understood that the Central Bank maintains its own version of COSMO, having participated in the original development of the model. In addition, some difficulty was reported in recruiting suitably qualified young modellers to support COSMO, as skills now tend to be focused on DSGE (dynamic stochastic general equilibrium) models. The maintenance and future development of the macroeconomic model is clearly an important issue, given the use that is made of COSMO, and therefore this issue will require attention and decision by both the Institute and the Department of Finance soon.

The Quarterly Economic Commentary (QEC) provides a very useful service to many public and private stakeholders who find it an invaluable and up-to-date summary of the current state of the economy along with a wealth of underlying detail and well-informed commentary. The Central Bank also publishes a quarterly bulletin providing similar material, allowing readers another perspective and comparison. Both documents are seen as highly relevant to a relatively wide range of

stakeholders with an interest in the Irish economy. For the ESRI, the QEC is a major product of the grant-in-aid and a significant destination for this scarce resource.

Some concern was expressed that the pressure to produce the QEC on a quarterly timeline pulls away from a needed focus on medium-term issues and may lead to a formulaic approach to the publication itself. A suggestion was made by one stakeholder to have two full commentaries each year along with two brief updates on key data, etc. to create more space for deeper consideration of issues covered in the report. However, the QEC is a flagship publication, and it is acknowledged that any change of this sort would require careful consideration.

From our engagement with a range of stakeholders, repeated calls were heard for the return of the previously published Medium-Term Review. There is a clear demand for this type of medium-term review and outlook material, including from central departments in the context of the needs of medium-term economic planning such as the National Development Plan capital programme. There may be some hesitation in the ESRI in taking on this work in part due to the recognition that this is a major block of work that would draw on resources across the whole Institute, as well as on scarce modelling expertise, and would therefore need a significant new funding stream. The appetite to fund this work would therefore need to be clarified with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department of Finance. However, it would seem a core area for the ESRI's unique expertise and the demand for it was made very clear in engagement with a range of stakeholders, including government departments and social partners.

There is significant media interest in macroeconomics output. In general, this is directly related to the published ESRI work and is very well handled by the staff in this area. The review team heard a very positive view of the communication and dissemination of macroeconomics work generally with the quality and timing of press releases and other communications material referenced in addition to strong presentation skills by ESRI staff. As we elaborate later (in the dissemination section), one point of criticism is related to the ESRI's website, which many stakeholders find difficult to navigate to find materials of interest. While this applies to all research areas, the macroeconomics research area may be particularly affected by this weakness, as it is a major originator of publications.

5.9 HOUSING

Research on housing is currently part of the macroeconomics research area. However, housing is a significant and growing area of work and likely deserves to be seen as a separate research area, given its centrality to medium-term policy concerns and the need to tackle the deeper underlying issues in housing supply and demand, which have arguably not been addressed to date. In the short term, research material on housing should be presented under a separate heading on the ESRI website to increase its visibility and impact.

The research activity in this area has focused on a range of issues relating to the functioning of the housing and mortgage market. The key aim of this research is to better understand the Irish housing market, the factors determining its development and the differing impacts across groups of households. Research has been undertaken on housing affordability, rental market function and rent controls, house price developments, investment in housing supply, credit market access and credit interventions. The goal is to produce research evidence to help target and calibrate policy measures to improve housing market outcomes.

Work under this heading by the ESRI on the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) Rent Index is appreciated and well-funded. The ESRI gives important credibility to the results, which are directly used for policy decisions on rent pressure zones. The Rent Index work is not a typical role one would expect of a research institute, but it does underpin the expertise and provides a data source which feeds into the ESRI's broader housing policy work. The available microdata on rents from the RTB also open significant opportunities for more high-quality academic work.

Housing is a highly contested policy space and there are a range of political and academic commentators making it sometimes a noisy and challenging area for the ESRI to make the value of its research understood. The lessons learned from other parts of the Institute which have faced similar challenges in the recent past in managing communications may prove useful, particularly if, as is desirable, the ESRI presses on into the core underlying issues around housing policy. The ESRI has staged a number of conferences on housing, which were positively viewed by both researchers and stakeholders. Continued and indeed expanded engagement with the diverse housing policy community, including those with differing views, would be worthwhile.

5.10 MIGRATION, INTEGRATION AND DEMOGRAPHY

Research examines the major forces that shape the population, including fertility, mortality and migration. A key research theme is the integration of migrants and their children. Work in this area incorporates research conducted by EMN Ireland, the national contact point for the European Migration Network, which sits within the ESRI. Their research provides objective, up-to-date and comparable statistics on migration and asylum.

The position of the ESRI in hosting the EMN is apparently unique in Ireland – it is more usually housed in a government department – this has both positive and negative aspects. The research study topics are proposed by the European Commission and Member States and then voted on. Some topics are timely for Ireland – others not so much. The research team advised that the EMN plays a positive role in policy development in Ireland and European level both in terms of current and emerging issues. All studies go through the peer review process (both internal and external) and there can be tensions between the review process and

the speed of output. The European dimension places its own challenges; it is hard to find time to respond to Horizon tenders given the programme of activity. It was also clarified that the current focus of the team is on migration and integration (in which the Institute has considerable expertise). Whilst there is no specific research strategy in relation to demography (notably ageing), a demographic model is maintained as part of macroeconomic modelling for many years, and this has been expanded in recent times to capture regional trends in addition to national. The researchers try to highlight demographic themes as part of other programmes, but there is no specific programme area for this.

In our engagement with the funders/consumers of this area, there was positive emphasis once again on the quality and relevance of the work being undertaken. The steering board and system of dialogue with the Institute provided for a flexible approach to setting the research agenda and there was an appreciation of the fact that it was grounded in the reality of policy making.

There was mention of the fact that there was now a wealth of administrative data in the area and the capacity of some of the stakeholders has improved, providing the prospect of a different relationship in the future. It was also suggested that the ‘incentive’ to partner with the ESRI through the public tendering rules did offer an advantage to the Institute – but the value of this was that it afforded quick response.

Activity in this area tends to be commissioned on a bilateral basis and it was suggested that it would be interesting to explore a trilateral arrangement with programme funding.

It was also mentioned that because the Institute has a proud history of research activity, there are often references to previous work on an area when there are discussions relating to policy problems. It was suggested that perhaps this repository of work could be made more accessible, with clearer links to allow for greater use. Finally, it was suggested that the evidence presented by the Institute’s researchers often provides the basis for different policy options and that this would certainly assist in making such research even more relevant for public consideration.

5.11 SOCIAL INCLUSION AND EQUALITY

Research in this area examines the policy responses required to support vulnerable groups in Ireland. Social inclusion research explores the capacity of individuals and households to participate in economic and social life. Equality research in the ESRI investigates inequalities in opportunities and in outcomes.

There is a very long history of research on poverty issues in the Institute, which has been instrumental in developing policy and poverty measurement in Ireland and the EU, and there continues to be a high level of engagement with stakeholders.

One influential study on discrimination found that Irish Travellers experienced the highest rates of discrimination while a list experiment revealed that people in Ireland mask negative attitudes to Black and Polish immigration, giving ‘socially desirable’ responses in surveys. The team’s work, along with that of other colleagues across the ESRI, informed the work of the recent Citizens’ Assembly on Gender Equality.

Our engagement with the researchers in this area highlighted the challenges of working in an area with multiple funders and multiple consumers, including government departments, agencies and the Oireachtas. Research work focuses on both the short term and long term with projects of variable length. This then provides a challenge in terms of the recruitment of staff – and the dissemination of research outcomes in the context of staff turnover. There is a high level of engagement with stakeholders and research in this area generally uses a range of datasets, including CSO data and GUI. Although there is a good working relationship with the CSO, there is a reliance on the CSO to clear the data outputs and there can be a difficult balance between CSO needs and the research agenda. This is a source of concern in the context of the move of GUI to the CSO.

Our engagement with funders/consumers echoed some of the points we heard in previous sessions. There was happiness expressed at the quality of research and the view was that in the main, the partnership with the ESRI had been a positive one. It was considered that the Institute was very expert and had strengths in both economic and social research. It was indicated that the research teams were available and willing to engage and that the Institute can meet needs of bodies that no one else can (through its ability to link datasets and research activity).

There was a view that the ESRI had also benefitted from the partnerships and developed some skills in different research methodologies because of their activity in this area.

5.12 TAXATION, WELFARE AND PENSIONS

Research examines the design of the tax, welfare and pensions system, with a focus on the effects it has on individuals, redistribution and incentives to work. Much of this work uses SWITCH – the ESRI tax and benefit model – to simulate the impact of actual or proposed reforms on households.

SWITCH was overhauled in 2020 to bring it in line with international standards. Extensive work was carried out during the pandemic to investigate its impact on incomes and inequality and to examine the role of social welfare policies and employment supports in protecting incomes. This work was awarded the Miriam Hederman O’Brien prize, which recognises outstanding original work in Irish fiscal policy.

The SWITCH model is an important resource, widely used by government departments and agencies. The team also works with the EU's Joint Research Centre on EUROMOD.

The engagement with the researchers illustrated that this was a significant element of the Institute's activity and attracted a significant funding pot from a consortium of five government departments. The stability of the programme of funding allows the researchers to shape and influence the research agenda now more so than in the past. Although a primary output is to focus attention on issues of the budget, there are opportunities to produce papers and present at Oireachtas committees. There was great attraction for researchers to this work because of its visible impact on policy – but this is at the cost of not having as much time for academic research.

Our engagement with the funders/consumers was again very positive, with the ESRI considered a trusted partner providing quality input into the work of the funding organisations. It was clarified that whilst departments participate in setting the research agenda, they do not get involved in the research projects – to ensure the independence of the analysis.

There was some commentary around the fact that the ESRI can highlight when policy doesn't do what was intended and this is a valuable input. The possibility of straying into subjective commentary was mentioned – and the dangers this would present to the trust in the ESRI if this happened.

There was also mention of the need to be more transparent regarding the choices made underpinning analyses. In this regard, it was suggested that it would be helpful if, at time of publication, the ESRI could be more open when it does not agree with the government assumptions and is basing its findings on a different basis, and that this would further cement its relationship as an independent entity.

5.13 SHARED ISLAND AND OTHER WORK

Although not one of the specified research areas, an emerging area of work in recent years has been the Shared Island work for the Department of the Taoiseach. This is driven as an Irish Government initiative, but also operates with other partners, as appropriate, across government, in Northern Ireland and the UK. This has provided the Department with an analysis and evidence base identifying opportunities for greater co-operation between the parties.

It was observed that its reputation for research excellence and unparalleled ability to link economic and social data had been determining factors in the choice of the ESRI as a partner in this work. The breadth and topicality of research activity conducted by the ESRI means that the Institute has been able to identify and link other relevant work being undertaken, thus avoiding duplication.

It was suggested that whilst the Institute is very active in meeting the current demands of individual funders, there is an opportunity for greater foresight and

horizon scanning analysis. The Department would support the provision of specific core funding to carry out this work on a more holistic basis.

It was also suggested that given the different audiences involved, more use could be made of different presentation approaches to increase understanding and greater appreciation of the 'takeaway' messages from research undertaken.

SECTION 6

General Observations of the Panel

The following observations of the review team respond directly to the key requirements of the terms of reference and summarise the team's reflections on the overall performance of the Institute in light of the ambitions set out in its Research Strategy 2019–2023.

6.1 QUALITY

The ESRI is a very strong and respected brand in Ireland based on a very positive perception of the quality and independence of its research output. Its major outputs – the QEC, research reports, working papers and journal articles – are widely read and a high level of trust is placed in the thoroughness, professionalism and independence of this work by virtually all stakeholders. The Institute is recognised as expert in economic and social policy domains and its ability to link both is viewed as a distinguishing feature.

Key stakeholders reported that the Institute's reputation has been further enhanced in recent years due to the relevance of its work to key policy issues and improved communications.

The ESRI has few or no competitors within Ireland for the type of policy-related analysis that it undertakes – both in the economic and, perhaps even more so, in the social domains. This is somewhat less true of its general macroeconomic work where some similar or related work is published by the Central Bank, IFAC, the Department of Finance and some stakeholder groups. Each of these bodies will naturally have a view of the quality of each other's work and this would seem to provide a potentially useful source for challenge and interaction (in the sense of providing quality control through regular or irregular meetings), which may not be fully exploited at present.

The Institute's own assessment of quality is underpinned by internal and external peer review of its publications, and by publication in refereed journals. The Institute makes a considerable effort to ensure a robust internal review process but distinguishes between research reports, which are thoroughly reviewed, and working papers which are 'un-refereed work-in-progress by researchers who are solely responsible for the content and any views expressed therein'. It is unlikely that the distinction between research reports and working papers is widely understood, and the reality is that the media and interested stakeholders tend to view all such outputs as endorsed by the ESRI.

In academic and research institutes generally, academic excellence is normally assessed and demonstrated by publication in prestigious peer-reviewed journals.

Here there is room for improvement, in terms of the quality of academic journals targeted by the ESRI. However, the nature of the ESRI's output – focused on specifically Irish policy-related issues rather than, for example, on methodological innovation – does not generally have much appeal to the most high-profile academic journals. There is also a tension between the timelines and effort required for journal publication with the more pressing demands of the ESRI's own publication cycles. Nevertheless, a pattern can be seen in ESRI work with material from research reports and working papers subsequently forming the basis of journal articles. This appears to be somewhat uneven in the various parts of the Institute. Funding constraints are important also, as any work specifically for journal publication is unlikely to be directly financed by programme funders and therefore implicitly must be funded by the limited grant-in-aid.

Some longstanding ESRI publications – such as the QEC – and a considerable amount of newer work – such as the behavioural work on Covid – operates to very tight and demanding timelines. This is necessarily the case as such work is highly time sensitive. It also applies to some research work sought by programme funders to assist in understanding specific current policy challenges. These timelines do not lend themselves to the type of peer review normally associated with academic rigour. In these circumstances, the ESRI must make do with less formal assessment systems but could perhaps usefully develop some ongoing monitoring and review processes with national and international peers. Such a process would necessarily be post hoc and would not therefore delay completion of work but could at least provide assessment input that could be reflected in any future or follow-on work. For example, having an international scientific board was noted as one mechanism used by some similar bodies to ensure independent continuous peer oversight of quality.

Most of the data sources used by researchers are external to the Institute. (The planned transition of the GUI project referred to earlier, further diminishes the ESRI direct role in data collection.) This means that the Institute has limited control over the scope or design of research themes, data collection or data quality. There appeared to be a reliance on the exploitation of certain well-known survey data sources (GUI, TILDA, CSO surveys) but limited evidence of the development of alternative data collection (e.g. web scraping, systematic text analysis) or 'participatory research' with the direct involvement of stakeholders. The review panel therefore has some concerns about the potential diminution of expertise, competence and 'intellectual leadership' in this area.

The panel was struck by the breadth of research activity within the Institute. Where a small number of staff within a particular research area are being stretched across a broadening (funder-led) demand, there is a risk that the breadth being serviced will be done so at the expense of development of depth of expertise in particular areas which potentially will impact on quality of output in the longer term.

6.2 RELEVANCE

The ESRI's current funding model, with most funding coming from programme funders or direct commissions, ensures a very strong link with the priorities of key stakeholders. Almost all these funds ultimately come from the exchequer but flow through many state bodies. (See separate comment on funding.) This gives rise to many challenges for the ESRI but certainly creates a very rich and diverse state network around the Institute, which impacts on its research programme and priorities. The process of setting work priorities in the Institute is deeply impacted by iterative exchanges with funders and some other stakeholders within programme steering committees, arguably ensuring a high level of policy relevance.

Current and recent research priorities include highly topical subjects, including various aspects of Covid, Brexit, energy and climate policy, along with continuing work on issues of more long-term policy concern, including competitiveness, inequality, labour market issues, trade, etc. Many observers were very impressed by the way in which the Institute was able to pivot quickly to do innovative and impactful work on Covid in particular. In terms of subject matter, therefore, the work of the ESRI was seen as highly relevant to existing policy concerns.

Discussions with funders and other stakeholders suggested a fairly widespread view that the relevance (or perception of relevance) of ESRI research work would be further enhanced if there was a greater willingness to spell out the policy implications of this work in ESRI publications. As noted in Section 5, this issue was raised in a number of research areas. To some extent, this may be based on a misunderstanding of how far researchers can go before exceeding the scope of the research evidence base. However, where there is a demand for the elaboration of policy options or scenarios, in both research papers and regular publications, it should be possible to do this without going beyond the evidence base provided by research findings.

A related issue was the desire for more face-to-face contact between researchers and the wider policy community, including those outside the state institutions, so that the key findings, and potential policy implications of any specific piece of research, or any body of research, can be clarified for a non-technical audience. This point is taken up in the next section.

In seeking to maintain relevance, there is some danger of the Institute being drawn into a wider range of issues and shallower time-sensitive work than would be desirable. The ESRI's reputation for quality was gained and will be maintained by work of substance and depth and this can be difficult to reconcile with the political/media cycle. There is a high level of awareness within the ESRI of the dangers and challenges arising in this context and to date these matters appear to have been dealt with well, but it requires continued consideration and deliberate decision.

6.3 DISSEMINATION

The ESRI's Research Strategy makes clear the Institute's ambition to disseminate its work through a range of outlets in order to ensure its goals of academic excellence and policy impact are achieved. It also identifies a need to develop existing and new channels of communication to a wider audience, including through wider use of both traditional and social media. This is elaborated, with appropriate publication policies and guidelines for staff, in a detailed and regularly updated Publications and Dissemination Policy.

The Institute has made significant efforts in this respect and several stakeholders noted how it had 'upped its game' on communications in recent years. A bigger presence on national broadcast media and social media was identified, with some researchers and senior figures in the Institute particularly prominent.

Indeed, some ESRI staff are now regular contributors to radio and TV programmes. In many cases, ESRI staff are primarily there to present recent reports and their comments are therefore solidly grounded in research. This is very useful in bringing the ESRI's work to a larger audience and to inserting some solid evidence into the public policy debate. However, it is a growing feature of media interviews to be quite expansive in the range of issues covered, and this can lead to comment being invited on issues distant from the specific competence of the interviewee. This hazard is generally well handled by ESRI staff but requires appropriate staff guidelines, careful management and appropriate training.

Engagement with the Oireachtas, in particular Oireachtas committees and the Parliamentary Budget Office, is an important feature of the ESRI's communications and dissemination work. Clearly this engagement is dependent on the particular areas of interest of the Oireachtas at any point in time and on the perceived relevance of ESRI reports. The ESRI tracks the number of mentions of the work of the Institute in Oireachtas debates (see Appendix 2 for the list of Key Performance Indicators tracked) and this generally shows a high level of interest as one would expect, albeit negatively impacted by Covid.

As noted earlier, in the Quality section, the media and others generally draw no distinction between research papers, working papers, QEC, etc. All are seen as being in the voice of the ESRI and therefore highly credible. Similarly, when ESRI staff communicate on social media, they are likely to be seen as speaking for the ESRI. Social media provides an important route to communicate with a wide range of people and should be fully exploited by the ESRI but again it is important to have clear protocols to govern social media interactions by staff, making it as clear as possible when they are speaking in a personal capacity. As already noted, the ESRI has such guidelines in place, and these will need to be regularly reviewed and updated in light of experience.

Somewhat in contrast to the enhanced media engagement, the reduced number of in-person seminars during and since Covid was regretted by several key

stakeholders who spoke to the review team. The particular value placed on seminars was that they provided a platform for ESRI researchers to interface directly with the policy community requiring them to translate their findings into accessible language and respond to questions and debate. This brings research results and data to life for the non-technical but interested, and often influential, consumer of the ESRI's output. Such seminars were also seen as a valuable networking space for the whole policy community, including younger ESRI staff. It was noted that web-based events have the advantage of potentially reaching a wider audience but do not provide the same platform for interaction with other players, and for this reason many organisations are now running hybrid events.

Similarly, non-specialist stakeholders appreciated succinct policy briefs, when they are produced, and would welcome more of this material. They should be presented in accessible language and focus on policy-relevant substance rather than methodology.

The ESRI's website was viewed as somewhat old fashioned and inaccessible by several stakeholders. It was seen as not well-tailored to a heterogeneous audience, with specialised (academic) publications mixed with detailed policy documents and shorter pieces for the broader public. The website would benefit from thinking of web design in terms of multiple target audiences with attention paid to presentation style and language appropriate to the specific audience. There was a demand for more visual material that would convey the key messages from research work to a non-technical audience, with frequent requests for 'modern' data visualisations, infographics, dynamic data views, etc. It was also suggested that the website could include a user-friendly repository of relevant research (past and current) on specific topics. All these messages point to the need to significantly refresh the Institute's web-based offering.

In relation to dissemination of research through academic journals, the picture presented to the peer review team by staff and stakeholders had a number of dimensions. It is clear that the ESRI has a strong record of publications in peer reviewed journals, and this is reflected in the IDEAS rankings (see Appendix 3) which provides a comparison with think tank peers and Irish institutions. The review team's engagement with staff and stakeholders suggested that different parts of the Institute appear to have a greater or lesser focus on journal publication depending on the nature of their work and the time and funding available. As already noted in the Quality section, funders are generally not particularly interested in supporting academic publication, and the highest regarded journals have a very limited appetite for articles focused on Irish policy concerns. However, the view within the ESRI, broadly supported by stakeholders, is that peer reviewed publication is nevertheless important to the maintenance of quality standards and for external recognition and affirmation of those standards. There is no easy answer to this conundrum. The Institute is right to continue to seek publication in recognised journals if possible but will likely continue to struggle with the issue of

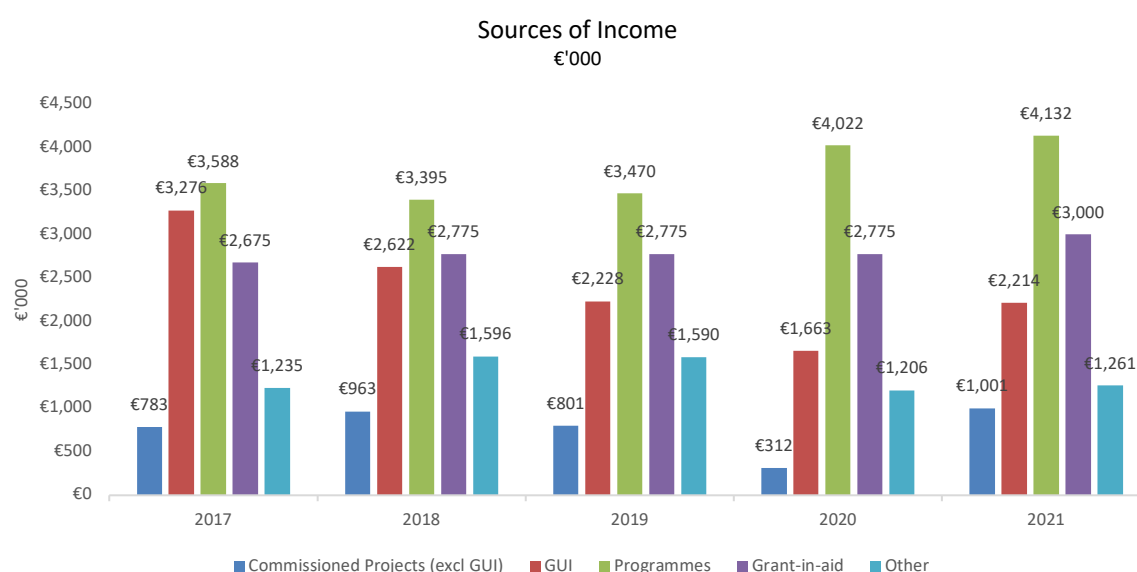
the appropriate weight, and resource, to give to this aspect of its work. To ensure wider publication in the most highly regarded journals would likely require a specific effort to recast some research output specifically for that audience, and this would give rise to some further draw on resources. There is interest in such journals in the use of novel administrative data, and this may be something that the ESRI could explore further in the future.

6.4 RESEARCH FUNDING

There is a view that the current funding of the ESRI may be a good balance between the core grant-in-aid funding (which covers national models, public good activity and a rebalancing of research funding to the social domain) and specific programme and project funds. The presence of 'programme' funds potentially affords a reasonable balance in terms of building relationships and identifying work that is important not just to the client but also to the research spread and depth of the ESRI. The variety of funding streams allows the ESRI to develop a close understanding of its customer base and appreciate the requirements of funders through engagement in a competitive marketplace.

Figure 1 shows the ESRI sources of funding over the past five years. For 2021, the more externally directed sources (programmes and projects) accounted for 55 per cent of non-GUI funding, with the balance from the more flexible grant-in-aid and other sources.

FIGURE 1 – SOURCES OF FUNDING



The Panel is of the view that there are risks attached to this mixed funding model if the balance between the sources is not safeguarded:

The **balance of research funding** which is 'available' to fund both the economic and social research streams. It is widely acknowledged that there is a greater appetite to fund the economic activity but there is a clear deficit of funding on the social stream – something of which the Council is aware.

The **management of the significant variety of funding streams** (with their accompanying governance arrangements) whilst ensuring an ongoing relationship between the Institute and many funders, each with its own specific research requirements, takes considerable effort and time on behalf of the ESRI's senior management. As almost all this funding comes from the exchequer, the total administrative overhead cost to the state of this funding structure must also be considerable. It is also not clear that this process allows for the determination of an optimum balance of national research priorities.

There is a real danger that in the '**research following the funding**' model, which is being pursued, the ESRI's ability to actually determine the research agenda is somewhat compromised. While this can be seen to usefully underpin the relevance of research (as noted earlier, in the Relevance section), there is a danger that the Institute's reputation for independence, and its capacity to develop a coherent and prioritised research agenda will be damaged and may not best serve the overall interests of the state.

The emphasis on time limited programmes or projects mitigates against a **national 'broadly based' longer-term research agenda** – which, based on the feedback received, is an area that stakeholders would wish to see further developed.

It is understood that in recent times the grant-in-aid to the Institute has not been increased in line with inflation because of general budget requirements rather than as a specific action taken against the Institute. This means, however, that the continued ability of the Institute to support public good activity, the maintenance and development of its models, and non-specified research by its research staff has also been impacted, leaving little room for either 'blue skies' research or broader research topics. In light of this, and of the cost to the state and the Institute, of the current complex multi-stream funding structure, it would be desirable for the ESRI and Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to clarify the desired role of the Institute in this regard and match it to an appropriate, perhaps more coherent, state funding structure.

The panel is strongly of the view that the ESRI, given its expertise across both economic and social domains, is a critical resource for the state and that its position as an independent trusted voice in both short-term and longer-term cross-functional research should be given greater protection through an increase in core funding. The panel were of the view that, in the same way as funding is provided to

similar institutions in other jurisdictions, core grant-in-aid funding should comprise at least 50 per cent of total funding for the Institute. This would require strategic discussion to identify what programmes would more efficiently be funded by the grant-in-aid rather than in research programmes. Also, the ESRI would need to determine a clear strategy for the allocation of the grant-in-aid and how to ensure that policy relevance is maintained.

As noted in the Macroeconomics section in Section 5, there appears to be a strong interest among key stakeholders in the ESRI undertaking more medium-term outlook work. If this is to be done, it will require new central funding – likely from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and Department of Finance – and would have implications for work throughout the Institute, as it would draw on expertise from both the Social and Economic divisions. This funding could be provided through the grant-in-aid or through a new stream, potentially modelled on the Energy Policy Research Centre approach.

The Energy Policy Research Centre consortium model (see Energy section in Section 5) is a possible useful middle ground between multiple funders with multiple demands and a co-ordinated single stream of funding and may have more general applicability in a revised exchequer funding structure.

In terms of project funding, the ESRI, like many other public sector agencies, currently enjoys the privilege of the ‘Teckal Exemption’³ which means that public funders do not necessarily have to go through a public tendering process to commission work from the Institute. In many respects, this is a positive for the ESRI, as it means that it does not have to ‘compete’ with others for a portion of its work programme and instead can respond quickly to work demands. However, this means that there are risks for the ESRI in terms of experience of market engagement, pricing and output in these areas.

Membership subscriptions have been in place as a source of funds since the 1960s but have recently expanded, driven by the Council. Given the range of policy areas on which the ESRI undertakes research work, it would seem inevitable that issues might arise where some work is seen as favourable or hostile to the interests of some commercial funders. The Council is clearly conscious of this and of the need to carefully manage all such funding to ensure that there is no compromise of the Institute’s independence. However, even with the most careful and ethical management of this matter, issues of perception may arise and will need to be monitored carefully, particularly if this area of funding continues to expand.

With some exceptions, there is relatively little EU/international funding of ESRI work, related in part to the complexity and time demands of application processes. Advantages of such funding include involvement in European/international

³ In the 1999 judgment of Teckal (C-107/98) the European Court of Justice established an exemption from public procurement for the award of contracts by a public authority to a separate entity provided certain requirements were met.

research networks of generally high quality while working on issues of high EU policy relevance (which in most cases should align with Irish policy relevance). Such funding also usually offers more leeway in designing and altering research projects once the grant is won. While more work would be required upfront to get this type of funding, it would then require lower ongoing overhead work – through steering groups, etc. – than with the current funding streams.

It seems that the relatively low engagement with EU/international funding has a negative impact on the international networking and reputation of the ESRI as well as the practical impact of losing out on an available funding source. While there clearly is a balance to be drawn between the benefits of such funding and the difficulty of accessing it, there might be merit in an overall review of such funding opportunities being undertaken, drawing on the experience in some parts of the ESRI.

6.5 HUMAN RESOURCE CAPACITY

There have been some changes to the staffing structure of the Institute over the period under review. While overall numbers have remained relatively constant, the distribution has changed somewhat, with an increase in senior research officers and research assistants and a reduction in postdoctoral fellows and interns.

In 2019, temporary (contract) staff represented approximately 37 per cent of the workforce; this fell to 32 per cent in 2020, and fell again to 23 per cent in 2021. It was clarified that the nature of employment of junior researchers meant that turnover at this level is ongoing – however, the panel concluded that the rate of staff turnover in the Institute appears to be somewhat lower than in private industry or public bodies at present.

In our engagement with researchers, they were positively disposed towards the contract arrangements on offer (research assistants – two-year contracts, and postdocs – three-year contracts) and considered this to be as good as, if not better, than other organisations.

It was clear that senior researchers are very aware of the need to ensure that there are good opportunities for junior researchers in terms of career development. They see the ESRI as being very team-based with collegiate interaction across divisions. This was reinforced by the view of junior researchers that the Institute (and individuals working therein) had a very positive attitude towards research assistants and postdoc fellows – in terms of credits being provided on publications and the general treatment of junior researchers as members of the research team. The training and mentoring provided to junior staff was also highlighted positively.

In terms of broader working conditions, hybrid working (minimum one day a week attendance) has now become the norm in the Institute, as in many other workplaces, and is generally reported as working well, including by younger staff. It

is an open question, however, given the considerable emphasis on collegiality and team working, which was expressed by all, as to whether this form of working will eventually impact on the coherence of teams (or organisation structure) within the Institute. In this, the question is no different for the ESRI than it is for many other organisations.

One issue that was raised in our engagement related to the fact that there is a specific challenge in recruiting and holding modellers capable of working on COSMO, SWITCH and other key models. This, along with funding restrictions, may be leading to some models becoming out of date. This has the potential to be a significant risk to the organisation.

Additionally, although the Institute is currently viewed as an attractive employer, the relatively low level of international collaboration was identified as a threat to the standing, and potentially to the quality of work, of the organisation by some stakeholders and staff. The suggestion of establishing an international scientific board – referenced earlier in the Quality section – and revisiting the potential to compete for more EU funding are relevant in this regard.

The previous peer review raised a concern regarding critical dependency on key individuals within the Institute. Although this was explored and there is no doubt that certain individuals have broadly acknowledged expertise, there appears to have been considerable efforts made to address this through the alteration of the staffing profile and through widening the exposure of an increased number of researchers to public and stakeholder engagement. For example, the work of the Institute during Covid provided numerous examples where the demand for media appearance by individual researchers increased significantly.

SECTION 7

Relationship with Funders/Stakeholders

The Institute generally enjoys a positive relationship with a wide variety of funders who each value the expertise, independence and credibility of the staff and their research output.

During our engagement with funders and consumers, there was little indication of any friction in the relationships, notwithstanding some commentary in relation to the (understandable) tension between quality of output and speed of response. The myriad of governance arrangements in place is clearly managed well – despite it imposing a considerable overhead on senior staff within the Institute as indicated earlier.

SECTION 8

Strategic Alliances and International Work

The Institute has a strategic alliance with Trinity College Dublin, which delivers benefits to both organisations. On the ESRI side, the arrangement allows access to the TCD library, resulting in huge savings; and from the TCD perspective, ESRI researchers use the TCD affiliation in journal papers. The hope was that more collaboration would flow over time and that certainly happened with Growing Up in Ireland (GUI), The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) and the new master in economic policy programme.

In addition, there has been some collaboration between the Institute and the faculty of engineers at University College Cork (MaREI Institute) on energy matters. Outside of this, there is little structural collaboration with the academic world. It has been suggested a formal relationship with a university might assist in providing a more structured approach to the publication of research to academic standards.

One area of concern to the panel was the potential for diminishing visibility of the ESRI internationally, given the limited engagement of the Institute in large-scale EU-funded research. This is a risk to the future reputation of the ESRI and is something that should be rectified. It is appreciated that there is an overhead to this engagement in terms of applying for, obtaining and managing such funding, but it is suggested that given the experience of the ESRI in managing multiple funding streams already, this is not something that should pose a significant problem in terms of aptitude. In a context where it is also being suggested that reliance on such a large number of (domestic) funding streams should be reduced (through increase in grant-in-aid and a rebalancing of project and 'programme' activity), the capacity to engage more fully on an international market should be created.

SECTION 9

Concluding Comments

The ESRI plays a unique and highly respected role in the provision of soundly based research to support policy development in Ireland. From its deliberations, the review team formed the view that this reputation is well deserved and is widely shared among key stakeholders in government agencies, social partners, academic peers and others.

The management, research staff and support staff of the Institute clearly take great pride in this reputation and find the Institute a positive, and indeed inspiring, place to work.

The detailed conclusions from this review are set out in Section 5 in relation to each research area and in Section 6 against each of the main terms of reference given to the review team, with some additional comments on key relationships in Sections 7 and 8 – and will not be repeated here. There are, however, several underlying issues, with broader ramifications, that recurred in our discussions and which the review team would like to emphasise here, although some are referenced in the sections above:

The current funding model of the ESRI – marked by many separate streams of public funds – seems sub-optimal to the review team, both in terms of the high overhead costs, for the Institute and the public sector/exchequer, and the lack of overall prioritisation of public sector demand for research evidence. However, the current model does have the benefit of ensuring direct engagement between researchers and a wide range of state actors. It should be possible to address these issues more appropriately by redressing the balance of funding with a higher proportion, at least 50 per cent, coming from the overall grant-in-aid, and possibly grouping more of the individual funding streams into consortiums, based on the Energy Policy Research Centre model. This would reduce overheads, allow for a more coherent approach to the determination of research priorities, allow the ESRI to develop an appropriate balance between social and economic work, and, crucially, maintain the strong engagement with key players in the policy community.

The relatively low level of funding from EU and international funders was noted by stakeholders and researchers. The review team believes that there are significant benefits to be gained, beyond the funding itself, from engagement with international competitive funding processes. The team therefore urges that this matter be examined by ESRI management, and the necessary steps taken to ensure that the Institute is enabled to compete effectively for such funding.

The existing governance structures, with many research programme steering groups, reflects the current complexity of funding. With a revised funding system, it should be possible to radically reduce and refocus these structures, while being careful to ensure that voices external to the Institute, including those outside of 'official Ireland', are genuinely heard. A further governance initiative worth detailed consideration is the suggestion to establish an international advisory council of peers to provide continuous feedback on quality standards. This is something the Council of the Institute might wish to examine.

The review team noted a substantial demand from stakeholders for more medium-term outlook work in the Institute. This related to a specific call from multiple stakeholders for the revival of the Medium-Term Review, or something similar. But there was also a strong demand for more work that addressed deeper underlying issues on key policy challenges on, for example, housing, climate change, population ageing, public capital investment, etc., where the Institute could add more value to public debate and policy formation for the medium-term framework in which these issues need to be considered. The Institute's strong multidisciplinary approach across both the Social and Economic divisions places it in an excellent position to undertake more of this work. As noted earlier, this would require additional funding and should be a subject for discussion with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and Department of Finance.

Finally, the review team would recommend that the Council of the Institute consider the future of the Institute, perhaps on a ten-year horizon, taking into account the funding and governance issues raised above.

The review team would like to thank all those who met with them and provided very open and well-considered views, which immeasurably assisted the team's work. We would wish to express our support and admiration for the work being done at the Institute and the very strong work ethic and commitment to independent policy-relevant research that characterised the senior and junior staff that we met.

APPENDIX 1

Programme of the Review

ESRI Peer Review 2022: Schedule of Meetings held in Dublin Monday, 24 and Tuesday, 25 October 2022 <i>To improve the efficiency and scope of the review, the panel was broken into two teams for several sessions. The composition of the teams was as follows:</i> <i>Team 1 – Economics and Behaviour: Aidan O’Driscoll (Chair), Gemma Tetlow, Holger Görg</i> <i>Team 2 – Sociology: Niamh O’Donoghue (Chair), Bea Cantillon, Philippe Van Kerm</i>			
Monday 24 October	Peer Review Attendees	ESRI or Stakeholder Attendees	Topic
8.00–9.00	All	Alan Barrett and Heads of Division – John Curtis (Economic Analysis), Helen Russell (Social Research), Emer Smyth (Growing Up in Ireland)	Intros, Overview
9.00–9.45	All	Representatives from the ESRI Council: Sean O’Driscoll (Chair), former Chair and CEO of Glen Dimplex Group Anne O’Leary, Vice President EMEA Region, Meta Rowena Pecchenino, Professor of Economics, Maynooth University Katy Hayward, Professor of Political Sociology, Queen’s University Belfast Sandra McNally, Professor of Economics, University of Surrey	Overview
Meetings of the peer review team with ESRI research area leaders: <i>Team 1 – Economics and Behaviour: Aidan O’Driscoll (Chair), Gemma Tetlow, Holger Görg</i> <i>Team 2 – Sociology: Niamh O’Donoghue (Chair), Bea Cantillon, Philippe Van Kerm</i>			
9.45–10.15	Team 1	Kieran McQuinn, Martina Lawless	Macroeconomics
	Team 2	Emer Smyth, Selina McCoy	Education
10.15–10.45	Team 1	Iulia Siedschlag, Martina Lawless	Competitiveness, Trade and FDI
	Team 2	Emer Smyth	Growing Up in Ireland
10.45–11.00	Break		
11.00–11.30	Team 1	Seamus McGuinness	Labour Market and Skills

	Team 2	Sheelah Connolly, Anne Nolan	Health and Quality of Life
11.30–12.00	Team 1	John Curtis, Niall Farrell, Kelly de Bruin	Energy, Environment/Climate
	Team 2	Emma Quinn, Frances McGinnity	Migration, Integration and Demography
12.00–12.30	Team 1	Pete Lunn	Behavioural
	Team 2	Bertrand Maître, Helen Russell, Frances McGinnity	Social Inclusion and Equality
12.30–13.00	Team 1	Kieran McQuinn, Conor O’Toole	Housing
	Team 2	Karina Doorley	Taxation, Welfare and Pensions
13.00–14.00	Lunch		
Meetings of the peer review team stakeholders:			
<i>Team 1 – Economics and Behaviour: Aidan O’Driscoll (Chair), Gemma Tetlow, Holger Görg</i>			
<i>Team 2 – Sociology: Niamh O’Donoghue (Chair), Bea Cantillon, Philippe Van Kerm</i>			
14.00–14.40	Team 1	Brendan O'Connor, Principal Officer, Head of Macroeconomic Analysis and Forecasting, Department of Finance Eddie Casey, Chief Economist, Irish Fiscal Advisory Council	Macroeconomics
	Team 2	Arlene Forster, Chief Executive, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) Jacqueline Fallon, Director, Curriculum and Assessment, NCCA Anne Looney, Professor, Head of Institute of Education, Dublin City University	Education
14.40–15.20	Team 1	David C Hegarty, Assistant Secretary, Enterprise Strategy, Competitiveness and Evaluation Division, Department Enterprise, Trade, Employment Dermot Coates, Head of Enterprise Strategy (Principal), Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Competitiveness, Trade and FDI
	Team 2	Anna Visser, Principal Officer, Research & Evaluation Unit, Department of Children, Equality, Diversity, Integration and Youth	Growing Up in Ireland
15.20–15.35	Break		
15.35–16.15	Team 1	Claire Pyke, Assistant Principal Officer, Labour Market and Skills Unit, Enterprise Strategy, Competitiveness and Evaluation Division, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment Frank Walsh, Economist, University College Dublin, Low Pay Commission	Labour Market and Skills

	Team 2	<p>Tiago McCarthy, Assistant Principal Officer Economist, Department of Health</p> <p>Deirdre Coy, Senior Economist, Research Services and Policy Unit, Department of Health</p> <p>Robert Murphy, Senior Economist, Research Services and Policy Unit, Department of Health</p> <p>Christopher Ryan, Principal Officer, Research Services and Policy Unit, Department of Health</p> <p>Dr Eimear Cotter, Director, Environmental Protection Agency</p>	Health and Quality of Life
16.15–16.55	Team 1	<p>Aoife MacEvilly, Chairperson, Commission for the Regulation of Utilities</p> <p>Matthew McGann, Principal Officer Economist, Department of Finance</p>	Energy, Environment and Infrastructure/Climate
	Team 2	<p>Gurchand Singh, Chief Information Officer, Department of Justice</p> <p>Úna Ní Dhubhghaill, Principal Officer, International Protection Accommodation Policy and Anti-Racism Policy, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth</p>	Migration, Integration and Demography
16.55–17.30	Team 1	<p>Liam Delaney, Professor in Behavioural Science, London School of Economics</p> <p>Deirdre Watters, Head of Communications, Department of Health</p>	Behavioural
	Team 2	<p>Sinéad Gibney, Chief Commissioner, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC)</p> <p>Rosalyn Tamming, Head of Policy, Research and Public Affairs, National Disability Authority</p>	Social Inclusion and Equality
17.30–18.00	Peer review panel – reflections on Day 1		
19.15	Dinner		
Tuesday 25 October	Peer Review Attendees	Stakeholder Attendees	Topic
9.00–9.40	Team 1	<p>Maria Graham, Assistant Secretary General, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage</p> <p>Caren Gallagher, Head of Communications and Research, Residential Tenancies Board</p> <p>Brian Gallwey, Research Officer, Residential Tenancies Board</p>	Housing

	Team 2	<p>Ciarán Lawler, Assistant Secretary, Corporate, Department of Social Protection</p> <p>Denise O’Connell, Deputy Director, Parliamentary Budget Office, Houses of the Oireachtas (Parliament)</p> <p>Victor Pigott, Head of Socio-Economic Research, Parliamentary Budget Office</p>	Taxation, Welfare and Pensions
9.40–10.20	All Peer Review Panel	David Moloney, Secretary General, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform	Grant-in-Aid
10.20–11.00	All Peer Review Panel	<p>Eoghan Duffy, Principal Officer, Shared Island Unit, Department of the Taoiseach (Prime Minister)</p> <p>Nigel Clarke, Principal Officer, Economic Policy Unit, Department of the Taoiseach (Prime Minister)</p>	Shared Island work, plus broader
11.00–11.15	Tea/coffee break		
11.15–11.55	All Peer Review Panel	<p>ESRI early career researchers:</p> <p>Eoin Kenny, Research Assistant – Macroeconomics</p> <p>Eva Shiel, Research Assistant – Macroeconomics</p> <p>Harry Humes, Research Assistant – Health and Quality of Life</p> <p>Janez Kren, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Competitiveness, Trade and FDI</p> <p>Olga Poluektova, Postdoctoral Research Fellow – Behavioural Science</p> <p>Sarah Curristan, Postdoctoral Research Fellow – Social Inclusion and Equality</p>	Experience of working in the ESRI
11.55–12.35	All Peer Review Panel	<p>Social partners, media:</p> <p>Fergal O'Brien, Executive Director, Lobbying & Influence, Ibec</p> <p>Laura Bambrick, Head of Social Policy & Employment Affairs, Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)</p> <p>Cliff Taylor, Economics & Finance journalist, The Irish Times</p>	Impacts
12.35–13.30	Lunch		
13.30–15.30	Peer review panel deliberations		

APPENDIX 2

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The Institute reports to its Council (board) on the Institute's latest key performance indicators (KPIs), on a rolling five-year basis, up to and including the most recent half-year period. The peer review team reviewed a sample report of these KPIs under the following headings:

RESEARCH ACTIVITY/OUTPUT

- journal articles;
- Quarterly Economic Commentary research notes;
- Reports and other publications;
- chapters in reports and books;
- ESRI Working Papers;
- other research output such as indices reports, substantial interim reports, completed commissioned reports;
- ESRI Research Bulletins;
- conference/seminar presentations by ESRI staff members.

COMMUNICATION / DISSEMINATION

- website visits/downloads;
- media coverage;
- newspaper and magazine articles;
- Oireachtas mentions;
- Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube followers and engagement;
- direct communications with subscribers and engagement (newsletter, event and publication notifications).

CAPACITY

- staff numbers;
- expenditure on training.

FINANCIAL

- new (and renewed) programmes, projects and grant applications;
- pending programmes, tenders and grant applications;
- fixed overheads as a per cent of net income;
- sources of income;
- income to salary costs.

APPENDIX 3

IDEAS Ranking Table

IDEAS is the largest bibliographic database dedicated to economics and available freely on the internet. Based on RePEc, it indexes over 4,200,000 items of research, including over 3,800,000 that can be downloaded in full text. RePEc is a large volunteer effort to enhance the free dissemination of research in economics, which includes bibliographic metadata from over 2,000 participating archives, including all the major publishers and research outlets. IDEAS is just one of several services that use RePEc data. Rankings across authors and institutions are created monthly, factoring in measure of research quantity and perceived impact.

ESRI RANKING IN IRISH ECONOMICS (AS AN INSTITUTE)

Rank	W.Rank	Institution	Score	Authors	Author shares
1	[1]	School of Economics, University College Dublin Dublin, Ireland	1.19	44	38.6
2	[2]	Department of Economics, Trinity College Dublin Dublin, Ireland	2.3	67	36.89
3	[3]	Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) Dublin, Ireland	2.62	69	56.64
4	[4]	Central Bank of Ireland Dublin, Ireland	4.9	45	39.48
5	[5]	Department of Economics, Finance and Accounting, Maynooth University Maynooth, Ireland	5.68	19	18.79
6	[6]	School of Business, Trinity College Dublin Dublin, Ireland	6.88	5	3.88
7	[7]	Geary Institute, University College Dublin Dublin, Ireland	7.32	26	11.28

Source: <https://ideas.repec.org/top/top.ireland.html>

ESRI RANKING RELATIVE TO INTERNATIONAL THINK-TANKS

Rank	Institution	Score	Authors	Author shares
1	National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) Cambridge, Massachusetts (USA)	1.06	460	92.52
2	Institute of Labor Economics (IZA) Bonn, Germany	2.22	953	132
3	Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR) London, United Kingdom	3.77	359	35.33
4	Brookings Institution Washington, District of Columbia (USA)	4.85	38	25
5	ifo Institut - Leibniz-Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung an der Universität München e.V. München, Germany	5.32	168	126.72
6	Peter G. Peterson Institute for International Economics (IIE) Washington, District of Columbia (USA)	5.51	42	31.49
7	DIW Berlin (Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung) Berlin, Germany	5.63	144	97.45
8	Institutet för Näringslivsforskning (IFN) Stockholm, Sweden	9.25	97	61.21
9	Resources for the Future (RFF) Washington, District of Columbia (USA)	10.13	55	41.39
10	Motu: Economic & Public Policy Research Wellington, New Zealand	11.02	23	17.14
11	Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung (IAB) Nürnberg, Germany	12.72	67	53.62
12	Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) Dublin, Ireland	13.31	69	56.64
13	Centre de recherche en Économie (OFCE), Sciences économiques, Sciences Po Paris, France	14.33	50	29.04
14	Leibniz-Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung Halle (IWH) Halle, Germany	14.59	52	34.63

Source: <https://ideas.repec.org/top/top.ttanks.html>

APPENDIX 4

Selected Funders of Research Areas

ESRI Research Area	Main Funders
Behavioural Research	Department of the Taoiseach Department of Health Department of Agriculture Department of Finance Environmental Protection Agency Health Service Executive Competition and Consumer Protection Commission Health Insurance Authority Sustainable Energy Authority National Transport Authority Irish Research Council
Competitiveness, Trade and FDI	International competitive research awards mainly from the European Commission Department of the Taoiseach Department of Finance and the Revenue Commissioners Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment; InterTradeIreland Environmental Protection Agency
Education	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth National Disability Authority Shared Island Unit Department of Environment, Climate and Communications/ComReg National Council for Special Education Educate Together Joint Managerial Body
Energy, Environment and Infrastructure (including Climate)	Energy: Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), Commission for Regulation of Utilities, ESB, Gas Networks Ireland, EirGrid, SSE Ireland, Viridian/Energia, Terra Solar, Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, Horizon 2020 Climate: DECC, Department of Finance, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Climate Change Advisory Council Environment: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, EPA Communications: Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) and DECC
Growing Up in Ireland	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
Housing and property market research activity	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Residential Tenancies Board Pensions Council Central Statistics Office Department of Finance

Health and Quality of Life	Department of Health HSE Department of the Taoiseach Shared Island Initiative Environmental Protection Agency Institute of Public Health Health Research Board Irish Cancer Society
Labour Market and Skills	Low Pay Commission Department of Rural and Community Development CHAISE – Erasmus EEA – Norway grant Department of Social Protection Shared Island Unit Ibec Horizon 2020 Pobal Queen’s University Belfast Trinity teaching Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
Macroeconomics	Department of Finance Revenue Commissioners Department of Housing Rental Tenancies Board Ibec Shared Island Unit of the Department of the Taoiseach
Migration, Integration and Demography research area	EU Asylum Migration and Integration Fund with 5% co-financing from the Department of Justice
Social Inclusion and Equality	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Pobal Department of Social Protection Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC), Department of Justice National Disability Authority Community Foundation for Ireland One off project funding , e.g. Women in Finance Project (finance industry bodies – Ibec, Banking and Payments Federation, Insurance Ireland) Public Appointments Service Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Department of Agriculture Shared Island Unit, Department of the Taoiseach
Tax, Welfare and Pensions	Department of Social Protection Department of Health Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Department of Finance Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Parliamentary Budget Office Joint Research Centre Horizon 2020 ROCKWOOL Foundation Directorate-General for Employment



ECONOMIC & SOCIAL
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

CATION SKILLS & TRAINING POVERTY SOCIAL DISADVANTAGE TAX MOD
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