



Newsletter, 2023

MU Economics Department



Dear Colleagues, Alumni, Students and Friends of the Economics Department,

Recently, I was a guest speaker in a year-long module on anti-racism offered by the Anthropology Department. I gave the closing lecture, so by the time I met the class, the students were already knowledgeable about the history, sociology, and anthropology of racism. My job was to give an economist's perspective on racism which I had gained while working on a [research project](#) on affirmative action.

This invite made me consider what I could achieve in the final two-hours of the module. 'What is your educational philosophy?' is a standard question in academic job interviews that often triggers buzzword answers but is critical to define for ourselves. My philosophy seems to evolve over the years, but one thing stays constant: It is truly rewarding when students gain a new perspective to view issues of critical significance like racism. I appreciated the opportunity to be able to demonstrate to students outside of my area, that economics is a discipline of thought rather than a collection of topics such as inflation, unemployment... Economics opens a window with light from a new angle.

In this newsletter, I am thrilled to share with you the exciting developments in research, teaching, learning and the wider educational activities of the Department of Economics.

The newsletter also contains a spotlight piece on Dr Olive Sweetman who is the incoming Head of the Department of Economics.

Best Wishes, Tuvana

How do Crowds Affect the Performance of Football Teams?



New England Patriot fans hold up a sign 'Noise' during the AFC Championship Game at Gillette Stadium on January 22, 2012, in Foxboro, Massachusetts. Photo: Rob Tringali
Source: Getty Images

When Leinster were beaten by La Rochelle in this year's Champions Cup Final in the Aviva Stadium, [some pundits felt](#) that at least part of the problem was the lack of support from Leinster fans. In recent years, atmosphere has also been [cited by Arsene Wenger](#) as the key reason for Liverpool's remarkable European record. But is it realistic to think that the noise made by crowds can have an impact on teams' performances?

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many sporting events which would typically take place in front of tens of thousands of spectators were played behind closed doors or with just a handful of supporters due to lock down restrictions. This has given researchers the opportunity to examine the effect of crowds (or a lack of crowds) on the performance of teams.

Research by **Dr Alex Farnell** examines whether the presence of a noisy crowd at an NFL game affects the ability of a Quarterback to fool the opposition defence and to communicate with his own offence. Alex finds some evidence that a quieter, empty stadium does offer the away team's Quarterback the opportunity to trick home defences, an opportunity not afforded to them during ordinarily noisy games. This suggests that promoting a loud atmosphere could in fact help NFL teams to win games.

[Here](#) is the full article.

Dr Aedín Doris at the Oireachtas Committee



Dr Aedín Doris addressed the Oireachtas Committee on Budgetary Oversight meeting. She was invited to provide expert opinion on the Commission on Taxation and Welfare Report. Her contribution begins at min 34:40 [here](#).

Welcome to First Cohort of BA International Economics Students



[BA International Economics](#) is a four-year course which provides deep understanding of the workings of the global economy, how trade and assets flow between countries, how monetary relations operate on an international scale and how financial crises spread. In the third year of the programme, students study abroad, or they undertake work placement.

In Light of the Evidence: Economic, Legal, Social, and Political Perspectives on Public Policy



The Department hosted a multidisciplinary conference on public policy which brought public servants, academics, and students together to discuss key issues in health, education, and agricultural policies.

Prof Alan Barrett from Economic and Social Research Institute delivered the keynote speech. President Prof Eeva Leinonen gave the opening remarks.

Many thanks to all our speakers and over one hundred attendees, and to Tracy Travers and Prof Rowena Pecchenino for organizing the event!



Is the Health of Irish Population Declining?



Irish residents were asked to rate their own health in the 2011 census and then again in the 2022 census. **Dr Irene Mosca's** article in *The Journal* notes some encouraging findings for the older population, but the findings are less encouraging for the rest of the population. See the full article [here](#) to find out about what might be driving these results.

Gender Pay Gap Reporting: New Obligations on Employers



Under new legislation, companies with more than 250 workers are obliged to publish information about their gender pay gaps on their websites. Over the past year, we have been hearing a lot about the mean gender pay gaps in various companies based in Ireland.

[Here](#) is **Dr Aedín Doris'** article for *The Journal* in which she explains that these figures do not tell us about wage discrimination, but they do uncover some worrying trends about power structures within companies.

Does Motherhood Explain the Gender Pay Gap?



Dr Aedín Doris, Prof Donal O'Neill and Dr Olive Sweetman examined the timing and causes of the gender wage gap for Irish university graduates. When compared like with like, wages of men and women are similar immediately after graduation, but a substantial wage gap soon emerges. This gap is particularly evident for women with children, and it's driven by a 27 percent fall in earnings immediately after childbirth. By contrast, there is no reduction in earnings around childbirth for men. Here is [Irish Times](#) reporting on this research article. A full copy of the paper is available [here](#).

Secondary School Support Programme



Dr Bruno Morando created an engaging [video](#) for secondary school students about economic, social and environmental sustainability in the context of Irish agriculture. This video discusses what the future holds for our agricultural sector.

Also check out Bruno's [publication](#) in the *World Bank Economic Review* on subsistence farming in Uganda.

Postgraduate Alumni Reunion



It was great to catch up with our postgraduate Economics alumni. A special thanks to MU Development and Alumni Relations Office for organising a wonderful event!

You are Invited to Join!

Maynooth Economics Society



The society brings together people interested in Economics in a friendly and fun environment. Whether you are an economics student or simply studying in Maynooth and are interested in getting involved, the society would love to have you as a member. You may also consider putting yourself forward as a committee member this September.

economics@mulife.ie

School Visits to the Economics Department



In the 2022-23 academic year, the Department visited ten secondary schools and welcomed secondary school students to the Maynooth University campus.

If you would like to arrange a visit or host a member of the Department, please email: sandra.doherty@mu.ie

Student Awards, 2023

We are delighted to announce the following annual awards:

Goodbody's Outstanding Student Awards for BA Arts Economics

Pavithra Vikram Arcot (1st year)

Darragh Kieran Bolger (2nd year)

Breda Ellen O'Toole (final year)

Citco's Outstanding Student Awards for BSc Economics

Ross Halpin (first year)

Denis Conniffe Award for Top Place in Econometrics

Joy Bridget Farrell (final year)

Jobseeker's Benefit Linked to Past Earnings?

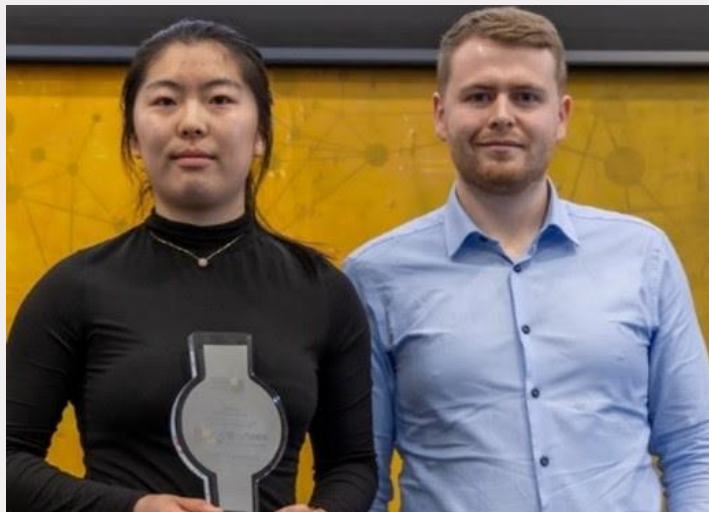


In November 2022, the Minister of Social Protection brought forward a [proposal](#) to reform the social welfare system. If you happen to find yourself unemployed, according to the proposal, your jobseeker's benefit would be high if your past earnings were high.

Critics question the fairness of such an approach and suggest that it could lead to disincentives to return to work.

Following the announcement, **Dr Aedín Doris** from the Department of Economics was interviewed on Newstalk's The Hard Shoulder to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this approach and whether it brings us in line with other European countries. You can listen to the interview [here](#).

The Young Economist of the Year Award Goes to . . .



Congratulations to **Junjia Li** of the Institute of Education for her paper “Refugee Immigrants: Assets or Burdens? What policies should we adopt?”

Prof Rowena Pecchenino is one of the founding figures of YEOTY awards. Since its launch in 2012, more than 25,000 pupils participated in the YEOTY competitions. **Ciaran Murphy** represented the Economics Department the award ceremony.

Spotlight on the Incoming Head of the Department of Economics:

Dr Olive Sweetman



Dr Olive Sweetman obtained her PhD from the University of Iowa in 1994. Her main interests are in the areas of labour economics and the economics of education. She has published articles examining the gender and racial wage gap, single-sex education, inequality, and intergenerational mobility. Her

research has been published in leading international economics journals including the Journal of Economic Inequality, Journal of Human Resources, Labour Economics, the Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics, the Economics of Education Review and the IZA Journal of Labor Economics. She was a member of the board of Combat Poverty from 2003-2006 and served as editor of the Economic and Social Review from 2010-2013. She currently serves as the Chairperson of the Economic and Social Studies Council.

The Department of Economics will prosper further under the leadership of Olive in research and teaching as well as in input to research-lead Irish economic and socioeconomic policy.



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