SOCIAL JUSTICE IRELAND

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Managing Change to Build a Just Society – Policy Outcomes for a New Social Contract

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Edited by
Susanne Rogers
John McGeady

Social Justice Ireland

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1-3 Burton Hall Road
Sandyford
Dublin 18
D18 A094
Ireland
Telephone: 01-290 3597
e-mail: secretary@socialjustice.ie
website: www.socialjustice.ie

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2023	A Just Transition

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTRIBUTORS

Matthew Donoghue is an Assistant Professor of Social Policy, in the School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, University College Dublin

Aoife Ní Lochlainn is Policy and Advocacy Manager at the Irish Environmental Network

Ciarán Nugent is an Economist at the Nevin Economic Research Institute

Seán Ó Riain is Professor of Sociology at the National University of Ireland Maynooth.

INTRODUCTION

Ireland is going through several major transitions, each of which is only going to deepen with time. While much is changing, many of the problems facing our society are long-standing: inequality, poverty, and under-investment in our social infrastructure remain major challenges. Although the economy in Ireland has experienced record growth since the pandemic, infrastructure and services in areas such as housing, healthcare and public transport are far below the levels and standards that would be expected in a normally functioning society. Likewise, developments in areas such as taxation, participation and sustainability fall below the minimum standards.

Policy makers have an opportunity to marry both prudence and ambition. It would also be prudent for Government to take the long-term view when it comes to investment in our infrastructure, social services, and income adequacy. Sustainable long-term policies will have enduring benefits for everyone, while a failure of ambition will only result in more pressure on an already creaking system, simply compounding problems. A robust and adequately resourced social and economic infrastructure is as important as sound fiscal policy for our nation's long-term stability and success. Given the scale of the crises facing our country, immediate and significant investment is required in housing, infrastructure, social services, renewable energy and income adequacy. None of this is beyond our capacity.

The scale of change has been underestimated and so, poorly managed to date. At every turn, there are examples of failures of public policy to provide the infrastructure required to keep pace with population growth. This failure has been compounded by rising unplanned immigration, providing a convenient scapegoat for the systemic pressures being widely experienced. These infrastructure deficits are compounded by difficulties in recruiting and retaining key personnel to deliver expanded and more specialised public services across health and education, policing and defence, caring and public administration.

Measures that build confidence in the capacity of policy makers to remedy infrastructure deficits and improve the availability and quality of services would increase trust and reduce the sense of alienation. A new social contract, shaped by a renewed social dialogue, would provide such a pathway. Now is the time for creative thinking about what society should look like. Business as usual is no longer tenable. It is *Social Justice Ireland's* contention that a new social contract

is required to address the core challenges now facing society, with real citizen engagement at the core of such a contract. *Social Justice Ireland's* proposals would see public policy focused on simultaneously delivering five outcomes as part of that a new social contract: a vibrant economy; decent infrastructure and services; just taxation; good governance; and sustainability.

Managing change effectively will allow us to harness the benefits of transition to transform both our society and our economy. All of this will require new approaches to the world of work as well as recognition of much of the work done in society that goes unpaid, under-recognised and undervalued. It will also require recognition that our tax and welfare systems are not fit for purpose in the twenty-first century. Ultimately, *Social Justice Ireland* argues that the social welfare system and the income tax credits system should be replaced by a Universal Basic Income which would be far more appropriate for today's economy. A new social contract will also require that climate action be urgently prioritised; to date the policy response has been wholly inadequate. The same can be said of the ineffectual response to the current housing crisis. Investment in infrastructure and services is needed to develop a thriving economy. Likewise, just taxation is required to fund this. Good governance is needed to ensure people have a say in shaping the decisions that impact them. Finally, all Government policy must be sustainable; environmentally, economically and socially.

Ultimately only social justice and the wellbeing of everybody in our country, whether born here or newly arrived, will ensure a stable, healthy, and open society. Achieving these five goals requires that we recognise that it is time for a new approach if we are to manage these transitions and deliver change.

These papers were originally presented at a conference organised by *Social Justice Ireland* on the theme: Managing Change to Build a Just Society – Policy Outcomes for a New Social Contract.

Social Justice Ireland expresses its deep gratitude to the authors of the following chapters who made this publication possible. They brought a great deal of experience, research, knowledge and wisdom to their task and contributed their time and obvious talent to preparing these chapters.

This work is partly supported by the SSNO funding scheme of the Department of Rural and Community Development and Pobal. A special 'thank you' to them.

Social Justice Ireland advances the lives of people and communities through providing independent social analysis and evidence-based policy development

to create a sustainable future for every member of society and for society as a whole. We work to build a just society through developing and delivering credible analysis and policy to improve society and the lives of people. We identify sustainable options for the future and outline viable pathways forward. In all of this, we focus on human rights and the common good. This publication is a contribution to this process.

In presenting these chapters we do not attempt to cover all questions that arise around this topic. This volume is offered as a contribution to the ongoing public debate around these and related issues. We trust that those engaged in shaping Ireland's future for the coming decades will find it of value.

Susanne Rogers

John McGeady

Managing Change to Build a Just Society – Policy Outcomes for a New Social Contract

Social Justice Ireland

1. Labour market outcomes of third level graduates in high-income EU members. Is Father's education important?[1]

Ciarán Nugent

Executive Summary

With the expansion of third level education and it's growing importance for individuals in the labour market, for firms and for macroeconomic development this report presents evidence of labour market outcomes of third level graduates with details by gender and time since graduation. The report concludes with a special focus on the outcomes of graduates by social origin as proxied by father's education in 13 high-income EU countries.

Every country in the sample increased the number and share of tertiary graduates in employment over the past two to three decades. In all 13 countries, the pace of growth was faster for women. In the majority of countries, the majority of this growth has happened since the great financial crisis (UK, Sweden, Portugal, Austria, the Netherlands, France and Germany).

The share of tertiary graduates in overall employment within the 20-64 year bracket has since the 1990's more than doubled in seven of the countries (Ireland, Spain, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Finland and the UK). Italy has the lowest share of third level graduates in employment in 2019 by some margin at 23.4%. This was followed by Portugal (29.1%) and Germany (30.8%). Ireland has the highest share of third level graduates in overall employment (49.9%), followed by Finland (47.0%), Belgium (46.9%), the UK (46.8%) and Sweden (44.6%).

For each country and for every year under consideration there is a strong association between the likeliness of being employed and education level i.e. the group with the least amount of years of education/training are least likely

[1] Previously published https://www.nerinstitute.net/. The research conducted in this publication was funded by the Irish Research Council under grant number [EBPPG/2021/67] in collaboration with the NERI and National University of Ireland Maynooth.

to be in employment and the group with higher education are most likely to be in employment.

Third level graduates are least likely to be in employment in Italy (78.9%), Spain (80.3%), France (83.3%) and Belgium (83.8%). In Denmark, Italy and Portugal the employment rates of third level graduates are actually lower than in the 1990s, while Ireland has caught up from a low base to around mid-table (78.7% to 85.3%). By 2019, Ireland and Spain the employment rate of third level graduates had yet to recover fully from the effects of the financial crisis of 2008.

Despite gender disparities in attainment and employment share, the employment rate for male graduates is higher than that of women in every country. Sweden and Portugal have the most equal employment rate outcomes with gaps below 2 pp (89.6% and 88.2% vs 86.6% and 84.8%). In Ireland, despite the share of females in the high education group in female employment having increased by most since 1992 (69.9% to 81.5%), the Irish labour market has the largest employment gap between genders in the tertiary educated group in 2019 (89.8% vs 81.5% or 8.4pp).

At the same time, in almost every country employment rates in the bracket of the lowest formal education levels (albeit as a group, it is falling as a share of the population across the board) have been trending downwards or are at the very least lower than their peak since 1997. In Ireland for instance, the employment rate in 2007 for under 40's in the lowest bracket of formal education was 47.0%, has subsequently fallen to just 21.3% by 2019, the lowest in the sample.

In 2019, on average (unweighted) across 12 countries (excluding the UK) 68.9% of third level graduates (25-59) are in matched 'high-end' employment (ISCO1-3), 19.7% are in employment but overqualified and 11% are inactive. The 2005 and 2011 unweighted averages are remarkably similar (68.3% and 69.0%) though they obscure significant heterogeneity in country level trends across the sample.

Sweden is the top performer with 79.1% of third level graduates in Managerial/Professional/Technician roles, followed by Portugal at 78.8%, Germany at 73.2% and the Netherlands at 73.0%. Graduates in Spain are least likely to be in high-end employment at 51.8%, followed by Ireland at 54.5%.

Germany is an outlier in the gender gap for high-end employment for graduates at 12.2 pp (79.0% vs 66.8%) with the Netherlands in second place (9 pp) and France and Austria in joint third (8.8 pp). The share of both Irish male and

female graduates in employment but overqualified increased by most in the sample between 2005 and 2019 (10.8 and 9.9 pp respectively).

With the exceptions of Finland and Sweden in 2019, third level graduates whose fathers also had third level qualifications are more likely to be in high-end employment than those whose fathers were in the middle bracket of formal education. With the exception of the Netherlands, the relationship also holds when comparing graduates whose fathers were in the middle bracket of formal education versus those whose fathers were in the lowest bracket.

In every country between 2005 and 2011, with the exception of Ireland, the high-end employment gap between graduates with fathers in the highest and lowest brackets of formal education background widened. Between 2011 and 2019, there was no exception to this trend such that every country between 2005 and 2019 has seen an increased gap of securing high-end employment between graduate children from backgrounds in high versus low education brackets. In 2019, the unweighted average share in the sample of graduates (excluding the UK) in high end jobs from highly educated backgrounds was 75.6%, 70.7% for those from backgrounds in the middle bracket of formal education and 63.5% for those from backgrounds in the lower bracket. In 2005, the same figures were 68.8%, 69.2% and 65.2%.

For the groups whose fathers had third level qualifications, graduates in Portugal were most likely to be in high-end employment commensurate with their education level (84.1%), followed by Sweden (82.4%), France (81.8%) and the Netherlands (80.6%) and least likely in Spain (62.7%), Ireland (66.0%) and Austria (70.7%).

The high-end employment gap between graduates from high versus low formal educational backgrounds is widest in 2019 in Germany (77.4% vs 56.8% or 20.7 pp), Ireland (66.0% vs 47.4% or 18.6 pp), Austria (70.7% vs 54.4% or 16.3 pp) and France (81.8% vs 66.3% or 15.4 pp). In 2019, Irish graduates whose fathers were in the low formal education bracket were least likely to be in high-end employment in the sample (47.4%). Third level graduates in Ireland with father's in the lowest education bracket saw the share in high-end employment fall by most between 2005 and 2019 (15.2 pp).

> *'graduates in Portugal were most likely to be in high-end employment commensurate with their education level'*

Introduction

The expansion of third level education is considered by some policymakers a goal in itself with inherent value that goes beyond narrow considerations related to work and material living standards. In the World Health organisation's Human Development Index for example, educational attainment is one of three indicators used to rank countries by their level of development.

From an economic perspective, workers with higher education levels have higher earnings potential and contribute to higher productivity in firms. On a macro level, more highly-educated workers are associated with higher value-added activities, productivity, competitiveness and they by extension drive economic development and contribute to higher aggregate living standards. Third level educational attainment is also considered an equaliser of opportunities between individuals of different social backgrounds and an important (if not the most important) vehicle for social mobility. That these are achievable goals is important for social cohesion in developed countries and increasingly unequal societies where narratives around the productive benefits of a meritocratic regime legitimise unequal outcomes.

In NERI Report 33, The Expansion of Third level education and Intergenerational Transmission of Educational attainment in high-income EU countries I presented evidence from the Labour Force Survey on this expansion in 13 countries over the past three decades. In the majority of countries, the absolute number of adults with third level qualifications has doubled alongside strong increases in the share of adults (and women in particular) with third level qualifications across the board. The report also includes evidence from the Survey in Income and Living Conditions (SILC) of a narrowing gap of third level educational attainment by social origin (as proxied by father's education) during this unprecedented expansion of third level education across the sample (with the exceptions of Austria and Germany).

In this related report I present evidence from the EU Labour Force Survey of the growing share of third level graduates in employment in the same sample of 13 high-income EU countries as well as evidence of changing relative rates of employment by educational attainment and the growing importance of third level on an individual level to secure employment. In broad terms the report also presents data on the growth in 'high-end' employment (commensurate with third level education entry requirements) in each country as well as as a share of overall employment.

Following on from the first NERI report in this series 'Overqualification in high-income EU members' (no.32) I create a three-category labour market outcome variable for third level graduates;

1) employed in a high-end occupation (ISCO categories 1-3, Managers, Professionals and Associate Professional and Technicians),
2) employed but overqualified (ISCO 4-9) and
3) inactive.

Using ad-hoc modules of the Survey on Income and Living Conditions on intergenerational transmission of disadvantage in 2005, 2011 and 2019 I present the evidence of changing outcomes of third level graduates on a national level and by gender.

Overqualification/vertical mismatch can be costly for individuals, can negatively affect workers through lower job satisfaction and is associated with lower returns to education in the form of earnings. On a macro level it also undermines potential growth with human capital underutilised and arguably from a policy perspective could indicate that government spending/investment may yield better returns elsewhere.

ISCO-08 major groups	Skill level
Managers	3+4
Professionals	4 (ISCED level 5a or higher)
Technician and Associate Professional	3 (ISCED level 5b)
Clerical support workers	
2 (ISCED level 2, 3, 4)	
Service and sales workers	
Skilled agricultural, forestry, & fishery workers	
Craft and related trades workers	
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	
Elementary occupations	1 (ISCED level 1)

This report measures overqualification using the job evaluation approach. An individual is overqualified (vertical mismatch) if they have a tertiary education (International Standard Classification of Education or ISCED 5+) but work in an occupation that does not require that level of training (International Standard

Classification of Occupations or ISCO 4-9).[2] For example, an MA graduate in any field working in a supermarket in a clerical or sales role is overqualified for their position. The broad categories in ISCO are defined and grouped by minimum educational entry requirements to secure a job in those occupations.

The report also presents labour market outcomes for graduate groups 5 or more years and 10 or more years since completion of their studies.

Finally, I present the evidence of the labour market outcomes of graduates by their social origin (as proxied by father's education).

Third level graduates and employment. Evidence from the EU Labour Force Survey

Table 1: Tertiary graduates in employment, 20-64, '000, all

	1992	1997	2002	2007	2012	2019
Belgium	1,018.4	1,240.2	1,382.1	1,648.3	1,849.7	2,205.9
Denmark	478.4	646.7	755.9	787.1	854.2	1,057.8
Germany	7,358.2	8,409.7	8,289.7	9,420.2	11,119.3	12,325.3
Ireland	249.1	385.1	479.2	766.2	850.5	1,086.4
Spain	2,225.2	3,245.6	4,932.1	6,781.7	6,962.7	8,571.5
France	:	4,749.3	6,434.5	7,641.6	8,955.3	11,424.1
Italy	1,736.8	2,066.9	2,774.9	3,590.9	4,171.1	5,281.3
Netherlands	:	1,770.2	1,987.1	2,389.8	2,690.6	3,367.6
Austria	:	323.5	661.7	689.3	818.1	1,528.1
Portugal	509.7	526.6	505.8	709.2	912.9	1,341.1
Finland	:	487.8	798.2	893.7	968.2	1,132.5
Sweden	:	1,065.8	1,108.9	1,369.7	1,593.0	2,138.1
UK	5,017.8	6,564.7	7,591.4	9,406.1	11,389.7	14,227.6

[2] International Standard Classification of Education-11 0. Early childhood education 1. Primary education 2. Lower secondary education 3. Upper secondary education 4. Post-secondary non-tertiary education 5. Short-cycle tertiary education 6. Bachelor's or equivalent level 7. Master's or equivalent level 8. Doctoral or equivalent level

Table 2: Tertiary graduates in employment, 20-64, '000, Male

	1992	1997	2002	2007	2012	2019
Belgium	545.2	636.5	696.6	806.3	878.9	1,015.0
Denmark	243.1	333.9	362.6	373.7	377.8	475.6
Germany	4,974.2	5,486.9	5,169.0	5,596.6	6,214.5	6,926.3
Ireland	142.7	204.7	236.6	371.1	399.9	517.8
Spain	1,314.8	1,827.0	2,665.9	3,493.5	3,449.0	4,122.5
France	:	2,414.5	3,164.6	3,659.5	4,266.7	5,271.9
Italy	1,051.6	1,174.5	1,487.7	1,748.5	1,939.4	2,353.2
Netherlands	:	1,036.9	1,138.9	1,299.2	1,413.8	1,688.5
Austria	:	192.0	362.0	409.4	454.6	790.5
Portugal	225.0	227.2	194.3	284.3	365.1	528.9
Finland	:	253.1	364.5	394.4	419.8	490.0
Sweden	:	500.0	483.8	596.7	686.0	918.5
UK	2,867.7	3,657.4	3,977.2	4,803.6	5,748.1	6,904.1

Table 3: Tertiary graduates in employment, 20-64, '000, Female

	1992	1997	2002	2007	2012	2019
Belgium	473.2	603.7	685.5	841.9	970.7	1,191.0
Denmark	235.3	312.8	393.3	413.4	476.4	582.1
Germany	2,384.0	2,922.8	3,120.7	3,823.6	4,904.7	5,399.0
Ireland	106.4	180.5	242.6	395.1	450.6	568.7
Spain	910.4	1,418.6	2,266.2	3,288.1	3,513.7	4,449.0
France	:	2,334.8	3,269.9	3,982.0	4,688.6	6,152.2
Italy	685.2	892.4	1,287.2	1,842.4	2,231.7	2,928.1
Netherlands	:	733.3	848.2	1,090.6	1,276.8	1,679.1
Austria	:	131.5	299.7	279.8	363.4	737.6
Portugal	284.7	299.4	311.5	424.9	547.8	812.3
Finland	:	234.7	433.7	499.3	548.4	642.5
Sweden	:	565.8	625.1	773.1	907.0	1,219.6
UK	2,150.1	2,907.3	3,614.2	4,602.5	5,641.6	7,323.5

Every country in the sample increased their number and share of tertiary graduates in employment over the past generation. In all 13 countries, the pace of growth was faster for women since the 1990s. There were over 4 times as many tertiary graduates in employment in Ireland in 2019 as there were in 1992, an additional 760,000 (460,000 of which were female). Spain similarly had almost 4 times as many graduates, increasing by 6.3 million from 2.2 to 8.5, with the addition of 3.6 million females. Other than in Germany and the Netherlands (when considered from 1997), every country in this sample of high-income EU countries has at a minimum doubled the number of third level graduates in employment. The UK increased by 9 million their number of third level educated workers to 14.2 million, giving them the highest number in the sample in 2019, this was followed by Germany (12.3 million) and France (11.4 million).

In a majority of countries, the bulk of this growth has happened since the great financial crisis (UK, Sweden, Portugal, Austria,[3] the Netherlands, France and Germany). In the UK, the increase in female graduates in employment has been 600,000 ahead of the growth in male graduates in employment since 2007 (2.7 million vs 2.1 million). In Spain and Italy since 2007 approximately 64% of the increase in tertiary graduates in employment has been women, with corresponding figures of 63% in Belgium, 62% in Denmark and 61% in Portugal.

The share of tertiary graduates in employment within the 20-64 year bracket more than doubled in seven of the countries (Ireland, Spain, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Finland and the UK). Italy has the lowest share of third level graduates in employment in 2019 by some margin at 23.4%. This was followed by Portugal (29.1%) and Germany (30.8%), where growth has been slowest over the period (9.6 pp). On the other hand, Ireland has the highest share of third level graduates in employment (49.9%), followed by Finland (47.0%), Belgium (46.9%), the UK (46.8%) and Sweden (44.6%).

'Ireland has the highest share of third level graduates in employment'

[3] A large jump in the number of third level graduates in Austria occurs in 2014 and is a result of a change in ISCO categories specific to Austria

Chart 1: Tertiary Educated in Employment (ISCED 5-8), 20-64, %

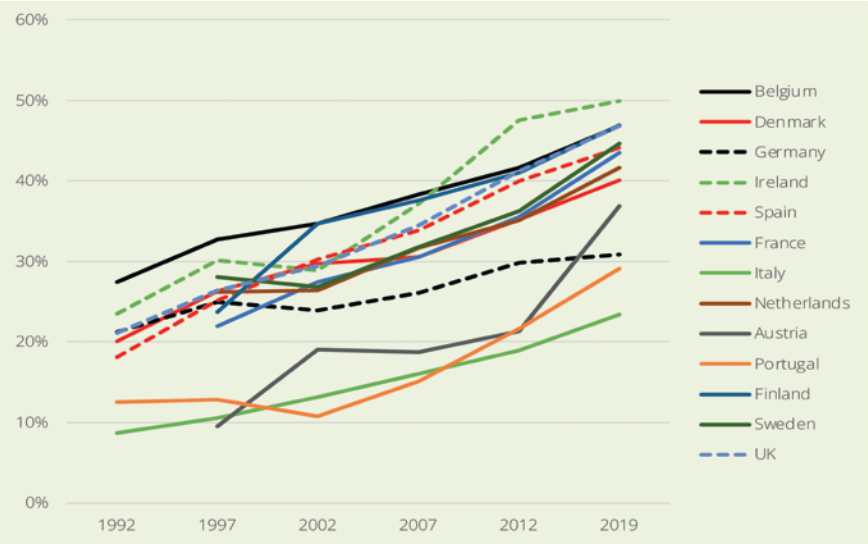


Chart 2: Tertiary Educated in Employment (ISCED 5-8), 20-64, M, %

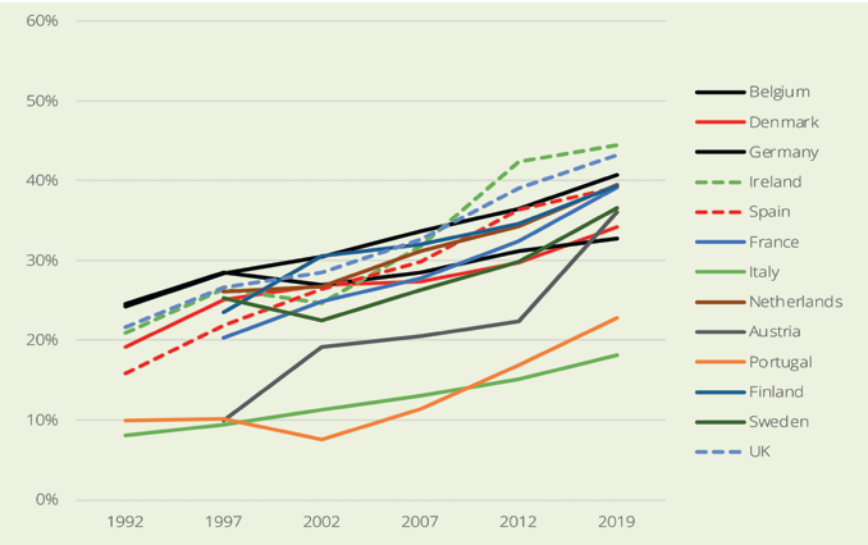
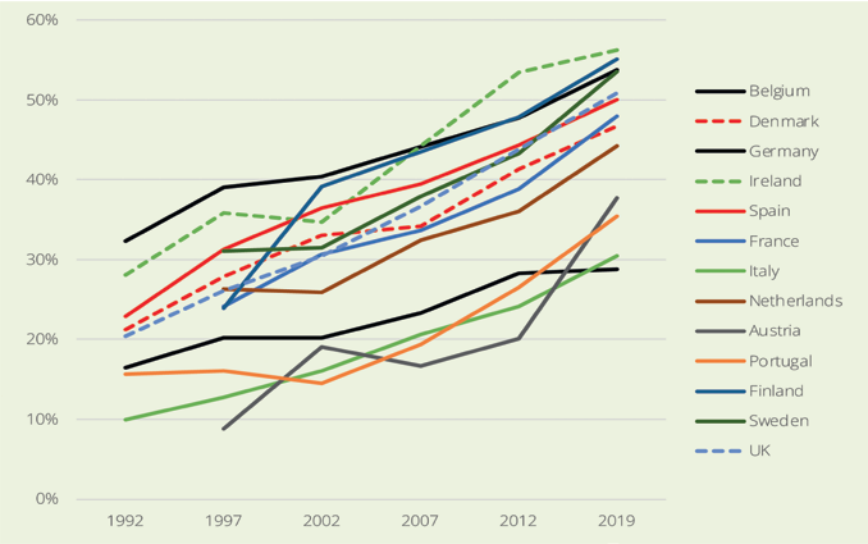


Chart 3: Tertiary Educated in Employment (ISCED 5-8), 20-64, F, %



The country with the highest share of tertiary graduates in male employment is again Ireland at 44.4%, a more than doubling of the share since 1992 (20.9%), followed by the UK (43.2%) and Belgium (40.7%). Italy also has the lowest share of male workers with tertiary education (18.2%), followed by Portugal (22.8%). Nevertheless, both Italy and Portugal have doubled the share of male workers in the highly educated category since the nineties. Male employment in Spain has steadily grown from having among the lowest shares in 1992 (15.9%) to being just 5 pp below the share in Ireland at 39.1%, a 23 pp increase.

German females in employment are the least likely in the sample to have third level education (28.2%), followed by Italy (30.4%). Of the thirteen countries considered, women with higher education made up over half of female employment in 2019 in six of them; Ireland (56.2%), Finland (55.1%), Belgium (53.8%), Sweden (53.6%), the UK (50.8%) and Spain (50.1%). Other than in the Netherlands, Belgium and Sweden the share of female workers with higher education has doubled in every country since the 1990s.

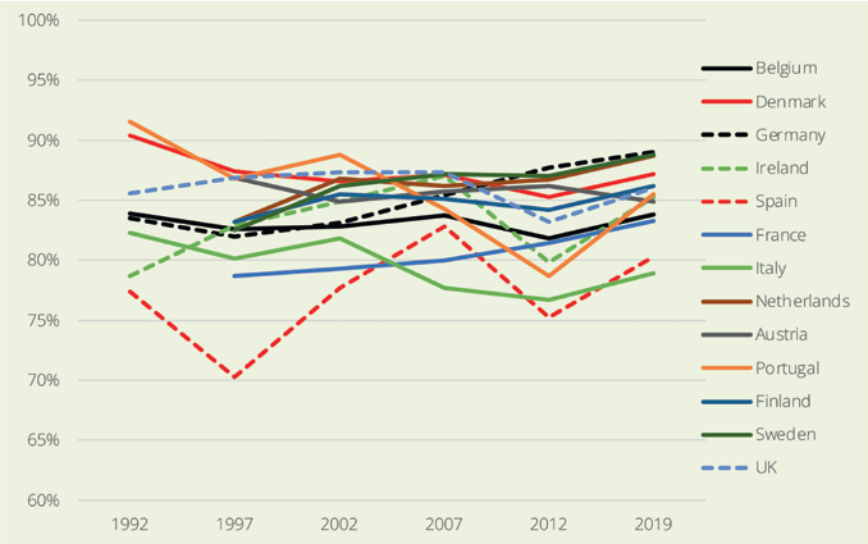
> *'Other than in the Netherlands, Belgium and Sweden the share of female workers with higher education has doubled in every country since the 1990s'*

Employment rate of Tertiary Graduates

There is considerable variation in country experiences in the share of tertiary graduates in employment (20-64) or the employment rate of third level graduates over the past number of decades (Chart 10). This variation is due in part to the already high employment rates among this group at the beginning of the timeframe under consideration. Further improvement in employment rates may be difficult in many countries with employment rates as high as 90% in some as far back as 1992. Particularly in this group, it's likely minimum rates of inactivity reflect choices around work-life balance of relatively comfortable households as well as issues around disability/ health in older groups. In addition, 'natural' factors in inactivity such as young graduates seeking appropriate employment over time also play a role.

For each country and for every year under consideration, there is a strong association between the likeliness of being employed and a person's education level. In other words, the group with the least amount of years of education/ training are also least likely to be in employment and the groups with higher education are most likely to be in employment (Table 4). In 2019, the country variation in employment rates for third level graduates fall within a narrow band of just over 10 pp with Germany at the top at 89.0% and Italy at the bottom with a graduate employment rate of 78.9%.

Chart 4: Employment rate, Tertiary Graduates (ISCED 5-8), 20-64, %



The top performers in terms of the employment rate of those in the highest education bracket are Germany (89.0%), Sweden (88.8%), the Netherlands (88.7%) and Denmark (87.2%). Third level graduates are least likely to be in employment in Italy (78.9%), Spain (80.3%), France (83.3%) and Belgium (83.8%). In Denmark, Italy and Portugal the shares of third level graduates in employment are actually lower than in the 1990s, while Ireland has caught up from a low initial starting point to reach mid-table (78.7% to 85.3%). By 2019, in Ireland and Spain the employment rate of third level graduates had yet to recover fully from the effects of the financial crisis. German graduates made most relative gains in the same period.

Despite gender disparities in attainment and employment share, the employment rate for male graduates is higher than that of women in every country. Men in the group with highest educational attainment were most likely to be in employment in Germany (92.0%), Denmark (90.0%), the Netherlands (90.9%), Ireland (89.8%) and Sweden (89.6%) and least likely in Italy (83.3%) and Spain (83.9%).

Sweden and Portugal have the most equal outcomes with gaps of below 2 pp (89.6% and 88.2% vs 86.6% and 84.8%). In Ireland, and despite the share of

females in the high education group in female employment having increased by the most since 1992 (69.9% to 81.5%), the Irish labour market still has the largest employment gap between genders in the tertiary educated group. In 2019 this gap was 8.4 pp (89.8% vs 81.5%). Women with higher education are least likely to be in employment in Italy (75.7%) and Spain (77.3%).

At the same time, in almost every country employment rates in the bracket of the lowest formal education levels (albeit as a group, it is falling as a share of the population across the board) have been trending downwards or are at the very least lower than their peak since 1997 (Table 4) reflecting the growing importance of third level education for individuals. In many countries, this trend accelerated after 2007 and can be seen most clearly when examining the figures for younger adults (Table 5). In Ireland for instance, the employment rate in 2007 for under 40's in the lowest bracket of formal education was 47.0%, has subsequently fallen to just 21.3% by 2019, the lowest in the sample. Similar trends are observed in France (37.0% to 23.4%), Spain (61.1% to 46.3%), Denmark (64.9% to 47.7%), Italy (45.0% to 30.2%) and Portugal (63.8 to 47.4%).

> *'Despite gender disparities in attainment and employment share, the employment rate for male graduates is higher than that of women in every country'*

Chart 5: Employment rate, Tertiary Graduates (ISCED 5-8), 20-64, M, %

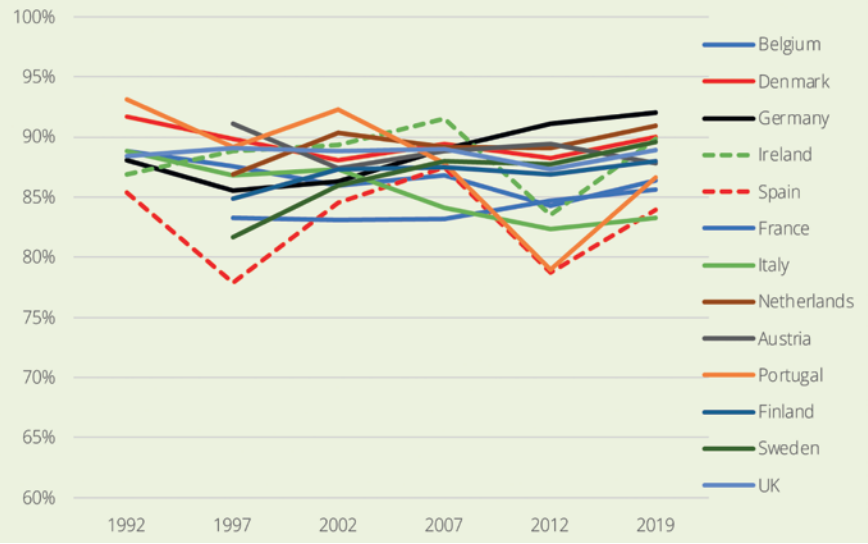


Chart 6: Employment rate, Tertiary Graduates (ISCED 5-8), 20-64, F, %

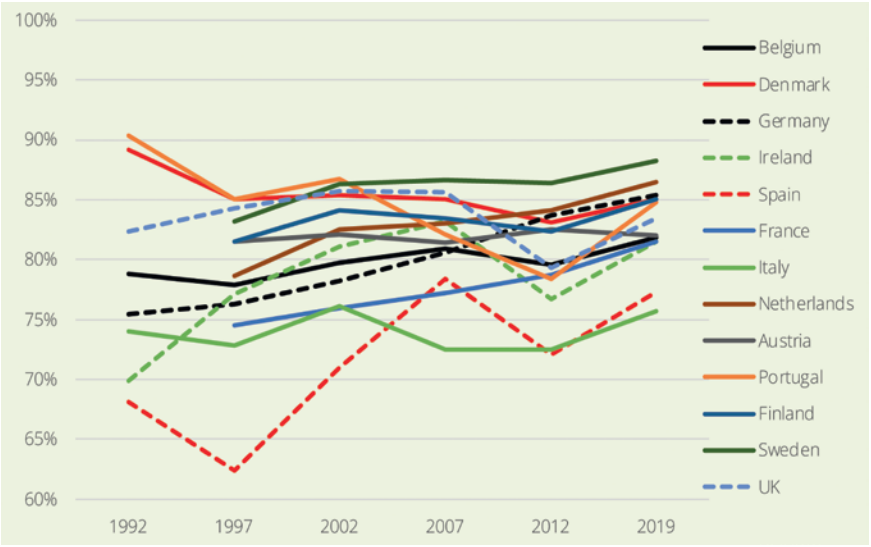


Table 4: Employment rates by Educational attainment level, 20-64, %

GEO (Labels)	ISCED11 (Labels)	TIME				
		1997	2002	2007	2012	2019
Belgium	(levels 0-2)	45.8	48.1	49.5	47.1	46.3
	(levels 3 and 4)	66.8	68.5	69.3	68.5	69.8
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	82.6	82.8	83.7	81.8	83.8
Denmark	(levels 0-2)	62.4	61.7	67.7	58.6	59.5
	(levels 3 and 4)	77.9	80.3	81.6	76.0	80.1
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	87.4	86.6	87.1	85.3	87.2
Germany	(levels 0-2)	48.0	51.9	55.0	57.8	61.8
	(levels 3 and 4)	68.6	70.0	73.3	76.8	81.3
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	82.0	83.1	85.4	87.7	89.0
Ireland	(levels 0-2)	51.0	57.4	58.6	43.0	52.4
	(levels 3 and 4)	65.9	74.1	77.3	62.3	72.5
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	82.9	84.9	87.0	79.8	85.3

GEO (Labels)	ISCED11 (Labels)	TIME				
		1997	2002	2007	2012	2019
Spain	(levels 0-2)	49.4	57.0	61.3	48.3	57.8
	(levels 3 and 4)	52.7	62.5	71.3	60.1	65.0
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	70.3	77.7	82.8	75.2	80.3
France	(levels 0-2)	53.3	56.1	57.3	54.9	51.8
	(levels 3 and 4)	69.9	72.7	72.5	69.9	70.1
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	78.7	79.3	80.0	81.4	83.3
Italy	(levels 0-2)	47.4	50.5	52.5	50.0	52.1
	(levels 3 and 4)	62.9	65.9	69.3	65.5	66.3
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	80.1	81.8	77.7	76.7	78.9
Netherlands	(levels 0-2)	55.3	62.0	60.4	61.9	63.2
	(levels 3 and 4)	75.7	80.0	78.3	78.3	80.9
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	83.2	86.8	86.2	86.7	88.7
Austria	(levels 0-2)	54.7	53.6	56.5	54.7	55.7
	(levels 3 and 4)	73.9	73.2	74.7	76.2	77.4
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	86.9	84.9	85.7	86.2	84.9
Portugal	(levels 0-2)	68.0	73.5	71.3	62.2	69.8
	(levels 3 and 4)	62.0	68.5	68.5	67.0	77.6
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	86.8	88.8	84.3	78.7	85.5
Finland	(levels 0-2)	52.2	58.3	58.2	53.9	52.0
	(levels 3 and 4)	68.5	73.2	74.3	72.6	74.6
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	83.2	85.5	85.1	84.2	86.2
Sweden	(levels 0-2)	65.0	67.8	66.9	62.9	61.2
	(levels 3 and 4)	74.4	79.9	81.8	80.4	82.9
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	82.5	86.2	87.2	87.0	88.8
United Kingdom	(levels 0-2)	66.7	64.2	63.3	56.4	64.6
	(levels 3 and 4)	77.2	80.5	79.7	75.2	78.8
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	86.9	87.3	87.3	83.2	86.0

Source: lfsa_ergaedn

Table 5: Employment rates by Educational attainment level, 15-39, %

GEO (Labels)	ISCED11 (Labels)	TIME				
		1997	2002	2007	2012	2019
Belgium	(levels 0-2)	38.5	38.1	31.7	29.3	26.4
	(levels 3 and 4)	63.6	64.1	63.9	60.8	64.0
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	86.9	87.9	87.6	83.0	82.9
Denmark	(levels 0-2)	66.2	60.1	64.9	47.7	47.7
	(levels 3 and 4)	82.1	81.9	84.4	75.3	76.9
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	88.1	87.6	89.8	86.2	85.9
Germany	(levels 0-2)	41.0	41.9	39.9	49.0	41.2
	(levels 3 and 4)	74.5	75.8	75.2	76.7	79.7
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	85.4	88.8	88.4	88.7	88.3
Ireland	(levels 0-2)	38.7	42.9	47.0	23.4	21.0
	(levels 3 and 4)	63.5	71.2	78.6	57.2	67.8
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	84.1	85.8	88.6	81.5	87.1
Spain	(levels 0-2)	45.3	56.7	61.1	40.7	46.3
	(levels 3 and 4)	40.1	54.4	65.7	49.6	50.9
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	64.6	75.1	82.6	72.6	77.7
France	(levels 0-2)	39.8	37.7	37.0	31.3	24.3
	(levels 3 and 4)	64.1	68.4	66.9	62.3	60.4
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	77.0	78.5	79.6	80.5	82.7
Italy	(levels 0-2)	44.1	47.3	45.0	35.7	30.2
	(levels 3 and 4)	57.4	61.0	64.2	57.2	54.5
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	75.3	79.0	72.4	69.7	68.9
Netherlands	(levels 0-2)	60.2	68.7	61.8	57.8	60.1
	(levels 3 and 4)	81.4	85.0	82.1	78.7	79.8
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	86.8	92.7	91.2	89.1	89.2
Austria	(levels 0-2)	50.6	48.8	49.2	45.4	43.6
	(levels 3 and 4)	80.2	80.4	79.6	80.0	79.2
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	88.9	90.1	88.5	87.7	83.8
Portugal	(levels 0-2)	60.8	67.6	63.8	50.7	47.4
	(levels 3 and 4)	52.0	61.0	60.5	57.7	66.3
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	88.9	88.9	83.5	75.5	82.0

GEO (Labels)	ISCED11 (Labels)	TIME				
		1997	2002	2007	2012	2019
Finland	(levels 0-2)	29.6	39.0	36.7	30.6	30.5
	(levels 3 and 4)	66.6	72.8	74.0	72.0	73.8
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	85.3	87.8	87.2	84.5	86.0
Sweden	(levels 0-2)	34.3	45.9	34.0	31.1	34.8
	(levels 3 and 4)	70.5	78.9	80.0	75.2	78.5
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	75.8	83.3	86.0	84.8	86.0
United Kingdom	(levels 0-2)	58.9	59.9	54.7	46.5	54.0
	(levels 3 and 4)	76.4	77.0	73.1	66.7	71.9
	Tertiary education (levels 5-8)	88.4	88.6	88.4	84.7	88.3

Source: lfsa_ergaedn

Labour Market Outcomes of third level graduates

Table 6: Labour Market outcomes of third level graduates (25-59)

		2005	2011	2019
Austria	Matched	58.0	67.3	65.4
	Overqualified	30.9	21.9	22.2
	Inactive	11.1	10.8	12.4
Belgium	Matched	59.9	64.0	70.3
	Overqualified	26.2	19.1	20.0
	Inactive	13.9	16.9	9.7
Denmark	Matched	77.3	76.9	72.1
	Overqualified	16.1	18.5	16.7
	Inactive	11.0	12.2	11.5
Finland	Matched	72.9	69.3	71.8
	Overqualified	16.1	18.5	16.7
	Inactive	11.0	12.2	11.5
France	Matched	70.7	69.4	71.0
	Overqualified	16.6	16.8	19.0
	Inactive	12.7	13.8	10.0

		2005	2011	2019
Germany	Matched	63.0	74.7	73.2
	Overqualified	17.5	16.5	17.6
	Inactive	19.4	8.7	9.2
Ireland	Matched	67.0	52.4	54.5
	Overqualified	22.2	26.6	32.4
	Inactive	10.8	21.0	13.1
Italy	Matched	71.0	69.6	66.2
	Overqualified	14.6	17.4	19.7
	Inactive	14.4	13.0	14.1
Portugal	Matched	82.5	80.9	78.8
	Overqualified	10.8	11.0	12.7
	Inactive	6.7*	8.1	8.6
Spain	Matched	53.1	52.7	51.8
	Overqualified	32.2	27.9	33.6
	Inactive	14.7	19.4	14.6
Sweden	Matched	77.6	75.9	79.1
	Overqualified	10.5	14.1	13.4
	Inactive	11.9	10.1	7.5
The Netherlands	Matched	74.6	77.2	73.0
	Overqualified	11.2	11.9	14.0
	Inactive	14.2	10.9	13.0
UK	Matched	60.7	66.5	
	Overqualified	26.0	21.8	
	Inactive	13.3	11.8	

Source: EU Survey on Incomes and Living Conditions

**low sample size, 20-49 observations*

Tables 6 shows evidence from the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions on outcomes of third level graduates using a simple three category variable constructed for this report:

1) in matched employment (a job in ISCO categories 1-3, all of which have third level entry requirements)

2) overqualified according to the job evaluation method (work in ISCO 4-9) and
3) economically inactive.

Breakdowns are also presented by gender (Tables 7 and 8). For consistency, the age brackets have been narrowed to 25-59 for consistency for the following sections, as background or social origin details in the EU-SILC ad-hoc modules are only asked of survey respondents in this group. Students and retirees are excluded. Estimates include employees and the self-employed.

In 2019, on average (unweighted) across 12 of the countries (i.e. excluding the UK) 68.9% of third level graduates (25-59) are in matched 'high-end' employment (ISCO1-3), 19.7% are in employment but overqualified and 11% are inactive. The 2005 and 2011 unweighted averages are remarkably similar (68.3% and 69.0%) though they obscure significant heterogeneity in country level trends across the sample.

Sweden is the top performer with 79.1% of third level graduates in Managerial/ Professional/Technician roles, followed by Portugal at 78.8%, Germany at 73.2% and the Netherlands at 73.0%. Graduates in Spain are least likely to be in high-end employment at 51.8%, followed by Ireland at 54.5%. Graduates in Austria are third least likely, though the share (65.4%) is almost 11pp ahead of Ireland's.

While graduates in Belgium, Germany and Austria saw the likeliness of securing high-end employment increase strongly between 2005 and 2019 by 10.4pp, 10.2pp and 7.5pp, Ireland is an outlier in terms of the scale of the decline over 14 years of the share graduates employed in high-end professions (down from 67.0% to 54.5% or 12.5 pp). The decline was second highest in Denmark at 5.2 pp. High-end employment outcomes for graduates in Ireland between 2011 and 2019 (a period of near record employment growth from the bottom of the great recession) were just 2 pp higher as a share from 52.4% to 54.5%. In the same period, the share employed but overqualified increased from 26.6% to 32.4%.

The unweighted average of male graduates in high-end employment across our sample (excluding the UK) in 2019 is 71.8%. Portuguese, German and Dutch male graduates are most likely to have secured high-end jobs (80.8%, 79.0% and 77.6%), while Irish males are least likely (55.6%), followed closely by Spanish males (55.9%).

Swedish women with third level qualifications are most likely to be in high-end jobs (81.0%), followed by Portuguese (77.6%) with highly educated Spanish

women faring worst (48.5%) followed by Irish women (53.5%). The unweighted average of the share of female graduates in high-end employment in the sample is 66.4%.

Germany is an outlier in the gender gap for high-end employment for graduates at 12.2 pp (79.0% vs 66.8%) with the Netherlands in second place (9.0 pp) and France and Austria in joint third (8.8 pp). Sweden is the only country where the gender gap is reversed and female graduates are 4.3 pp more likely to be employed in a high-end job (81.0%). The estimates for Denmark show zero gender outcome gap for high-end employment (though women are more likely to be inactive, men more likely to be in employment but overqualified) and the gap in Ireland is third narrowest in 2019 (55.6% vs 53.5% or 2.1pp), having halved since 2005 (4.4 pp).

The share of both Irish male and female graduates in employment and overqualified increased by the most in the sample between 2005 and 2019 (10.8 and 9.9 pp respectively). The likelihood of Italian male graduates being overqualified increased by 6.9 pp in the same period, the second largest increase, while Danish female graduates were 5.4 pp more likely to be in overqualified employment in 2019, also the second largest increase.

> *'The share of both Irish male and female graduates in employment and overqualified increased by the most in the sample between 2005 and 2019'*

Table 7: Labour Market outcomes of third level graduates (25-59, Male)

		2005	2011	2019
Austria	Matched	62.1	67.1	69.9
	Overqualified	33.0	28.9	24.0
	Inactive	4.9	4.0*	6.2
Belgium	Matched	65.1	65.8	73.6
	Overqualified	23.4	18.0	18.1
	Inactive	11.4	16.3	8.3
Denmark	Matched	76.7	79.7	72.1
	Overqualified	14.8	11.7	16.5
	Inactive	8.5	8.7	11.4

		2005	2011	2019
Finland	Matched	80.2	76.7	76.4
	Overqualified	11.1	15.5	14.0
	Inactive	8.7	7.8	9.6
France	Matched	75.9	72.0	75.8
	Overqualified	14.1	15.5	17.6
	Inactive	10.1	12.4	6.6
Germany	Matched	68.7	77.5	79.0
	Overqualified	20.4	18.5	16.7
	Inactive	10.8	4.1	4.4
Ireland	Matched	69.3	50.8	55.6
	Overqualified	24.3	30.6	35.1
	Inactive	6.4	18.7	9.3
Italy	Matched	76.2	76.2	68.3
	Overqualified	14.9	16.3	21.8
	Inactive	9.0	7.5	9.9
Portugal	Matched	82.5	79.1	80.8
	Overqualified	9.4*	12.2*	11.7
	Inactive	8.1*	8.7*	7.5
Spain	Matched	57.0	57.1	55.9
	Overqualified	34.1	27.5	33.5
	Inactive	8.9	15.4	10.6
Sweden	Matched	78.7	75.6	76.8
	Overqualified	10.5	14.5	14.4
	Inactive	10.9	9.9	8.8
The Netherlands	Matched	81.6	80.7	77.6
	Overqualified	10.7	11.8	11.6
	Inactive	7.7	7.5	10.8
UK	Matched	68.9	71.3	
	Overqualified	22.7	20.6	
	Inactive	8.4	8.1	

Source: EU Survey on Incomes and Living Conditions

** low sample size, 20-49 observations*

Table 8: Labour Market outcomes of third level graduates (25-59, Female)

		2005	2011	2019
Austria	Matched	52.8	67.5	61.1
	Overqualified	28.3	13.5	20.5
	Inactive	19.0	19.0	18.5
Belgium	Matched	55.1	62.5	67.5
	Overqualified	28.7	20.1	21.6
	Inactive	16.2	17.4	10.9
Denmark	Matched	77.8	74.7	72.1
	Overqualified	9.6	15.1	15.0
	Inactive	12.6	10.2	12.9
Finland	Matched	67.4	64.1	68.6
	Overqualified	19.9	20.6	18.6
	Inactive	12.7	15.3	12.8
France	Matched	66.4	67.2	67.1
	Overqualified	18.8	17.9	20.1
	Inactive	14.8	14.9	12.8
Germany	Matched	56.6	71.4	66.8
	Overqualified	14.3	14.1	18.6
	Inactive	29.2	14.5	14.6
Ireland	Matched	64.9	53.9	53.5
	Overqualified	20.3	22.9	30.2
	Inactive	14.8	23.2	16.3
Italy	Matched	66.1	64.4	64.6
	Overqualified	14.4	18.3	18.2
	Inactive	19.6	17.3	17.2
Portugal	Matched	82.6	82.1	77.6
	Overqualified	11.7*	10.3	13.2
	Inactive	5.7*	7.7*	9.2
Spain	Matched	49.4	48.9	48.5
	Overqualified	30.4	28.3	33.7
	Inactive	20.2	22.8	17.8

		2005	2011	2019
Sweden	Matched	76.9	76.0	81.0
	Overqualified	10.5	13.8	12.6
	Inactive	12.6	10.2	6.4
The Netherlands	Matched	66.2	73.5	68.6
	Overqualified	11.8	12.0	16.3
	Inactive	22.0	14.5	15.1
UK	Matched	53.8	62.1	
	Overqualified	28.8	22.8	
	Inactive	17.4	15.1	

Source: EU Survey on incomes and living conditions

**low sample size, 20-49 observations*

Whether overqualification is a transitory phenomenon or a 'stepping stone' from work experience to matched, high-end employment is an important consideration with specific policy implications. Longitudinal analysis is not possible with the data available. However, Tables 9 and 10 show overqualification rates across the 13 country sample and three years, controlled for by graduates more than 5 years since they achieved their qualification and more than 10 years.

Remarkably, there is very little difference across 13 countries and 3 years both for the '5 years plus since graduation' and '10 years plus since graduation' groups with the wider group with the exception of Denmark and to a smaller degree, Italy. In most countries across the time frame there is less than a 2 pp difference between the wider group and the more experienced groups and on occasion, the more experienced groups are actually less likely to be in high-end employment.

In 2019, in Denmark 72.1% of graduates between 25-59 were in high-end employment with 77.5% of graduates who were 10 years+ since the completion of their studies. The second largest increase in 2019 on this measure is in Italy (66.2% to 69.3%), though partial evidence of the 'stepping stone theory' is more clear in the data for outcomes in the country in 2005 (71.0% vs 78.7%).

'In 2019, in Denmark 72.1% of graduates between 25-59 were in high-end employment with 77.5% of graduates who were 10 years+ since the completion of their studies'

Table 9: Outcomes of third level graduates (25-59), 5+ yrs since graduation

		2005	2011	2019
Austria	Matched	57.6	67.1	63.4
	Overqualified	30.9	22.0	23.8
	Inactive	11.6	10.9	12.8
Belgium	Matched	60.8	63.5	69.8
	Overqualified	25.5	19.6	20.8
	Inactive	13.7	16.9	9.4
Denmark	Matched	77.6	78.7	76.9
	Overqualified	12.4	13.7	14.4
	Inactive	10.0	7.6	8.7
Finland	Matched	72.0	69.3	71.1
	Overqualified	16.5	18.5	17.4
	Inactive	11.4	12.2	11.5
France	Matched	71.7	70.5	71.4
	Overqualified	16.2	16.5	19.5
	Inactive	12.1	13.0	9.1
Germany	Matched	62.6	74.1	71.9
	Overqualified	17.4	17.1	18.4
	Inactive	20.0	8.8	9.7
Ireland	Matched	67.3	51.4	53.7
	Overqualified	21.0	27.9	33.3
	Inactive	11.7	20.7	13.0
Italy	Matched	76.6	72.7	67.6
	Overqualified	13.2	16.8	19.1
	Inactive	10.2	10.6	13.3
Portugal	Matched	84.9	85.6	80.6
	Overqualified	9.2*	8.5	11.6
	Inactive	6.0*	5.9*	7.8
Spain	Matched	54.2	52.8	51.2
	Overqualified	31.7	28.5	35.0
	Inactive	14.1	18.7	13.8

		2005	2011	2019
Sweden	Matched	78.7	74.5	78.1
	Overqualified	10.0	14.2	14.1
	Inactive	11.2	11.3	7.9
The Netherlands	Matched	74.4	77.4	72.2
	Overqualified	10.6	11.5	14.2
	Inactive	15.0	11.1	13.6
UK	Matched	63.1	67.6	
	Overqualified	22.7	20.8	
	Inactive	14.2	11.6	

Source: EU Survey on incomes and living conditions

**low sample size, 20-49 observations*

Table 10: Outcomes of third level graduates (25-59), 10+ yrs since graduation

		2005	2011	2019
Austria	Matched	59.8	67.4	62.9
	Overqualified	30.0	23.1	24.8
	Inactive	10.3	9.5	12.3
Belgium	Matched	60.5	63.2	68.7
	Overqualified	24.7	20.0	20.8
	Inactive	14.8	16.8	10.5
Denmark	Matched	77.3	77.7	77.5
	Overqualified	12.6	14.0	14.4
	Inactive	10.2	8.4	8.1
Finland	Matched	73.3	69.1	70.9
	Overqualified	16.6	20.4	18.5
	Inactive	10.2	10.6	10.6
France	Matched	73.7	71.1	72.1
	Overqualified	14.1	15.9	19.3
	Inactive	12.1	13.0	8.6

		2005	2011	2019
Germany	Matched	63.1	74.1	72.6
	Overqualified	17.2	17.7	18.4
	Inactive	19.7	8.2	9.1
Ireland	Matched	67.6	51.5	52.6
	Overqualified	19.4	26.7	35.3
	Inactive	13.0	21.8	12.1
Italy	Matched	78.7	73.8	69.3
	Overqualified	12.8	16.4	18.5
	Inactive	8.5	9.8	12.2
Portugal	Matched	83.1	86.0	81.3
	Overqualified	9.6*	7.8*	11.4
	Inactive	7.3*	6.2*	7.3
Spain	Matched	54.3	52.7	50.5
	Overqualified	30.7	29.0	35.6
	Inactive	15.0	18.3	14.0
Sweden	Matched	77.6	72.0	76.4
	Overqualified	10.5	15.0	15.3
	Inactive	12.0	13.1	8.3
The Netherlands	Matched	73.9	76.8	71.1
	Overqualified	9.8	11.6	14.8
	Inactive	16.3	11.6	14.8
UK	Matched	66.0	69.5	
	Overqualified	19.7	19.3	
	Inactive	14.3	11.2	

Source: EU Survey on incomes and living conditions

**low sample size, 20-49 observations*

Labour Market Outcomes of third level graduates by social origin

Chart 7 -19 present the same outcome variables for graduates (2005, 2011 and 2019) with a breakdown by social origin (in this case, proxied by father's

education). The data suggest that social origin is an important explanatory factor in the labour market outcomes of third level graduates.[4]

With the exceptions of Finland and Sweden in 2019, third level graduates whose fathers also had third level qualifications are more likely to be in high-end employment than those whose fathers were in the middle bracket of formal education. With the exception of the Netherlands, the relationship also holds between graduates whose fathers were in the middle bracket of formal education versus those whose fathers were in the lowest bracket. In every country those from highly educated backgrounds have better labour market outcomes (higher shares in high end employment) than those whose fathers were in the lowest bracket of formal education. In most cases and across the three EU SILC surveys in 2005, 2011 and 2019 this relationship applies as a trend (i.e that outcomes of graduates from high educational backgrounds are more likely to be in high-end employment than those from backgrounds in the middle category with similar relationship between graduates of middle and low formal education backgrounds, with some exceptions (especially in the first year of the analysis, 2005).

In every country, with the exception of Ireland, the high-end employment gap (in percentage points) between graduates with fathers in the highest and lowest brackets of formal education background widened between 2005 and 2011. The widening trend occurred for each country between 2011 and 2019 with the result that every country between 2005 and 2019 has seen an increased gap of securing high-end employment between graduate children from backgrounds in high versus low education brackets. In 2019, the unweighted average share in the sample of graduates (excluding the UK) in high end jobs from highly educated backgrounds was 75.6%, 70.7% for those from backgrounds in the middle bracket of formal education and 63.5% for those from backgrounds in the lower bracket. In 2005, the same figures were 68.8%, 69.2% and 65.2% and in 2011, 73.3%, 70.6% and 65.6%. Between 2005 and 2019 (excluding the UK), the outcome gap has widened by 8.3 pp on average between graduates from backgrounds in the top education bracket versus the lowest formal education bracket to 12.1 pp (excluding the UK).

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[4] EU SILC data provides detail on broad education level. Third level graduates (ISCED 5-8) are grouped together from short cycle tertiary qualifications (5) to doctorates (8). It is more than likely that even among this group that social origin is important in the difference between a degree and an MA, which in turn are likely to be associated with different probabilities of attaining high-end employment. Other details like the field of research or spending on additional educational resources such as private lessons etc. that may be explanatory factors in different outcomes are not available through SILC.

For the groups whose fathers had third level qualifications, graduates in Portugal were most likely to be in high-end employment commensurate with their education level (84.1%), followed by Sweden (82.4%), France (81.8%) and the Netherlands (80.6%) and least likely in Spain (62.7%), Ireland (66.0%) and Austria (70.7%). The latest data for the UK (2011) suggests a relatively low share that year (4th lowest) at 70.7%.

The high-end employment gap between graduates from high versus low formal educational backgrounds is widest in 2019 in Germany (77.4% vs 56.8% or 20.7 pp), Ireland (66.0% vs 47.4% or 18.6 pp), Austria (70.7% vs 54.4% or 16.3 pp) and France (81.8% vs 66.3% or 15.4 pp). In 2019, Irish graduates whose fathers were in the low formal education bracket were least likely to be in high-end employment in the sample (47.4%) and those from backgrounds in the middle education bracket (58.6%) and high education brackets (66.0%), were second least likely in their groups (behind Spain).

Third level graduates in Ireland with father's in the lowest education bracket saw the share in high-end employment fall by the most between 2005 and 2019 (15.2 pp), with Finland next at 8.5 pp and an average decline of 2.9 pp (excluding the UK). In some countries the share of this group in high-end employment grew over the period, with Belgium the outlier at the opposite end at 9.0 pp. Graduates in this group are most likely to be in high-end employment in Portugal (78.6%), Sweden (75.9%) and the Netherlands (71.6%) and least likely in Ireland (47.4%), Spain (47.9%), Austria (54.4%) and Germany (56.8%).

For graduates with father's in the middle bracket of formal education there were large differences in the share in high-end employment in 2019 relative to 2005 across the sample. In Ireland and the Netherlands in 2019, this group were 9.4 pp and 8.9pp less likely (from 68.0% to 58.6% and from 78.0% and 69.1%) to be employed as a Manager/ Professional/Associate Professional or Technician respectively. In Germany and Belgium, the experience of this group was the opposite, with positive growth in the share of graduates of this group in high-end jobs of 12.2 and 12.1 pp respectively (65.0% to 77.3% and 59.8 to 71.9%)

The narrowest high-end employment outcome gaps for graduates by background (father in high vs father in low brackets of formal education) are in Portugal (5.5 pp), Sweden (6.5 pp) and Denmark (7.1 pp).

Chart 7: Labour Market Outcomes of Third Level graduates by Social Origin, Austria

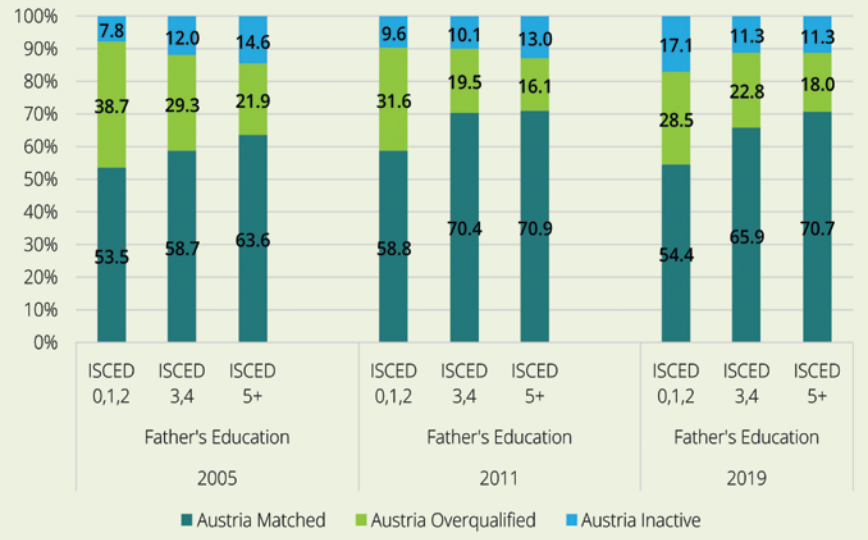


Chart 8: Labour Market Outcomes of Third Level graduates by Social Origin, Belgium

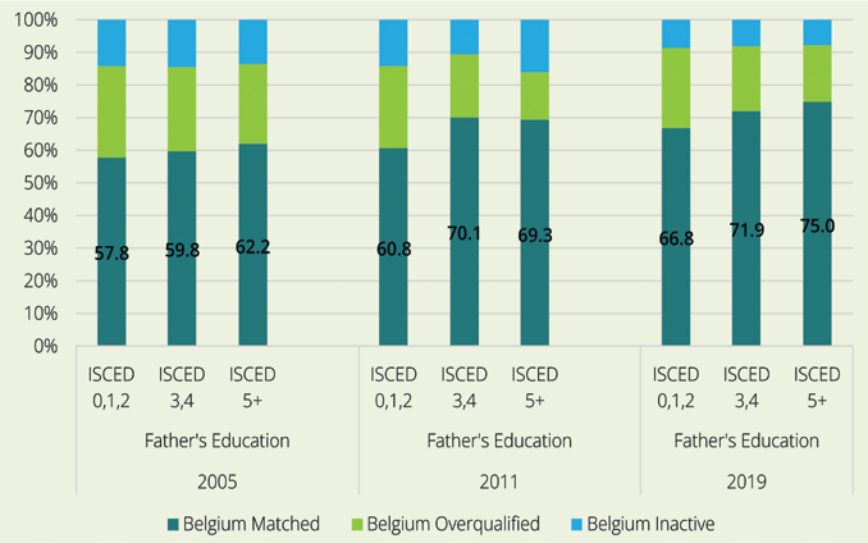


Chart 9: Labour Market Outcomes of Third Level graduates by Social Origin, Denmark

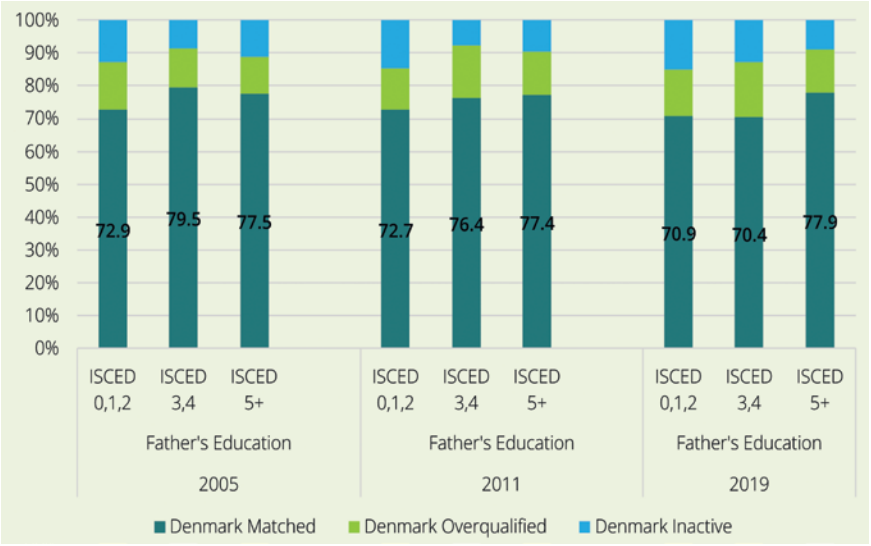


Chart 10: Labour Market Outcomes of Third Level graduates by Social Origin, Finland

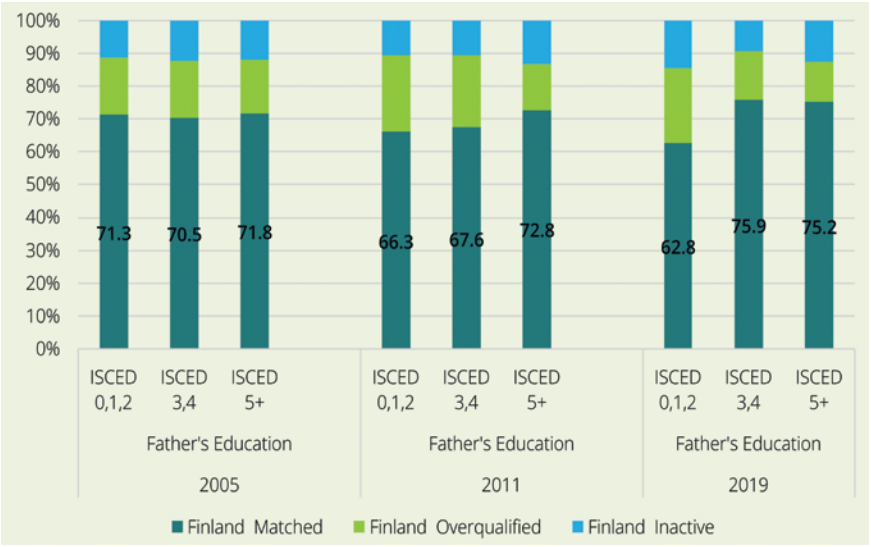


Chart 11: Labour Market Outcomes of Third Level graduates by Social Origin, France

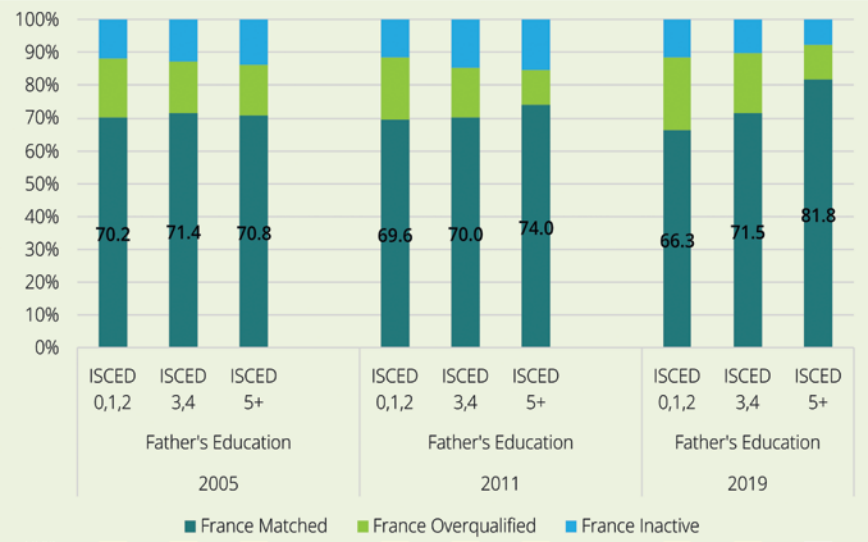


Chart 12: Labour Market Outcomes of Third Level graduates by Social Origin, Germany

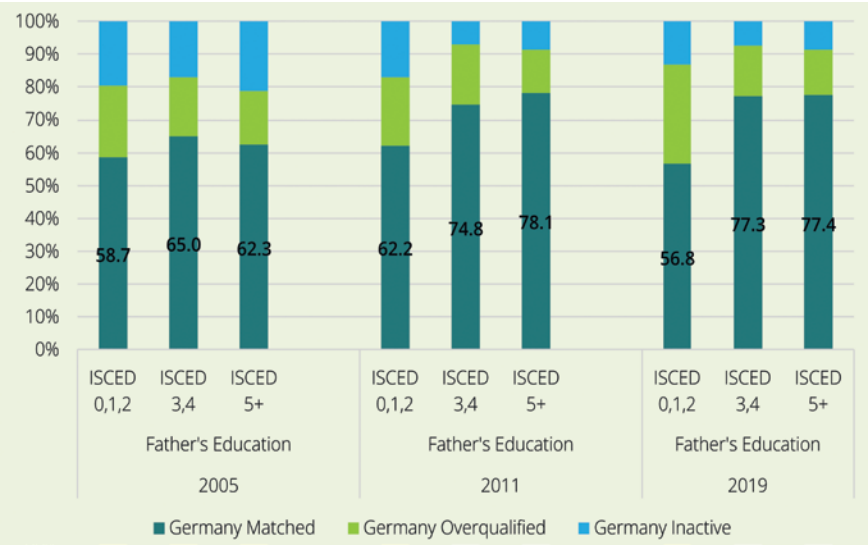


Chart 13: Labour Market Outcomes of Third Level graduates by Social Origin, Ireland

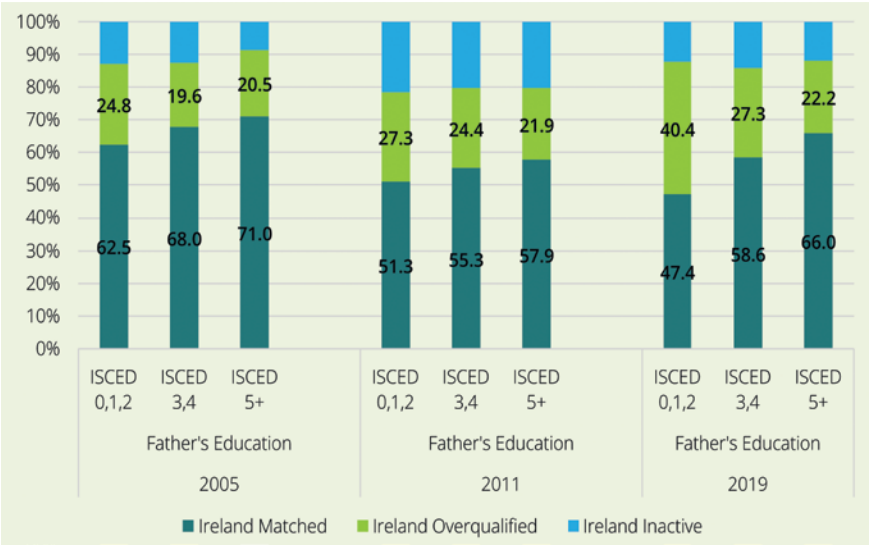


Chart 14: Labour Market Outcomes of Third Level graduates by Social Origin, Italy

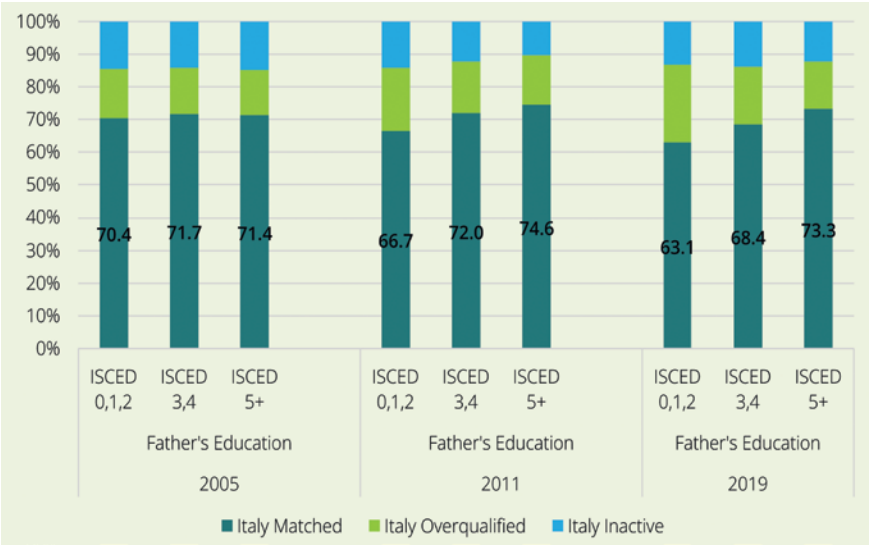


Chart 15 Labour Market Outcomes of Third Level graduates by Social Origin, Portugal

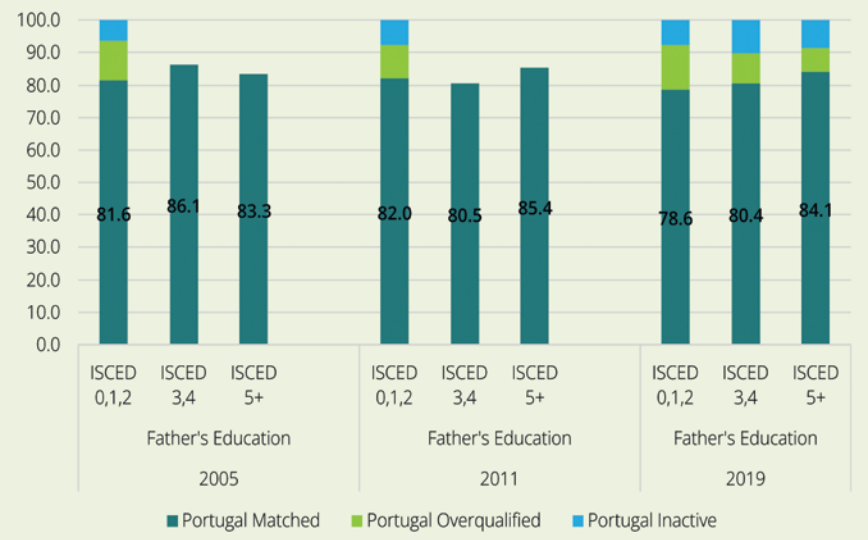


Chart 16: Labour Market Outcomes of Third Level graduates by Social Origin, Spain

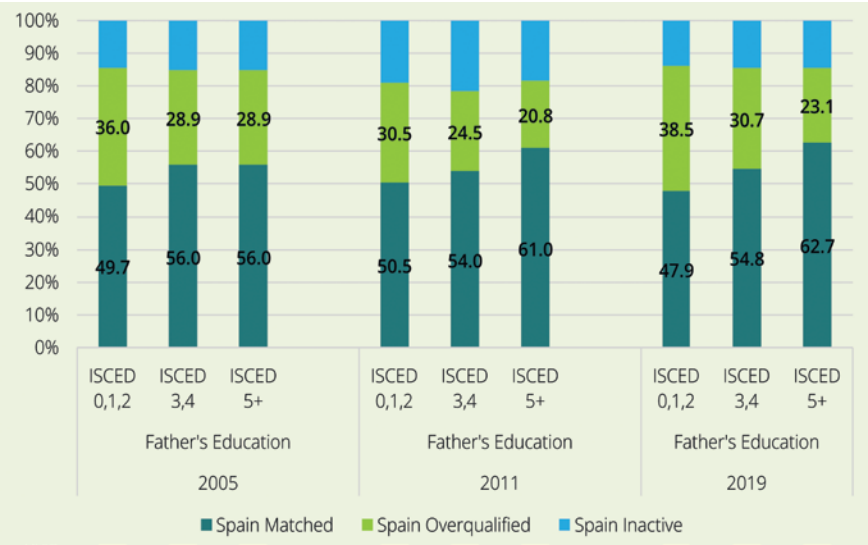


Chart 17: Labour Market Outcomes of Third Level graduates by Social Origin, Sweden

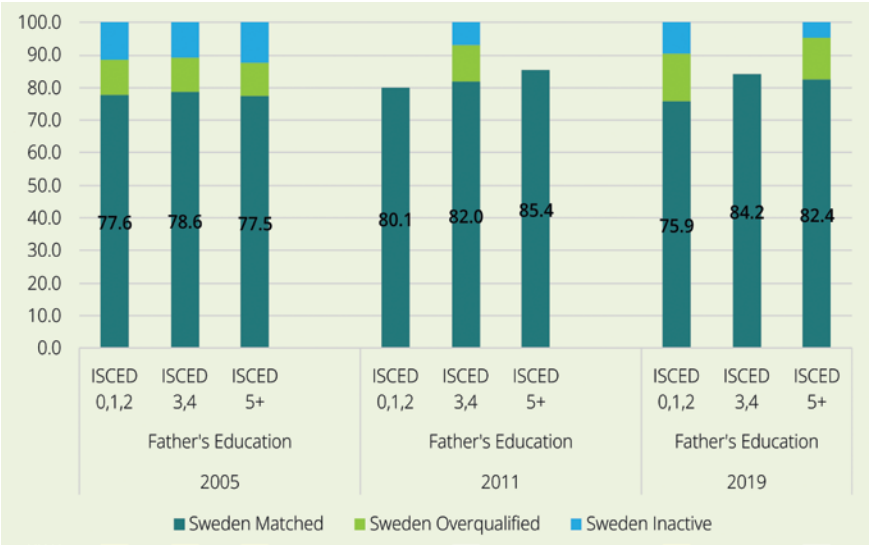


Chart 18: Labour Market Outcomes of Third Level graduates by Social Origin, Netherlands

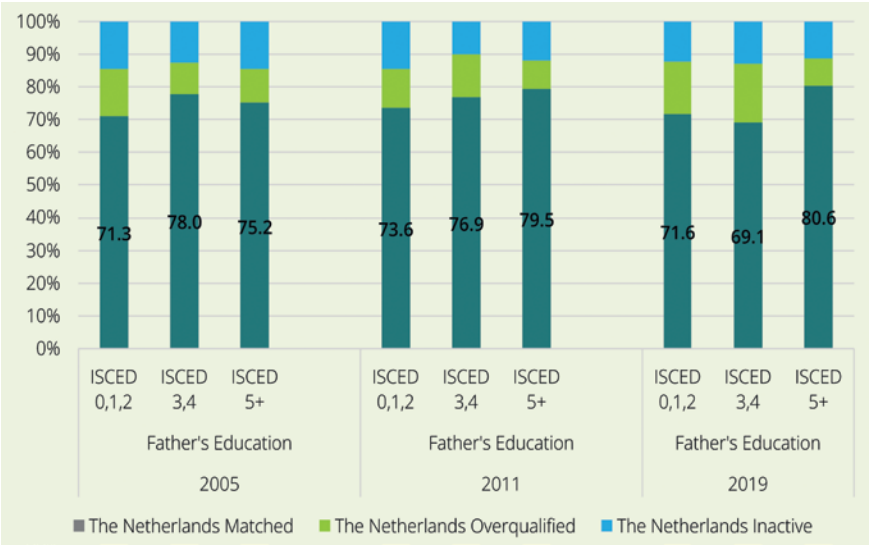
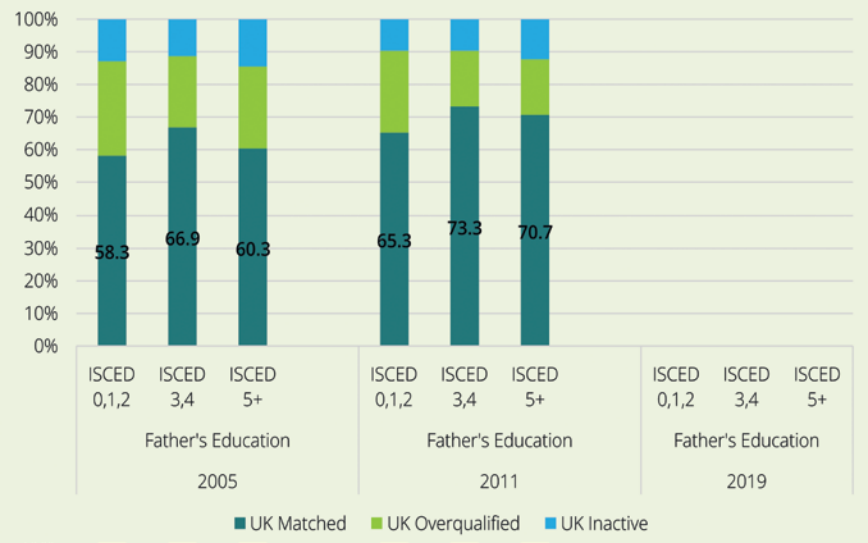


Chart 19: Labour Market Outcomes of Third Level graduates by Social Origin, UK



2. ‘Collective Enabling’ of Society through Decent Services

Seán Ó Riain

Introduction

Modern states spend a vast amount of money on all sorts of activities and for all kinds of reasons, typically with some collective purpose in mind. How this money is spent, the way in which that spending is organised and the extent of delivery of the outcomes that are intended shapes societies in highly significant and consequential ways. There are important decisions to be made in societies about not only the level of spending, which varies significantly across countries, but also the focus of that spending and the kind of social relations that it creates, and social possibilities that it enables. Put more bluntly, the success of states in using this spending to deliver protections and resources to the population can profoundly shape the fortunes of the people in that society.

Ireland also spends a great deal of money on public and social spending, although at a somewhat lower level than most other comparable countries. In this chapter, I explore the way that Ireland organizes its social spending and the degree to which that spending delivers the decent services that are so central to any effective, fair and inclusive social contract. This issue is all the more important given that decent services can enable individuals, support households and communities and knit together diverse elements and interests in society.

Decent public services are at the core of any sustainable and effective and inclusive social contract. All states in Western Europe spend large proportions of their GDP on social and other purposes. However, the provision of services from this spending is only one of the possible uses. Others include subsidies on private provision, direct transfer of funds through taxes and benefits and any number of different targets of spending which are generally seen as separate from social purposes, with defence as one of the largest of these in many countries.

This chapter explores the nature of public services in Ireland and the potential to further develop those to achieve the promise of decent services. We investigate the level of social spending in Ireland, which is generally on the comparatively lower end. We also examine the composition of that spending in terms of the mix of private, voluntary and state providers, the proportion of spending that

comes from private versus public sources, and the relative effort that goes into direct transfers and payments compared to the organised provision of social services. We also explore the complexities and perhaps even contradictions of Irish public services, including the nature of public support, for social service spending by the State.

Having examined Irish public services and their character, we then go on to explore how services can be organized along the lines of a compensation model, which currently dominates, or through a collective enabling model, where services provide valuable resources to individuals, households and communities to use in their own 'projects' building their futures. Having discussed these models, we then examine a number of small scale examples in Ireland of ongoing but also potentially enabling services, including the school transport service and the emergence of Post Leaving Cert colleges within the higher education landscape.

Based on these discussions we then conclude by examining how we should think about public services and about their potential. This potential includes how they can be part of renewing and sustaining a more profound social contract, which incorporates individual and community autonomy, supported by collective provision of shared resources and services, so that the success of particular individuals, households or groups, is knit together with that of the society as a whole.

However, we start by briefly reviewing how services can act as a valuable foundation for a broader support for public institutions, democracy and aspects of social contract.

Public Services and the Social Contract

It is no secret that social cohesion, social solidarity and support for basic elements of representative democracy, as well as the legitimacy of public bodies are under profound threat in many countries around the world. There is some complacency in Ireland around these issues, based (somewhat flimsily) on the relative success of more centrist parties in the election of 2024. However, it is clear from various public upheavals and from the experience of other countries that such threats can materialize very quickly in any society. In particular where existing institutions or political actors leave a vacuum of trust and support this can leave a space for actors questioning the basic legitimacy of existing institutions, especially where there is an element of truth to those critiques. While the rise of the far right rightly attracts significant attention, it is important to analyze the

conditions that have left the space for the emergence of these movements, and for their attraction of a wide degree of support. The fundamental contention of this chapter is that where a vacuum of trust, confidence and solidarity exists, the potential for anti-democratic and anti-egalitarian movements will be greater.

It turns out that strong core public services are one of the elements through which this vacuum can be avoided or at least partially filled and act as a buffer against Far Right voting in particular (Vlandas and Halikiopoulou, 2022). Decent services are a critical element through which the good in political and public life can drive out the bad. Table 1 summarizes the attitudes of a representative sample of the Irish public in late 2023 towards social services and broader social and political satisfaction. Using the European Social Survey, the table presents the association (measured as bivariate correlations) between the degree of satisfaction that respondents had with the state of two key public services, education and health services, and their satisfaction with a broader set of factors affecting their life. These included satisfaction with their life as a whole, the economy, national government, democracy and one of the hot button issues of the day, immigration.

Table 1: Correlations between satisfaction between education and health services and measures of broader satisfaction

	Satisfied with State of Education	Satisfied with State of Health Services
Satisfaction with Life as a Whole	.19	.21
Satisfaction with Economy	.38	.41
Satisfaction with National Government	.46	.47
Satisfaction with how Democracy Works	.48	.39
Immigrants make Country Better Place to Live	.24	.25

Source: European Social Survey, 2023

In the table, a higher score indicates that someone who is more satisfied with the state of the education system, for example, is more satisfied with, for example, their life as a whole overall. This is true across the board, with even people's level of satisfaction with their own individual lives associated with satisfaction with

public services. Of course, it is not clear in what direction the effects run here - is overall satisfaction affecting satisfaction with social services or vice versa? But the results in Table 1 strongly suggest that satisfaction in different domains of life and with different public institutions are clustered together and reinforce one another. In particular, satisfaction with education and health services are strongly associated with satisfaction with political processes, including both government and more broadly how democracy works.

While it is far from definitive evidence, these patterns strongly suggest that popular public services can be an important element in underpinning the public institutions and democratic public decision making more generally. Interestingly, there is a somewhat weaker association between approval of the effects of immigration on the country and satisfaction with public services. However, this does suggest that at least a portion of anti-immigrant feeling is associated with dissatisfaction with public services, once again indicating how public services can not only deliver important resources to members of society, but also underpin the broader social contract. Of course, it should be noted that on all questions related to immigration, Irish attitudes are overwhelmingly positive, particularly when compared to other Western European countries.

Having noted this important aspect of social services in underpinning broader aspects of the social contract, we can now turn to an exploration of the key aspects of those social services.

The Character of Social Services in Ireland

Table 2 presents a comparison of Ireland with a range of countries of interest on various dimensions of the provision funding and form of social expenditure and social services. The data for the overall OECD are included as a general benchmark, with the UK included as a society that is often considered quite similar to Ireland as an Anglo, liberal form of Capitalism. However, Ireland also contains elements that are more typically associated with Christian democratic countries, such as Austria and Belgium, or even some social democratic countries such as Denmark. The Netherlands is included as a country that often falls between these two groups, and which also includes a significant element of voluntary and private provision and funding in its social services model. These countries therefore provide an interesting, broader picture within which to locate the common and distinctive elements of Ireland's social services.

Table 2: Characteristics of Social Services and Spending in Comparative Perspective

	Total Social Expenditure as % of GDP(2019)	Voluntary Private Spending as % of Total Spending	Total Non-Profit Employees as % of Economically Active (2010 approx)	% Reduction in Market Inequality due to Taxes and Transfers
Austria	30.0	4.9%	3.8%	44.4%
Belgium	30.0	6.0%	8.6%	46.3%
Denmark	32.3	4.6%	2.4%	42.3%
Ireland	14.8	13.1%	8.3%	45.7%
Ireland (% GNI*)	24.7			
Netherlands	29.5	22.3%	9.2%	33.4%
United Kingdom	25.8	21.9%	4.8%	31.3%
OECD	23.2	7.3%		

Most basically, we can examine the total social expenditure of the society as a percentage of GDP. Figures from 2019 are taken as they relate to pre pandemic patterns of spending. Although social spending increased dramatically over the pandemic and in many cases has persisted at those higher levels, the total social expenditure in 2019 may be a better indicator of the underlying social model. It is unclear whether Ireland and other countries will sustain their currently higher levels of social expenditure. Data for Ireland is presented in two measures. The first much lower measure does not adjust for Ireland's artificially inflated GDP due to the accounting activities of multinational corporations. The second Ireland measure provides a percentage of modified gross national income, which is a better reflection, although not perfect, of Ireland's overall level of national wealth. However, while GDP is an unsatisfactory measure of national wealth in Ireland, the state (and population) does gain significant tax revenues from the multinationals that inflate that figure. Therefore a measure of 24.7% of national wealth spent on social expenditure is probably somewhat inflated as an indicator of the national effort to invest and protect socially. Either way, Ireland is behind its western European comparators in this table, in some cases very significantly, and sits just above the OECD average.

There are other distinctive features of the Irish public services picture. Voluntary private spending (i.e. spending by households on buying public services or paying for public services individually) runs significantly higher than continental European provision, although the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have higher levels. In the case of the Netherlands, this is combined, in distinctive ways, with patterns of social insurance and other forms of mixing of public and private financing. In the case of the United Kingdom, this more clearly reflects a more market-oriented system. Nonetheless, Ireland remains more dependent on voluntary private spending than the OECD average (see Independent Review Group, 2018 for more detail).

Another distinctive feature of the Irish public services landscape is the role of non-profit organisations in the provision of services. This is difficult to compare across countries, although the third column presents the percentage of all economically active persons in the labour market who were working for non-profits around 2010. In this regard, the Netherlands, Belgium and Ireland are clearly ahead of the other countries, reflecting their histories of significant religious involvement in social services, which converted, over time, into a higher non-profit sector, even if these non-profits became more detached from their religious origins over time.

Where Ireland does particularly well comparatively is in the reduction of market inequality due to taxes and transfers, i.e. through direct transfer of funds to those who have lower market incomes. In this respect, Ireland is much more similar to the north western European social and Christian democracies, although it should be noted that the starting levels of inequality in market incomes are much lower in Austria, Belgium and Denmark than they are in Ireland. In other words, Ireland is doing a lot more work to equalize incomes – although those incomes still remain more unequal in Ireland after that redistribution than in these other countries (Ó Riain and Healy, 2017). Nonetheless, Ireland's redistributive effort through transfer payments is significantly higher than in the Netherlands, which has lower levels of market inequality, or the United Kingdom, which is similar to Ireland in its high rates of market inequality.

Overall therefore, Irish public services are generally characterized by comparatively lower levels of spending (although this increased during and since the pandemic), very significant presence of private spending as part of the public services mix, a comparatively large reliance on non-profit providers and a system that reduces inequalities through cash payments, albeit from a very high underlying level of inequality.

These complex and apparently contradictory patterns are perhaps reflected in the ambiguity of public opinion in Ireland, as outlined in Table 3, drawing on the most recent welfare policy questions in the European Social Survey of 2008. It seems that Irish respondents are more likely to believe two statements, which are generally seen as contradicting each other, that welfare prevents poverty and that welfare makes people lazy. While only 20% of people in Denmark agree with this, and 30% in The Netherlands and Belgium, 44% do so in Ireland. Irish public opinion, albeit before the financial crash, is therefore both supportive of welfare spending and also somewhat contradictory (Ó Riain, 2014).

Table 3: Percentage of people who agree BOTH that welfare prevents poverty AND makes people lazy (ESS, 2008)

Ireland	44%
UK	36%
Belgium	30%
Netherlands	30%
Denmark	20%

The reasons why this exists and how this base of support might be built upon in a more coherent and purposeful way is addressed in the next section.

Services as 'Collective Enabling'

Services can take different forms and be part of social relations in different ways, depending how they are organized. Table 4 compares two basic models of service provision. Typically, services are characterized by a basic level of universal or at least widely available provision, for example, primary school education in most countries. However, layered on top of this are a variety of services that are more specialized and that are organized around a compensation model where services are provided with a view to compensating for perceived deficits in the resources or indeed behaviours of private individuals and households. We contrast this approach with a model of social services which is focused on 'collective enabling'. This model emphasizes how resources become available to members of the society to enhance their capabilities through the provision of different social services. Table 4 compares these two models of social services along a number of different dimensions.

Table 4: Models of Social Services

	The Compensation Model	The Collective Enabling Model
Individuals in Society	Private Individuals and Households as Independent Actors	Individual who depends upon, and can be constrained or empowered by, the social context
Challenges for Individuals	Individuals face deficits relative to the 'normal person'	Individuals need social resources and relations to develop
Key Role of Public Institutions	Public Institutions compensate for failures of private strategies and/ or markets	Public Institutions help us collectively construct our futures
Services and Society	Services compensate for those who are 'failing'	Services are the building blocks of these 'projects of the future'

The compensation model starting point is the idea of the private individual and their households as relatively autonomous, free standing units. In the collective enabling model, the view of the person, the member of society or the citizen is an individual or a household or other collective whose capabilities depend upon the social context. In this model, we as individuals are shaped by, but also work with, the resources of many different kinds available in the social world around us. Society may be constraining upon individual action, but it is also a critical element in enabling us to act, develop and decide about our own futures.

Therefore, each model works from a different notion of how individuals should be supported. The compensation model focuses on the deficits associated with each individual, whether that is personal behaviour (which generally attracts psychological interventions) or whether it is in the social environment (where payments are provided to compensate for those deficits e.g. housing assistance). These, of course, are important interventions, but the collective enabling model thinks of decent public services that are more central to the development of all individuals, by providing resources in the social environment that we can use to develop our lives, both individually and collectively. This builds upon the capabilities approach to social action and to public policy (Sen, 1999).

Similarly, the models differ in terms of institutions. Where institutions in the compensation model fill the gaps that are left by personal psychologies or

failures of markets or other forms of private action, the collective enabling model focuses on institutions as providers of resources that we can use to manage our lives and construct our futures. So overall, in the compensation model, services compensate for deficits among those who are failing, whereas in the collective enabling model, services are key building blocks or bundles of resources or collective capabilities that enable us to build these projects of the future. In the process, this perspective directs us towards a deeper understanding of how our lives and the actions that we might take to improve them are always entangled with the lives of those around us.

This is a challenging framework for public policy and societal action, but is one that can be very empowering, and can also bridge the apparent gap between individual and society. We can now turn to a number of examples in the Irish case, where publicly provided services have made important contributions, but can also be greatly enhanced through policy development closer to the collective enabling model.

First of all, we take the example of the humble school bus (and indeed, many services that are vitally important are indeed humble in their presentation). In recent years, the school bus service has been made free to those traveling in their local area. This was a popular move, as indicated in the increased demand for the service. However, it also has generated a great deal of protest by those who are unable to get spots on the increasingly in demand service. Leaving aside these conflicts over scarce resources, there's a bigger missed opportunity here with the school bus and school transport system. Most fundamentally, the school bus still sits in the same traffic that it did before the bus transport scheme was made free and therefore, apparently more universal.

A great deal of the traffic in Irish cities and towns in the key hours of the morning rush hour is associated, one way or another, with travel to school and the widespread use of the private car to get to school (increasing from 24% in 1986 to 41% in 2016 (CSO, 2017). The potential of the school bus system could be realised through a much more substantial expansion of the system, which aims at bringing the vast majority of students to school by public transport (as is a goal of public policy). Such an expansion could be linked to parking policies at schools, design of town and city streets, linking transport systems and more.

In such a system, the individual or private strategies of private car use become exceptional, and the system runs much more smoothly with traffic taken off the streets. Here, there is a much better solution for individuals, as buses are available to them, freeing up time and space for those responsible for them. But

there are also very significant knock on effects in terms of ability to get to work, flexibility in parents scheduling, livability of towns and cities and economic competitiveness - and of course, very significantly, greatly improving the environmental impact of the morning school commute. Individual difficulties are solved, while a wide range of collective possibilities are enabled to great benefit.

A second example is the Post Leaving Cert College, which has become an important and increasingly popular route into further education, often leading students into the university sector, where their records are at least as good as the students who did their first year in university. The PLC sector has grown. It's popular and is clearly a success. However, it still operates as something of a residual in the system, with the perverse situation where the more high status option is to go to the university and sit in extremely large classes in first year, while the lower status PLC sector offers much smaller classes and tailored instruction. A more constructive engagement between the university sector, the PLC sector and other related providers could change the experience of many first year higher education students in significant and creative ways, easing the transition into third level and tackling the very high dropout rate in the first year of higher education.

As it stands, the high status university courses and the student experience associated with them is the main remaining area within higher education that is based on mass lectures and exceptionally high staff student ratios, both compared to other parts of the Irish system and university systems internationally. A focus on constructing a higher education system that addresses these contradictions in the various forms of provision for the first year of higher education could address many of the issues relating, in particular, to students' apparently declining engagement with their higher education institutions. Again, such changes raise issues – and possibilities – of complex integration with other policy areas, including transport, accommodation, precarious employment and more.

Pathways to Decent Services

The past two sections have, first of all, documented the somewhat fragmentary and contradictory nature of Irish public services, even if there are areas of strength, and analyzed the potential within different parts of the system to build upon a thin level of universal services to move towards better developed, more complex and widely available services that can be the basis of the collective enabling of individuals, households, communities and the society as a whole. In many ways, this was the fundamental perspective underlying the NESC (2005)

report on the Developmental Welfare State, even if the realization of that vision was only ever very partial. Indeed, the main lessons taken into the policy system from the developmental welfare state report related mainly to the importance of tailoring services across the life cycle. While this was compatible with the notion of services as collectively enabling, it was only one aspect of the broader argument of that report which placed services at the heart of a dual process of social protection and social development.

In thinking about enhancing decent public and social services, we need to move beyond certain binary distinctions that obscure the possibilities for development and reform. The first of these is indeed that between public and social services. In many respects, all services are social in that they impact the social infrastructure and resources available to us to act together to improve our lives and communities.

Of course, that social infrastructure can be provided through a variety of means, as we have seen ranging across different mixes of public and private funding and provision. The Irish case, however, exhibits a wide range of areas where the combination of private provision, voluntary, collective provision and public provision interact in ways that are not effective, most obviously in health and in housing. The most effective national systems anchor their provision of decent services around public provision and financing.

There are other taken for granted distinctions that we should seek to move beyond. Some counterpose regulation to development. But in fact, these are often two sides of the same coin. For example, regulation can identify violations that can spark supports for improvement, as argued by Piore and Schrank (2018) in their discussion of how inspections of labour violations can be used to drive the upgrading of work. This can clearly extend to environmental violations of any kind, and what they might spark in terms of not only improvements in infrastructure, but also in standards and organizational practices in the infrastructure sector. At the same time supports for new developments and doing new things tends to spark the need for new regulatory frameworks. Therefore posing regulation and development as opposing imperatives artificially reduces the space available for public and policy action. Lester and Piore (2004) also argued that organisational forms that were oriented towards provision (e.g. social services or infrastructure), towards regulation (e.g. of labour violations or scientific standards) or towards development (e.g. training or enterprise policy) can all be spaces where the various actors not only access and use services but engage with each other. In this engagement they can learn through dialogue around the potential violations or deficits, but also around the challenges of

providing and accessing services. Decent services depend upon learning among providers and users, but the search for decent services can also spark that learning.

Once again, greater social capacities support the development of individuals and communities with decent services the critical mechanism in connecting these. Furthermore, the commonplace distinction between current and capital expenditure or investment is often misleading in the case of services, and especially more complex customized services that depend heavily on the labour and insights of professional workers and of citizen and user groups. In many cases, these services, for example, training or working on regulations, are oriented towards development and change, and therefore our investments in the future, even if showing up in the annual government budget under the heading of current spending. Indeed, it seems clear that an underfunded system of services will invest less in development and learning from its current budget as it seeks to meet the basic requirements of provision. However, a better funded system will have more space to engage in development and learning activities, even if in both cases, they are listed in government finances as current spending.

A final point regarding the dynamics of service provision is the critical role of professionals as employment in public and social services is by far the most professionalized of any of the economic sectors other than Information and Communication Technology. Therefore, the interaction between professionals, state organizations and the public, whether that be citizens or organizations, including firms, is a critical dynamic of learning and improvement in public services. Therefore, the enhancement of decent services is in many ways also about improving and enriching the relationship between citizens and the professionals working in those services.

As we noted earlier, public services can help renew the social contract. Improving public services will not only provide greater welfare to individuals and households but help to practically chart a way to a deeper common social purpose. Public services are most valuable, and most widely supported, when they not only compensate and support those who are lacking resources but when they enable and support all in the society. Enabling, shared, high quality social services anchor equality, solidarity and democracy in everyday life.

There are, of course, a variety of challenges to sparking this virtuous circle of public investment, delivery and trust. At the national level, and particularly in Ireland, the policy impulse is to provide funds, and in particular, to provide transfer payments as compensation, rather than to invest in reconfiguring and

developing existing services into a much deeper form of provision with either universal or strongly collective elements at the local level. The last budget in 2024 of the outgoing government in Ireland yielded firmly to this temptation with a wide variety of spending increases and was met with only moderate enthusiasm from a population seeking more fundamental solutions.

The reconfiguring of services and social relations can produce winners and losers, or can at least unsettle the routines and the confidence and trust of local people who are accustomed to existing patterns of service provision and have built them into their everyday live. In this sense it is important to provide for communities around a society a range of local wins in the early stages of service reform. There can be compensation for individuals and communities, but it should be closely linked to the medium to longer term development of these richer services discussed here.

Finally, there are, of course, major international challenges, particularly from the fiscal policy regime of the European Union. The challenge at the European level is to move past the legacy of austerity and mistrust in political action and social solidarity to collective enabling at the European level.

Nonetheless, the development of decent services in Ireland need not wait for this. There are huge returns to be gained, even in economic terms, from enhanced services. Much can be done building significantly on existing layers of provision. Finally, services that are collectively enabling will, as we saw at the outset, generally be politically popular and reinforce broader support for political and democratic institutions.

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3. Aviation and Fairness in Climate Policy: The Case for Making Flying Pay

Aoife Ní Lochlain

The issue of equity and historical accountability for climate change has been a persistent challenge in international negotiations aimed at mitigating global greenhouse gas emissions for several decades. Successive UN Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings have struggled to come to an agreement which satisfies the demands of the global south for an equitable financial contribution to adaptation and loss and damage from the industrialised economies who bear the primary responsibility for decades, if not centuries of cumulative GHG emissions.

While environmental policy, in particular climate action, has become a greater concern for the general public over the years, the potential for popular backlash has never receded. Indeed, the Covid19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine may have strengthened the impetus behind opposition to environmental policies (Euronews, 2023). The political environment in many European countries has become less hospitable towards EU environmental policies, especially those which may have an impact on prices or on specific sectoral groups such as farmers. The battle to pass a Nature Restoration Law in the EU is an example of a concerted, transnational campaign of opposition - coupled with misinformation and disinformation (Maxwell, L., 2024) - to a key environmental policy.

Perceptions of fairness and who pays are important factors in the receptiveness of the public to accept many environmental policies. In this context therefore, the opportunity to promote and pursue an environmental policy which satisfies both the polluter pays principle and equity concerns, becomes more attractive. One such policy challenge which may satisfy this duel constraint is the thorny problem of tackling aviation emissions.

This paper will examine the case for increasing taxes or charges on aviation as a mitigation measure to reduce emissions from the sector, an adaptation measure for raising revenue for climate spending and a fair method for targeting a polluter pays measure at those most responsible for emissions. It will begin by exploring the relationship between inequality and emissions, followed by a brief look at the importance of perceptions of fairness in climate policy-making and finally

it will examine some of the proposals for introducing/increasing taxes and/or charges in the aviation sector.

Fairness and Equity in Policy-Making: The relationship between emissions and inequality.

The relationship between climate change and inequality, both at the global and national level, has been a major focus of debate and research over many years (Bruckner *et.al.* 2022; Chancel and Piketty, 2015; Ivanova and Wood, 2020). Climate policy and inequality intersect in a number of key ways. First, the effects of climate change, such as rising food prices or increasingly frequent and severe flooding, disproportionally impact economically vulnerable households and marginalised communities, necessitating targeted adaptation policies and increased funding both globally and nationally. Second, many policies aimed at reducing fossil fuel consumption, such as carbon taxes, are widely regarded as regressive because lower-income households spend a larger share of their income on energy (Lyons *et.al.* 2012), unless compensating measures such as increased social transfers are implemented (Bruckner, *op.cit.;* Domguia, E., 2023). At the same time, the distribution of households' or individuals' carbon budgets is also highly unequal, both within and between countries (Bruckner *op.cit.*; Chancel and Piketty *op.cit.;* Ivanova and Wood; 2020, Khalfan *et.al.*, 2023). Finally, Chancel and Piketty (2015) emphasise the inequality in access to decision-makers and power between higher- and lower-income groups, which can significantly influence policymaking. This inequality of access highlights the importance of ensuring meaningful stakeholder participation in just transition strategies to address these disparities effectively.

Thus, climate policy must be developed and implemented in a way that does not exacerbate existing inequalities and, preferably, works to increase equality and improve quality of life for those on lower incomes. In addition, the Polluter Pays Principle and fairness demand that those most responsible for GHG emissions contribute more through both mitigation efforts and funding for adaptation measures. Understanding the distribution of CO2 emissions across household or individual income groups is crucial, therefore, to ensuring that any adverse effects of climate policies do not disproportionately burden those who are least responsible for emissions and least equipped to manage the consequences.

Studies investigating the distribution of CO2 emissions and energy consumption have predominately focused on income and/or expenditure as the most

significant determinants (Büchs, *et.al.*, 2024), albeit not the only ones[1], in particular in relation to indirect individual emissions. Inequality in household or individual CO2 emissions stem from the inequality in incomes, more precisely, the pattern of consumption and investment of the different income groups (Chancel, *et.al.,* 2023). The higher the income the higher the GHG emissions. Direct emissions, those that arise from heating and transport[2] for example, are considered necessities, and are less responsive to income rises than indirect emissions (Chancel, 2022). This raises an efficiency question (Chancel, *et.al.* 2023*)*; is the marginal effort to reduce the same level of emissions significantly lower for higher emitters than lower ones and does this mean there is a strong incentive to target policies at this group? Inequality may also impede mitigation efforts if the high emitting lifestyle of the top emitters prove attractive to lower emitting groups and encourage greater emitting by those groups in order to increase their social status (Chancel, *et.al.,* 2023); thus encouraging a *keeping up with the Jones's* style behaviour.

Lyons *et.al.* (2012) examined the distribution of emissions across household types, urban and rural and household size. While the data used relates to 2006 and much has changed in terms of both policy and technology, the results are very much in line with later research i.e. that the poorest households emit less than the richest households. During the period under study, the richest decile (emitting 8,209 tonnes) emitted 4,900 more tonnes CO2 than the poorest decile (3,300 tonnes) which emitted 1,400 tonnes directly and 1,900 tonnes indirectly. The analysis also found that indirect emissions are more correlated with a rise in income and consumption than direct emissions. This inequality of distribution between richer and poorer households in Ireland is line with a later research paper for Oxfam International on inequality and global emissions. *Khalfan et.al.* (2023) reported that in 2019, the richest 1% were responsible for 16% of global carbon emissions which was equivalent to the emissions of the poorest 66% of people. In addition, the richest 10% were responsible for 50% of global carbon emissions.

Analysis of consumption and emissions data at an EU level to show the distribution between households found that the top 1% of households in the EU with the highest carbon footprint were responsible for 22 times the per capita climate targets[3] (Ivanova and Wood, 2020). Ninety-five percent of households in

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1 Other variables could include composition of household and rural or urban location etc.

2 Road and rail transport

3 Only 5% of households remained within the target

Europe were living outside of the per capita targets (2.5 tCO2eq). The top 10% of EU households with the highest per capita carbon footprint accounted for 27% of the EU carbon footprint, which was a higher contribution than the bottom 50 per cent. An important finding of the study was that air transport made up the largest proportion of the footprint of the top 1% of emitting households.

The authors of the 2020 study adopted a per capita emission's target of 2.5tCO2eq by 2030, consistent with emissions pathways that would seek to limit global heating to the 1.5 degrees target as per the 2015 Paris Agreement. They then estimated the carbon footprint distribution in each EU country for the top 10%, middle 40% and bottom 50% of the population. Results showed that the top 10% of EU households were responsible for 27% of emissions, the middle 40% were responsible for 47% and the bottom 50% were responsible for 26%. Ireland had the highest percentage of households (55%) in the EU middle 40% bracket and the third lowest proportion (27%) of households in the bottom 50% (after Luxembourg and Greece). Germany, Ireland, Greece and Luxembourg had less than 1% of households within the per capita climate target. Finally, air travel comprised 41% of the top 1% of emitters in the EU.

Air travel was the most elastic consumption in the EU, with elasticity rising with expenditure quintile. The expenditure elasticity was 1.5, reaching 2.0-2.7 among those with the highest expenditure levels. The lowest expenditure quintile on the other hand did not increase spending on air transport with an increase in total spending. This, according to the authors "confirms air travel as a highly carbon-intensive luxury" (Ivanova and Wood, *op.cit.*). Overall, income and carbon footprints were found to be "strongly positively correlated" and aviation stood out, "with a substantial carbon contribution and the highest expenditure elasticities for the highest emitters" while receiving "extremely low policy attention, with only 1% of policies targeting aviation" (Ivanova and Wood, *op.cit.,* p.6).

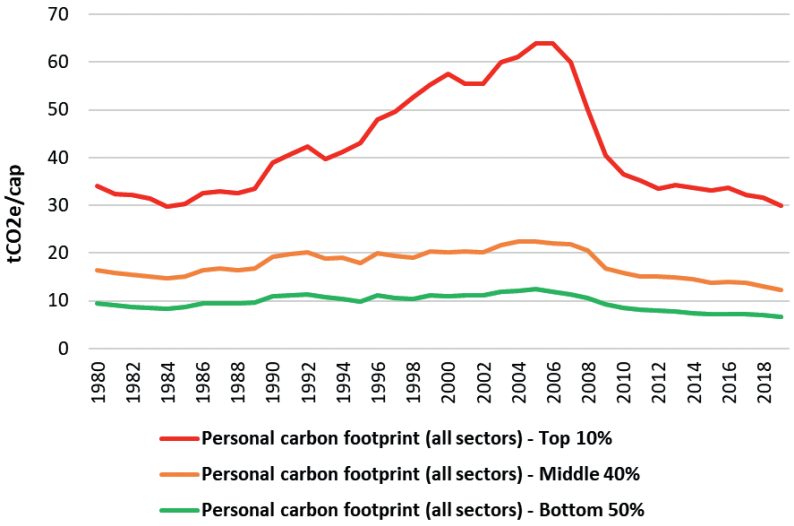
Taking a slightly different approach Büchs, *et.al.*, (2024) compared the role of income and wealth in Belgium and the UK found that not only is wealth positively correlated with emissions but that emissions inequality according to wealth and income is higher than according to income alone and thus households with low income and low wealth face a cumulative disadvantage in having the means to undertake mitigation and adaptation measures such as house retrofitting. This means that inequality can be a barrier to emissions reductions if policies are not designed to take account of wealth and income disparities.

Chancel, *et.al.* (2023) estimates that the top 10% of global carbon emitters are responsible for nearly half of all greenhouse gas emissions, while the bottom 50% contribute only 12%. In addition, analysis showed that within-country carbon inequality now accounts for the bulk[4] of global emissions inequality with the consumption and investment patterns of "a relatively small group of the population" contributing disproportionally to GHG emissions (Chancel, *op.cit.*, p5).

The World Inequality Lab hosts and manages the World Inequality Database (WID), a comprehensive open-access resource on global inequality data upon which Chancel *et.al.* (2023), Chancel (2022) Chancel and Piketty (2015) base their analysis. The WID encompasses extensive data on income and wealth distribution, as well as gender disparities and environmental inequality.[5] Using WID data, Figure 1 below shows the CO2 emissions per capita in Ireland at the top 10%, middle 40% and bottom 50% levels of distribution. The distribution of CO2 emissions in Ireland follows the same pattern as those in other EU countries, with the to 10% accounting for a much higher proportion of emissions than the bottom 50%.

[4] Approximately two-thirds of the total
[5] See https://wid.world/

Figure 1: CO2 Emissions Per Capita Ireland 1980-2019



Source: World Inequality Database

The focus of the World Inequality Lab is to provide analysis and policy solutions to inequality, globally and nationally. The severity of the impacts of climate change on the global south and the moral case for 'Loss and Damage' payments from industrialised countries demand substantial and sustained funding. At the same time, the work of the WIL has advanced the argument that as carbon inequality within countries is increasing faster than carbon inequality between countries, the demand for equitable adaptation finance should apply to all citizens of the world equally, whether they come from rich, emerging or developing countries. While a global progressive carbon tax would be a more preferable policy measure, far more implementable would be a global tax on air transport.

As discussed in the literature above, air transport is generally a marker of high income and high CO2 emitting lifestyles and is associated with higher living standards. To bring greater fairness, a further distinction between different income or social groups can be made through the ticket class system of economy, first and business class or through targeting frequent flyers. Such a tax would

have two useful properties, it would target both high-income individuals and high emitters.

Adopting a distributional approach in the design of climate policies is essential to ensure both fairness and effectiveness. A review of the literature on emissions and their distribution consistently demonstrates that higher-income individuals are responsible for significantly greater emissions compared to those with lower incomes or lower levels of consumption. This disparity is particularly evident in the context of air travel, which is both a high-emission activity and largely considered a luxury rather than a necessity. Given these characteristics, there is a strong rationale for implementing appropriate taxation on air travel to address its environmental impact and align its costs with the principles of Polluter Pays and fairness and equity.

The importance of the perception of fairness in support for climate polices

Public perception of the threat posed by climate change is high at both a European and Irish level.[6] Ireland was one of seven EU countries to rank climate change as the number one threat facing the world (EU Commission, 2023). Seventy-nine percent of the Irish public believes that climate change should be a "very high" or "high" priority for Government (EPA, 2022). When it came to individual policy measures the results were more mixed, with 36% of respondents opposed to higher taxes on petrol and diesel cars and 32% against reducing the number of cattle in Ireland.

Berguist *et.al.* (2022) undertook a meta-analysis of studies from 33 countries on determinants influencing public opinion on climate change taxes and laws. The analysis identified key factors, including fairness, effectiveness, trust, and demographic variables which shape public acceptance of these policies. Fairness and effectiveness were the most crucial factors. Perceived fairness, in particular distributional fairness, had the strongest positive impact, personal fairness showed a weaker influence. Belief in the efficacy of policies to mitigate climate change also strongly influenced acceptance, interestingly this was stronger for regulations than for economic policies. Knowledge and belief in climate change, on the other hand, had a weak positive relationship with public opinion. Looking specifically at environmental taxes, Berquist (2024) found similar results, that perceived unfairness was more important to stimulating public opposition to a policy measure than extensive costs or ineffectiveness.

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[6] See the 2023 *Special Eurobarometer Report 538 Climate Change* for more details.

A 2023 Austrian study on support for low carbon mobility measures also found that public acceptance is strongly influenced by perceptions of fairness and that policies perceived as fair are more likely to gain support (Thaller, A. *et.al.* 2023). Echoing Berquist *et.al.,* policies which were perceived as effective in reducing emissions positively influenced public support, but the direct impact was weaker than fairness. Policies which were seen as overly disruptive or intrusive reduced acceptance as intrusiveness was found to indirectly affect acceptance by decreasing perceptions of fairness and effectiveness. Regulatory measures (e.g., banning fossil-fuel cars) were slightly more accepted and seen as fairer compared to economic measures (e.g., fuel taxes) however, the differences in acceptance and fairness between the two types were minimal. Overall, public support for both regulatory and economic policies was found to be low in this study, underlining the challenge of implementing restrictive measures for low-carbon mobility. The study recommended that policymakers should emphasize fairness, particularly by ensuring policies are seen as equitable and minimally disruptive. Compensatory mechanisms for vulnerable groups could also enhance perceived fairness (Thaller, *op.cit.).* Political viability is strongly linked to public acceptability and key to formulating public opinion on the effectiveness of a policy is the perceived fairness of the policy (Isaacson, *et.al*, 2023). Perceived fairness, according to Isaacson *et.al.*, is the most important predictor of acceptance of what are known as 'push-measure' climate policies (e.g. taxes and charges).

The Thorny Problem of Aviation

Air passenger numbers have been growing in Ireland and the wider EU since the end of the Covid 19 pandemic. For some, this reflects an understandable desire to travel and the social need to keep and touch with families and friends across the globe (Transport and Environment, 2022). However, this growth in passenger numbers also demonstrates a collective failure on behalf of governments and the EU to address emissions in the sector. In fact, through various policy measures, Governments are supporting the artificially low prices at the expense of the environment. At a European level, tax free fuel, VAT free tickets and a legacy of free allowances under the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EUETS) have left flights under-taxed; to this can be added the subsidisation of airports and airport expansion in many countries

Aviation imposes the highest climate change costs among transportation modes (European Commission, 2019). Emissions per seat-kilometre on short-haul flights have nearly four times higher external costs than those from high-speed rail. However, while tax harmonisation on aviation at the EU level has remained

elusive, these substantial external costs, particularly in terms of climate impact, have led to policies aimed at raising the price of air travel to help curb projected long-term growth in air traffic. For example, flights within the European Economic Area have been included in the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) since 2013, and several European countries have introduced various flight ticket tax schemes and VAT on domestic flights.

Considered 'hard to abate', the key challenge to aviation as a sector is that demand-driven growth has consistently been greater than any efficiency gains, and this gap is expected to grow as further efficiency improvements become harder to achieve (Transport and Environment, 2022). Addressing this imbalance requires better pricing of aviation emissions and ending the sector's significant tax exemptions.

Traditional jet engines are likely to remain in service for decades, thus policies are essential to encourage a shift from fossil jet fuel to near-zero carbon alternatives such as sustainable aviation fuels (SAFs). This shift is critical to decarbonising aviation and mitigating its non-CO_2 impacts. Yet scaling up these new fuels is a formidable task (Black, *et.al.*, 2024). SAFs are projected to remain considerably more expensive than fossil fuels in the short-medium term (Teusch, J., and Ribansky, S., 2021). Bio-based alternatives for example compete with other land uses such as food and would be difficult to produce at scale sustainably (Teusch and Ribansky, *op.cit.;* Transport and Environment, *op.cit.)*. E-kerosene, produced from green hydrogen, does not have the land-use constraint but it will require additional renewable electricity and CO_2, captured from ambient air (Black, *et.al.*, *op.cit.;* Transport and Environment, *op.cit.)*. This means that it is competing with other sectors for share of renewable energy.

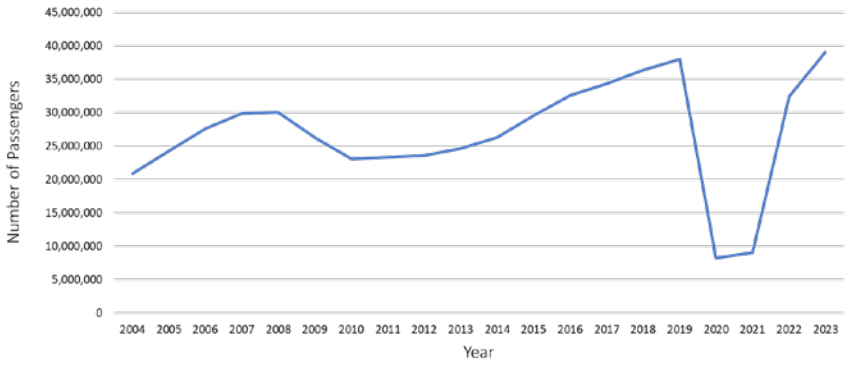
Despite some progress, this shift isn't happening fast enough. Fully decarbonising aviation with e-kerosene would demand immense amounts of renewable electricity —likely unachievable in the near term (Black, *et.al.*, 2024). According to Transport and Environment (*op.cit.*), if unchecked sector growth continues, passenger demand alone could consume up to 24% of Europe's renewable electricity by 2050. Additionally, aviation's non-CO_2 effects may have an even greater impact than its CO_2 emissions, further demonstrating the urgency of accelerating this transition.

Reducing flight demand is therefore crucial for reducing GHG emissions in aviation. Cumulative emissions drive global warming and allowing the aviation sector to avoid substantial emissions reductions until alternative fuel supplies scale up in the 2030s and 2040s places greater mitigation responsibility on other

sectors. Estimations by Transport and Environment (2022) show that if aviation traffic continues to grow as projected, an additional 1GtCO_2 emissions will be released into the atmosphere compared to a scenario where demand is actively managed—even if full decarbonisation is achieved by 2050.

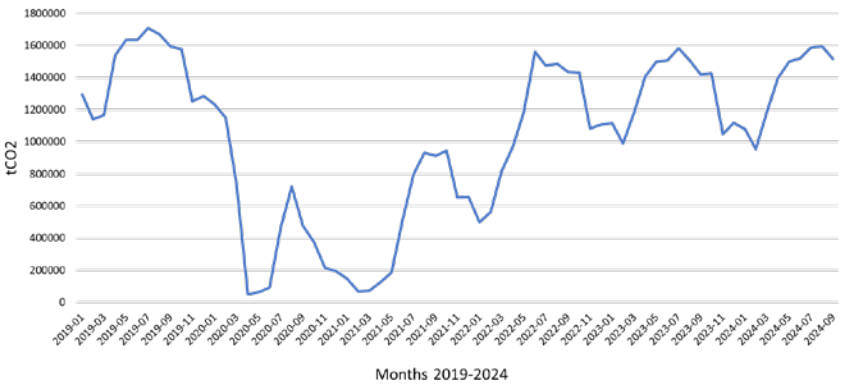
In the case of Ireland, figures 2,3 and 4 show the growth in both passenger numbers and emissions from air transport 2019-2023. Despite the disruption to the industry brought by the pandemic, 2023 saw nearly 40 million people use Irish airports. This was the highest number on record and caused Ireland's consumption of jet kerosene to increase by 15%. Clearly with no policy action, demand will continue to rise.

Figure 2: Number of Passengers: Ireland 2004-2023



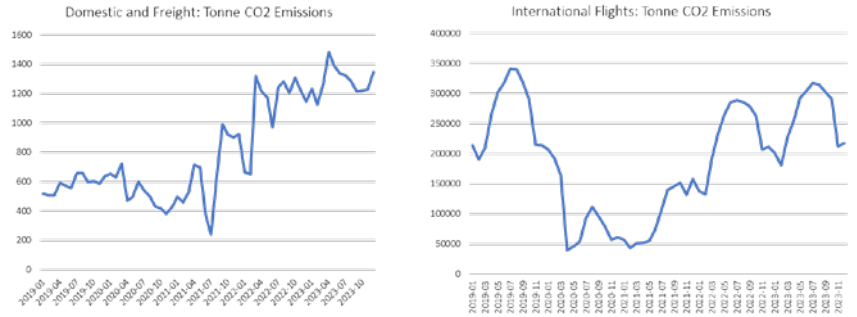
Source: Eurostat, Air Transport Statistics

Figure 2: Total Emissions from Aviation Ireland 2019-2023



Source: OECD (SEEA Residence Principle)

Figure 3: Emissions from Domestic and international Flights Ireland – 2019-2023



Source: OECD (UNFCCC Inventories territorial principle)

Taxation and Aviation: current state of play

Why is pricing pollution in the aviation sector so important? First, eliminating subsidies and price gaps with other, less damaging modes of transport or with clean fuels would have a behavioural impact. A ticket for a flight in the EU is

cheaper than the equivalent train ticket 70% of the time, while air passengers are five times more polluting than train passengers (Sgaravatti, G., 2023). Second, it would incentivise the use of cleaner fuels and drive fuel efficiency and new aircraft technologies, encouraging airlines to invest in more fuel-efficient aircraft. Equally important however is the contribution it would make to social and environmental justice. As discussed above, higher income and wealthier households contribute disproportionally to emissions, bridging the price gap would satisfy the Polluter Pays Principle. Options for taxes and charges addressing all or part of this price gap exist at both the EU and the member state level.

Removing the jet fuel exemption

Member states can already remove the exemption on taxing jet fuel for domestic flights or bilateral extra-EU flights with countries where there are no Air Service Agreements (ASA) which stipulate exemptions. However, no member state has opted to do so. The revision of the Energy Taxation Directive, under the EU Green New Deal, includes the removal of the exemption at the intra-EU level, along with other fossil fuel subsidies. The proposal is currently making its way through the process and is subject to some opposition from some member states. It includes, amongst other measures:

- Minimum levels of tax to be applied gradually on jet fuels, set at €10.75 per gigajoule (0.38 per litre) by 2033.
- Intra-EU cargo flights will continue to be exempted.

Existing ASAs complicate the picture. The EU has included fuel exemptions in its ASAs with the US and Canada for example, which means that it cannot require that airlines from these countries pay tax on fuel bought within the EU. However, more recently negotiated ASAs do not have this exemption and the EU could seek to renegotiate ASAs where the exemption exists. While the revised Energy Tax Directive has not yet completed its passage through the EU institutions, it has been criticised by environmentalists for the slow gradual application of the minimum level of tax on jet fuels.[7] Environmental campaigners and others have also argued that if the proposals do not gain the needed unanimity at EU level, that willing member states should enter into bilateral agreements with

[7] See https://www.transportenvironment.org/uploads/files/Joint-letter-on-ETD-Unfair-tax-exemption-FINAL-3.pdf

each other to tax jet fuel, as is currently allowed under the existing Energy Tax Directive (Transport and Environment *op.cit.;* Teusch and Ribansky, 2021).

The EU ETS

European Airlines have been members of the European Union Emissions Trading System since 2012. While the past few years have seen carbon price increase since its reform in 2018, a number of factors mean that the system has not been as effective as it could have been in addressing emissions from aviation. First of all, only intra-EU flights were included, due to pressure from some countries and from industry (Transport and Environment *op.cIt.*). This narrower scope has meant that only 40% of aviation's EU emissions were included and some of the EUs largest airlines do not pay for 70% of their emissions.[8] In addition, the original poor design of the system created an oversupply of credits in previous years. Airlines also still receive some of their allowances for free, in 2019, airlines got nearly half of their required emissions permits for free, which amounted to a €900m subsidy. However, despite these limitations, the system had "significant impact" in restricting the growth of air services within the EEA (Fageda and Teixidó, 2022: p.19)

The International Civil Aviation Organisation has a carbon offsetting scheme known as CORSIA, Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation. However, limitations include (but are not limited to) the lack of revenue generated, the challenge of ensuring offsets are additional and the unalignment of the net emissions targets with global net-zero emissions targets (Black, *et.al.*, 2024). CORSIA is not an effective alternative to an expanded EU ETS, for the system to fully account for the cost of pollution, the scope must be expanded to include all flights (Sgaravatti, G., 2023).

VAT Exemption

The VAT Directive permits EU member states to exempt passenger transport from VAT under specific conditions, allowing for reduced rates or a zero VAT rate. All member states apply a zero rate to international air travel, creating price gaps between it and other transportation modes. In contrast, a majority of countries impose VAT on domestic air tickets, either at a reduced or standard VAT rate. The loss of revenue to EU member states is significant, with one estimation putting

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[8] Prices over the last two years have fluctuated between a record high of €100 per ton to a low of €56 a ton. Current prices are between €63 and €66 a ton. For reference, carbon tax in Ireland has been increased to €63.50 per tonne.

the loss at €17 billion for both intra-EU and extra-EU flights at a harmonised rate of 15%. In place of VAT a number of member states apply ticket charges.

Tickets and Taxes Applied in EEA + UK

Currently nine countries in the EEA +UK zone apply a form of ticket charge (see table 1 below). Denmark will become the tenth country in the region to do so in 2025, pledging that the revenue will help finance the green transition. Seven of the countries apply different rates depending on distance travelled. This is in line with the Polluter Pays Principle, longer distance flights have a greater impact on emissions not just due to the extra carbon emitted but also to the non-CO2 impacts that are greater at higher altitude.

However, while the number of countries applying a ticket tax has increased, a small number of countries, including Ireland, have removed existing ticket taxes (see table 2). Malta removed its tax following a ruling by the European Commission that the tax was discriminatory, as it only applied to flights leaving the island. Ireland had a passenger tax between 2009 and 2014, when it was abolished following lobbying by the industry and the publication of a report critical of the measure which was commissioned by industry.

Table 1: Aviation Ticket Measures and Taxes in the EEA + UK

Country	Ticket Tax Name	Rate Per Passenger	Commercial/ non-commercial
Austria	Air Transport Levy (ATL	Less than 350km €30 Greater than 350km €12 VAT is liable on domestic flights but deducted from the ATL	
Belgium	Embarkation Tax	Less than 500km from BRU €10 More than 500km from BRU but inside EEA/UK €2 Outside EEA/UK €4	Commercial and non-commercial
Denmark*	Air Passenger Tax (forthcoming 2025)	Intra-European €30 Medium Distance €250 Long Distance €300	Commercial and certified for more than 10 passengers

Country	Ticket Tax Name	Rate Per Passenger	Commercial/ non-commercial
France	Airport Tax**	Class 1: Parisian Airports €11.80 Class 2: Lyon, Marseilles, Nice or Toulouse etc. €8.90-€9.40 Class 3: All other airports €17.20	Commercial
	Civil Aviation Tax	Within EEA Outside EEA Per tonne of Freight	
	Air Passenger Eco (Linked with Solidarity) Tax	Within EEA Economy €2.63 Within EEA Business €20.27 Outside EEA Economy €7.51 Outside EEA Business €63.07	Commercial
	Noise Tax***	Applies to Operators	Commercial and non-commercial
Germany	Air Transport Tax	Annex 1: Flights to EFTA, Russia, Turkey, North Africa, UK €15.53 Annex 2: Between Annex 1 and 6,000 km €39.34 All other destinations €70.83	Commercial
	Security Fee	All passengers departing from any German airport €2 - €10	Commercial and non-commercial
Italy	Noise Tax	Levied on Aircraft depending on size	
	City Council tax	Passenger tax applied at different rates across different airports	
	Aero (Luxury) Tax	Distance <100 km €10 Distance <1,500 km €100 Distance > 1,500 km €200	Applied on executive charter flights
Netherlands	Air Passenger Tax	Within Europe NOK 85 Outside of Europe NOK 332	Commercial

Country	Ticket Tax Name	Rate Per Passenger	Commercial/ non-commercial
Norway	Air Passenger Duty	Lowest fare class < 2,000m All other fare classes < 2,000m Lowest fare class > 2,000 m All other fare classes > 2,000m	Special rate for charted/non-commercial flights
Portugal	Carbon Tax	Over 19 seats €2.00 Under 19 seats €2.00 + pollution coefficient of 10 + distance	Commercial and non-commercial
United Kingdom	Air Passenger Duty	Distance and Weight dependent £7 - £607	Commercial and non-commercial

Source: Transport and Environment (2022), FCC Aviation website[9]

** The Danish tax rates increase year-on-year to 2030*

*** French Airport Tax applies to passenger and cargo flights departing on board commercial aircraft*

**** French Noise Tax applies to operators, amount depends on tax rate at applicable airports (€0- €75)*

Table 2: Aviation Ticket Measures Removed in the EEA + UK

Member State	Ticket Tax Name	Rate Types	Reason for Removal
Ireland	Passenger Tax	One rate	2009 – 2014 Removed due to impact on industry and tourism
Malta	Air Passenger Departure Tax	One rate	2001-2008 Found to be discriminatory by EU Commission
Sweden	Air Travel Tax	Domestic/EU International commercial < 6,000km All other distances	Removed from 2025 by new Government

Source: Transport and Environment (2022), FCC Aviation website[10]

[9] Last Accessed 01/12/2024
[10] Last Accessed 01/12/2024

Impacts of Taxation and Charges on Aviation

The aims of introducing air travel taxes varies between countries. A 2023 systematic review of literature explored their implementation, purposes, and impact on the airline industry. Focusing on research published between 2007 and 2019 which examined the implementation of indirect taxes on aviation, it categorised the motives for air travel taxes into four main purposes: general revenue generation, sustainable tourism strategies, environmental concerns, and specific funding initiatives. The effectiveness of such taxes in reducing carbon emissions was questioned, as they were found to "distort travel demand" without achieving significant environmental benefits (Jamaluddin, A. *et.al.* 2023). This "distortion" was due to the substitution effect, where passengers opted to take another form of transport instead of flying. The literature on the impact of aviation taxes on demand generally finds that implementation results in reduced passenger numbers (De Bruin and Yakot, *op.cit.)*. However, the extent of that reduction may be lower (or non-existent) in areas which are geographically isolated.

At the global level, an IMF paper estimated the impact of two ticket taxes, one at 25% and one at 10% which was combined with a feebate[11] (Black, *et.al.*, 2024). Results of the analysis showed that the taxes alone generated significant revenue, but had little impact on emissions. Revenue from the 25% ticket tax would raise nearly $200 billion in 2030 and up to $450 billion in 2050. However, emissions declined only 10%. The lower rate of 10% combined with a feebate on the other hand had a greater impact on emissions but a lower revenue.

A 2014 paper analysed the impact of a carbon-based flight ticket tax compared to a lump sum ticket tax rate similar to those found in the table above (Krenek, A. and Schratzenstaller, M., 2014). The carbon-based tax was considered to be more effective in internalising the external costs of flying and therefore a more effective measure for disincentivising flying, in particular very short flights (which could be substituted by other modes) and long-distance flights (which are extremely carbon intensive). In addition, while it was found to be less effective than a fuel tax (such as excise duties), it had the advantage of being implementable within the current legal international agreements on air transport. In terms of the impact on Irish passenger numbers the analysis estimated that with a high

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[11] A feebate in this scenario is a measure which applied "a sliding scale of fees/rebates on (plane or ship) operators with emissions rates above/below a certain threshold level ("pivot point") ... Feebates could help accelerate the adoption of zero-emission fuels, can be designed to raise some revenues, have smaller impacts on prices, and hence less need for compensating vulnerable states." Black, *et.al.*, p.2

tax scenario of €35 per tCO2 emissions, the growth rate in passenger numbers 2013-2014 would fall from 6.96% to 2.87% (Krenek and Schratzenstaller, *op.cit.*).

At the European level, Transport and Environment (*op.cit.)* modelled a price of €165 per tonne by 2030 on all European aviation emissions, including flights departing from Europe not included in the EU ETS. By 2030, they calculated that 85% of the abatement would come from demand management and pricing measures. The role of business travel would be especially important, with a reduction in business travel representing half of the emissions savings. As part of this model they included a business travel cap and an end to airport expansion in Europe. Thus, taxation measures coupled with regulation may yield the best results.

Ticket taxes in European countries may have a particularly negative impact on supply by low-cost airlines (Bernardo *et.al.*, 2024) bringing an average reduction of 12% reduction in air traffic by these carriers. Passengers who purchase low-prices tickets bear more of the tax burden than those who pay high fares. This could mean that ticket taxes could have a greater impact on 'avoidable' or opportunistic flights, those which have "less added value" and a "lower degree of internalisation of the total costs of flying" (Bernardo *op.cit.*)

Finally, exploring the broader economic or secondary impacts of aviation taxation in Ireland, a 2021 ESRI paper investigated the possible impacts of five scenarios (De Bruin and Yakut, 2021).

1. The abolition of the free allowances in the ETS in 2026
2. Introduction of VAT
3. A passenger tax of €5, €16 and UK level
4. Abolition of the kerosene tax exemption and,
5. Abolition of kerosene tax exemption plus the ETS improvements.

The analysis showed that all five types of taxation changes listed above resulted in higher prices and a reduction in demand, however this impact on demand was constrained by the lack of adequately substitutable modes of transport, due to the Ireland's position as an island nation. The results are shown as percentage differences of all measures when compared with a carbon tax trajectory. The imposition of VAT lead to the highest emissions reductions for a single measure (1.8% in 2030 if introduced in 2025). The removal of free EU ETS allowances in 2026 yielded a 1.1% reduction in 2030. Passenger taxes at €5, €16 and the same level as the UK yielded 0.3%, 0.8% and 1.5% reductions in 2030 respectively.

The abolition of the kerosene tax exemption yielded a 0.8% reduction and the abolition of kerosene tax exemption plus the ETS improvements yielded a 1.9% reduction. As taxes which directly target carbon, this final combination, along with abolition of kerosene alone and abolition of free EU ETS allowances were also found to be the most cost-effective measures. In terms of impacts on household wages, the study found that while the impacts were small, they were regressive and specific households would face unemployment. In terms of real disposable income, the result was the opposite, the impact was progressive (although still small), with richer households more negatively impacted (De Bruin and Yakut, *op.cit.)*.

Addressing the Frequent Flyer

A measure that is being increasingly championed by environmental campaigners and think tanks is the Frequent Flyer Levy or fee (FFL).[12] Reducing corporate travel presents a genuine opportunity to lower demand. The pandemic demonstrated that, although people missed the social connections associated with flying, corporate and business travel could largely be replaced by alternative methods of working. Discussion on reducing demand is no longer off-limits; the IEA notes that even a modest reduction in flights (just 12%) could cut emissions by up to 50% (Transport and Environment, 2022). A business travel cap or a frequent flyer measure has been suggested by think tanks as a way of reducing the demand from cooperate travel as well as high-income households. New Economics Foundation (NEF) analysis showed that households with incomes over £/€100,000 per year are at least six times more likely to take three or more return flights annually compared to those with incomes below £/€20,000. Additionally, nearly 70% of households in the lowest income group do not fly at all in a given year, while only about 20% of the highest-income households forgo flying annually.

The Frequent Flyer Levy proposed by the NEF applies a tax to each flight taken by an individual, with the rate increasing incrementally after two single flights (or one round trip). This approach, the NEF argues, supports the green transition in three key ways:

First, it would reduce aviation emissions by achieving significant short- to medium-term reductions, providing necessary cuts in emissions that technology alone cannot meet. Their model suggests that, if implemented in 2028, it

[12] For example, the New Economics Foundation, the International Council on Clean Transportation.

could reduce European aviation carbon emissions by 21%. Second, it would protect low-income flyers: 72% of the Western European population will pay no extra taxes under this model, meaning that low-income passengers can continue flying. Higher-income households (earning over £/€100,000), on the other hand, will be four times more likely to pay the levy than those earning below £/€20,000. The majority of emissions reductions (54%) will come from passengers who currently take four or more return flights per year, or 4.5% of the Western European population. Finally, the FFL could generate significant revenue -an estimated €63.6 billion across Europe - which could be used to fund the transition (New Economics Foundation, 2024).

A study which modelled the impact of a carbon tax and an FFL on aviation in Canada found that $123 per tonne carbon price would result in a 4% reduction in air traffic and a 4% reduction in emissions in 2030, compared to business as usual. An FFL which would exempt two flights a year per passenger and charge higher rates for each subsequent flight would lead to a shift in passenger profile of flights avoided. Higher income passengers would make up 68% of flights avoided compared with 10% of lower income passengers. The burden of the tax would fall more heavily on high-income high frequency air passengers (Zheng, S., 2024).

Finally, an International Council on Clean Transportation white paper (Zheng and Rutherford, 2022) compared a flat ticket tax to an FFL and estimated that a global FFL would earn 81% of its revenue from frequent flyers who take more than 6 flights a year and 67% of revenue from high-income countries. A flat ticket tax, on the other hand, would earn 41% of its revenue from frequent flyers and 51% from high-income countries. On the basis of fairness, the white paper presents a good argument for an FFL. The demand pattern from the FFL differed to that of the flat ticket tax. Overall the demand reduction was 7% for both measures but the distribution of the demand reduction for the FFL was concentrated on those who flew over 2 flights per annum and increased on a sliding scale to reach 44% on the 20th flight. The distribution of demand reduction in terms of income brackets fell heaviest on the higher-income percentiles.

There are clear environmental and fairness reasons to tax air travel and while most of the possible options currently available to government and the European Union may not the most effective and efficient in terms of the degree to which they can internalise the full environmental and social cost of pollution, they do provide a price signal and increased revenue to fund the transition. Some measures have a greater impact on demand reduction than others. The Frequent Flyer Levy stands out as a measure which can reduce demand, raise revenue and

target higher-earners and polluters more effectively. As such, the FFL or inclusion of FFL in a suite of measures may have the potential to gain better favour with the general public.

In terms of funding mitigation and adaptation measures in the Global South, aviation taxes provide a mechanism for raising revenue either at a global level or a regional level such as the EU. A critical consideration is the allocation of revenue generated from such taxes. Should funds primarily support national climate measures, or should they be directed toward adaptation and loss-and-damage efforts in the Global South? Dama *et.al.*, (2023), argue that a tax of €0.33 per litre would raise €18 billion a year which could be used for the financing of adaptation in vulnerable countries. The question of where the revenue should be allocated is closely tied to the objectives of the tax — whether they are implanted to address global inequality and loss and damage, drive mitigation, or both.

As the costs of climate action and climate-related damages escalate globally, ensuring stable revenue streams is essential. However, reliance solely on environmental taxes (such as the carbon tax and fuel excise duties in Ireland) is unsustainable in the longer run; these revenues are expected to decline as the effectiveness of mitigation policies reduces the activities being taxed (Commission on Taxation and Welfare, 2022). Aviation taxes and charges would therefore bring a diversified and equitable approach to climate financing, whether global or national. These taxes can be implemented nationally but should form part of a broader aviation and tourism policy. Such a policy might include regulatory measures, such as passenger caps, restrictions or bans on private jets, and limitations on business travel, to enhance emissions reduction and equity outcomes. Depending on their design, they also have the possibility of both influencing behaviour and targeting higher-income individuals and frequent flyers who contribute disproportionately to emissions. It should not be forgotten, however, that a reduction in passenger numbers would have a knock-on-effect on the airlines and on the tourist industry and the principle of fairness requires that Government take a Just Transition approach to mitigating negative impacts on households and jobs.

Conclusion

The intersection of climate policy, fairness, and inequality is at the forefront of global discussions on mitigating climate change. Aviation, which accounts for approximately 14% of total EU transport emissions (De Bruin and Yakut, *op.cit.)* remains disproportionately accessible to wealthier populations. Aviation exemplifies the inherent inequities in climate change mitigation, as frequent

flyers—often the wealthiest individuals—contribute the most to emissions, while vulnerable populations, particularly in developing nations, bear the brunt of climate impacts. This disparity underscores the need for equitable climate policies that address the dual challenges of reducing aviation emissions and ensuring a just transition.

The persistence of inequities within and across nations is a recurring theme. Wealthier households and high-income countries are overrepresented in aviation emissions, yet the poorest populations face the greatest vulnerability to climate impacts. Addressing this imbalance is central to achieving climate justice. Policies such as the Frequent Flyer Levy and ticket taxes align with the Polluter-Pays Principle, ensuring those who contribute disproportionately to emissions shoulder their fair share of mitigation costs. These measures not only reduce demand but also generate revenue that can be directed towards a just transition in Ireland and adaptation and loss-and-damage efforts in the Global South.

Public perception remains an important factor in implementing effective climate policies. Studies demonstrate that fairness is a critical determinant of public support. Equitable policies that protect low-income groups while holding high emitters accountable are more likely to gain acceptance. The integration of just transition strategies is also essential to minimize any regressive impacts of aviation taxes on vulnerable populations and sectors and negative impacts on those dependent on the tourism industry.

In a time where environmental policies, in particular taxation measures risk provoking backlash across the continent and here in Ireland, greater taxation of air travel could demonstrate not just a commitment to emissions reduction, but a commitment to fairness and a just transition. A 2023 poll undertaken by Friends of the Irish Environment showed that 55% of the Irish public believe that 'Airplane fuel should be taxed as much as fuel for any other mode of transport' with just 9% 'strongly disagreeing'. Support for heavily taxing private jets was "overwhelming at 79% with only 5% disagreeing". Kerosene subsidies cost the state €553m in 2022 and the effective tax rate was €26 per tonne compared with €220 per tonne for petrol.

Technological advancements, such as sustainable aviation fuels, are vital for long-term decarbonisation, but they remain insufficient in the short to medium term. Immediate demand reduction through fiscal and regulatory measures is necessary to curb aviation emissions. Policies must be designed to address

cumulative emissions, close loopholes like tax exemptions, and phase out subsidies that perpetuate the sector's reliance on fossil fuels.

Transforming aviation into a fair and sustainable sector requires a multifaceted approach. This includes reducing demand though both taxation and regulation, encouraging innovation in alternative fuels and redistributing resources to support low-income and vulnerable households nationally and climate-vulnerable regions globally. By targeting high-emitting, mostly affluent flyers, these policies demonstrate a commitment towards fairness in climate policy. Ultimately, making flying pay is not only a practical step toward decarbonisation but also a moral imperative for achieving global, European and national equity and environmental justice.

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4. Enhancing Participation in Local Democracy? Opportunities and Challenges via Public Participation Networks[1]

Dr. Matthew Donoghue, Assistant Professor of Social Policy
Khalil Moran, PhD candidate in Social Justice

Paper based on talk given at the 2024 Social Justice Ireland Annual Conference "Managing Change to Build a Just Society – Policy Outcomes for a New Social Contract"

N.B.: please note that these findings are preliminary and may be subject to change or refinement.

Introduction

Public Participation Networks (PPNs) were set up in 2014. Their explicit aim from the outset was to develop the role of local communities in local policymaking and contributing to oversight of Local Authorities (LAs) (Bennett, 2021: 20).

The Department of Rural and Community Development (DCRD, 2024) remarks that:

> *A Public Participation Network is a network that allows local authorities to connect with community groups around the country. The Public Participation Network is the 'go to' for all local authorities who wish to benefit from community and voluntary expertise in their area.*

A core organising principle of PPNs is that of deliberative democracy. According to Melo and Baiocchi (2006: 589),

> *'Defined as more than democracy as a political system, but also more than "discussion-based" democracy, deliberative democracy calls for the deliberation of citizens as reasonable equals for the legitimate exercise of authority and as a way of transforming the preferences and intentions of citizens'.*

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PPNs have been set up with these principles in mind, developing mechanisms and structures that provide opportunities for members of the public, most often via grassroots organisations such as charities and community groups, to directly engage with the local policymaking process. Indeed, the DRCD (2023) argues that 'democracy is made stronger, by allowing diverse views and interests to be considered as part of the decision-making process of local government'. Nevertheless, deliberative democracy can be a lofty ideal and its implementation is not always straightforward.

This research set out to investigate the dynamics of PPNs as facilitators of deliberative democracy via case studies and interviews with various stakeholders, following a call for further qualitative research on the deliberative nature of PPNs, by Social Justice Ireland (see Bennett, 2021). Indeed, Bennett found that while the principles of PPNs are being implemented, and genuine dialogue taking place, this has fallen short of developing a genuine partnership between community groups and Local Authorities via PPNs (Bennett, 2021: 3).

This paper gives an overview of research carried out as part of an Irish Research Council (now Research Ireland) funded project, funded under the *New Foundations* programme. This programme awards small grants for relatively short projects. As such, the research team were compelled to manage the size of the project. Nevertheless, it acts as an excellent springboard for further, more extensive and mixed method research. At the time of writing, the data analysis is ongoing. As such, this paper focuses on the practical and procedural elements of the research process, along with preliminary findings and analysis drawn from the primary data, alongside some tentative recommendations as a result of these findings.

PPNs and Deliberative Democracy

PPNs were established through the Local Government Reform Act (2014). In particular, the Act provided a legislative basis for a Local Authority to 'take such steps as it considers appropriate to consult with and promote effective participation by the local community in local government' (Local Govt Reform Act, 2014: section 46). As highlighted by Bennett (2021: 20), PPNs have been 'firmly established and recognised as the main conduit by which Local Authorities engage with their communities, with a membership of more than 15,000 organisations from the Community and Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental sectors'. These moves have been significant in bringing communities and local government together, while increasing the political and policy legitimacy of both through increased co-operation, consultation and

collaboration. This is made all the more significant given the traditionally highly centralized nature of Irish politics and government (e.g. Quinn, 2016).

PPNs tend to facilitate local democracy and policymaking through the traditional channels of representative democracy, such as nominating or electing representatives to sit on committees, especially Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) that oversee, monitor and assist in the development of policies in specific strategic areas such as environment, local development, infrastructure and so on.

The increased involvement of community groups, and the collaborative mode of co-production that PPNs can facilitate mean there is potential to develop processes of deliberative democracy. This goal aligns with pushes towards active citizenship, in which individual citizens take more of a stake in political life, from the local to the national levels. PPNs in this scenario are the vehicles which promote and facilitate increased community engagement, political participation, and can act as a conduit to translate social problems, concerns and inspiration into political and policy-orientated instruments.

However, this is a lofty ambition in any representative democracy, let alone one that has until recently centralized power within the major institutions of political life, and has only relatively recently devolved more power and autonomy to local authorities. As such, although PPNs are now ten years old, such a method of governance is still young, and even if one can no longer talk of 'teething problems', PPNs can still be constrained by a series of known and as yet unidentified barriers, inertia, political and institutional structures, despite the clear ambitions for these barriers to be removed. It is this final point that is currently strongly represented in the preliminary analysis and findings, as outlined in the following sections.

Approach and Method

The research is primarily concerned with the extent to which PPNs are able to enhance local democracy through involving community and other grassroots organisations in the local policymaking process. The principle of deliberative democracy, as discussed in the previous sections, as well as institutional considerations of local politics and policymaking, inform these processes.

In order to explore this in requisite detail, the research draws upon Interpretive Policy Analysis (IPA). IPA privileges the interpretation of meaning in political and policy processes, considering in particular how problems and solutions

are socially and politically constructed. In doing so, IPA emphasises the role of politics and dialogue in the policymaking process, and the contestable nature of political evidence, while privileging the experience (and *experiences*), perceptions and voices of actors (Wagenaar, 2015). This is particularly useful for our study, given that we are interested in understanding the (potentially) deliberative nature of PPNs, while accounting for different actors' and stakeholders' views and perspectives. Being able to compare perspectives from different levels of government (representation) and different perspectives of engagement with, and organisation of, PPNs, facilitates a form of triangulation of data that enables in-depth case study analysis of PPNs alongside broader brush consideration of and reflection upon the organisation, role and efficacy of PPNs across Ireland.

Data Collection

The research followed a qualitative research design, focused on interview data split between individual interviews and focus groups: interview sampling and data collection were focused on PPN staff (support workers and resource workers), councillors and TDs. Focus group sampling and data collection was focused on members of the organisations that engaged with PPNs. Data was collected primarily in two PPN /Local Authority areas. Originally, the aim was to collect data from four areas, but the researchers experienced barriers to access to participants. There seemed to be two primary reasons for this: 1) members of PPNs being time-poor leading to an inability to make time for the research, despite notable interest in it; 2) the fact that the research's main data collection period coincided with the run up to the 2024 local elections, which occupied a significant amount of time for PPN members, PPN staff, and councillors. All interviews were conducted via the teleconferencing platform Zoom over the course of Spring and Summer 2024. Participants gave their consent for these interviews to be recorded. Interviews were transcribed using Zoom's in-built transcription software.

During sampling and data collection, the experiences of the researchers also led to speculation that some barriers to engagement with the research could have been driven by a combination of research fatigue on the part of the potential respondents and possible confusion about competing research. PPNs have been examined quite intensively in recent years, particularly through government-commissioned research. Indeed, during the sampling process at least one PPN queried whether the researchers' project was part of 'the Department's' research, suggesting other research that was similar enough to the IRC project was taking place simultaneously. Anecdotally, there was weariness – and wariness – of research on PPNs from some potential respondents, either from a perception of

not being listened to, fatigue from engaging in similar research multiple times, and the requirement to continue with demanding jobs and balance work-life considerations.

Data comprised of a focus group with PPN members, interviews (both solo and group) with PPN staff such as resource workers and support workers, and interviews with actors linked to PPNs, including a TD, a Councillor and a consultant linked to PPN organising. This enabled the research to capture a range of views and perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of PPNs and, importantly, opportunities for learning and development. Although the sample size is relatively small – which is an effect of the relative size of the project – the nature of the data collection strategy means that there is nonetheless a significant amount of detailed data that provides the opportunity to document what Wright and Patrick call 'shared typical' experiences. These can be considered to be 'a "structure of feeling" about an era or set of "typical constellations of motives"' (2019: Page; see also McIntosh and Wright, 2018: 15; Williams, 1961: 48; Mills, 1940: 906) that arise due to the context in which people find themselves rather than necessarily being intrinsic to the participant or agent in question.

Data was analysed using thematic analysis. The researchers developed a set of 'codes' to classify different elements that arose during the interviews and focus groups. These codes were developed based on knowledge of the scholarly literature, experiences during data collection, and assumptions and presuppositions that the researchers wanted to explore further. The codes were then refined based on findings and reflections that arose from engaging with the data. These codes were then arranged into overarching themes that help the researchers to understand the main thoughts, reflections, experiences and concerns of the project participants. Given that the aim of this research is to develop an understanding of what our participants feel are important points to consider regarding PPNs' impact on local politics and policymaking, the codes themselves act more as an aid for the researchers to consider take-away points and lessons learned. At the time of writing, data analysis remains ongoing and codes and results are subject to change. Nevertheless, some prominent themes include:

- Community
- Groups (e.g. social groups, policy groups etc.)
- Networks
- Policy

These themes point to firstly the importance that participants place on policy, regardless of whether they feel connected, or able to make changes etc. Alongside this, participants clearly place priority on the importance of community and community groups to their work, the importance of building networks, as well as group work. Looking at the sentiment of coded elements of the transcripts, there is a relatively even split between positive and negative sentiment:

Though this on its own cannot tell us anything about the substantive content that has been coded, the slight weighting towards negative sentiment within the transcripts may suggest that, overall, participants have identified more areas for improvement than strengths. However, this basic sentiment analysis also does not tell us whether the positives outweigh the negatives. It also cannot tell us whether the negative sentiment is aimed at PPNs themselves, experiences participants have had, or the structural and contextual factors in which PPNs operate. As the preliminary analysis that follows will show, all participants are committed to the work of PPNs and want to see them flourish, and all participants highlight the important work that PPNs do. Arguably, then, this enhances the necessity of taking seriously the critiques and points of contestation in order to develop a series of actionable points to improve the operation of PPNs. Some

of these issues, alongside other considerations, are outlined in the preliminary findings in the following section.

Preliminary Findings

Two recent major reports on PPNs, the Mazars and SJI reports discussed earlier, both identify a series of barriers or sticking points regarding the efficient and effective operation of PPNs. This research demonstrates that many of these barriers have not yet been overcome. Yet, this is not from a lack of trying on the part of PPN members and officers. Research by the Department of Rural and Community Development on PPNs appears to be fairly consistent. On the one hand, this is positive, as it demonstrates a clear commitment by the department on the issue of local democracy and local policymaking. Nevertheless, that many barriers remain despite this ongoing research, and despite the voices of our participants and many others like them being increasingly heard, could be cause for concern.

As mentioned previously, the findings in this paper are preliminary, based on ongoing iterative analysis of the data. Given their prominence and significance, the findings reported here are unlikely to disappear or be deemphasised as analysis continues. Nevertheless, it is highly likely that more nuance and context will be added as the data analysis develops. This is simply to say that these findings will be revised and new findings will arise as the data analysis develops further. The findings can be organised into three broad categories: Structural issues, agential issues and resource-based issues.

Structural Issues

A core theme across all interviews was the structural barriers and challenges that PPNs faced. These structural issues ranged in terms of scale, from relationships with central and local government, economic conditions, political developments, and organisational issues at the level of the PPN.

In terms of organising principles and the overall ambitions of PPNs, DCRD research – and collaboration with PPNs themselves – makes it clear that PPNs have an active role to play in local policymaking:

> *A Public Participation Network (PPN) is a structure that provides representation for the community sector in local authority policymaking structures. It serves as the main link between local authorities and the community sector, facilitating the two-way flow of information between the local authority and community*

groups to influence policy development and the delivery of services to the wider community (Public Participation Networks Ireland, 2024: 2).

Despite this, all stakeholders we interviewed expressed that there was uncertainty over the precise role of PPNs. That is, although the mission statement of PPNs was clear (as highlighted in the quote above), in reality the tasks of PPNs, and what was asked of them by their own stakeholders, often amounted to PPNs acting as an umbrella community organisation or information hub. Rather than focusing more intensely on the processes of, and pathways to, policymaking at the local level, PPNs often ultimately focused their time on providing grant writing support for community organisations, and publicising the activities of local groups. Of course, this is undoubtedly an essential and highly useful task. Nevertheless it is not a primary objective of PPNs. This can place PPNs in a difficult situation, stuck between working to fulfil their original remit while working hard to support their members' interests. The tension here is that unless there is a clear understanding and knowledge of PPNs' remits, and the roles community organisations play within them, PPNs risk being stretched too thin.

Scaling up, a number of stakeholders remarked – quite emphatically in some cases – the utility of having a tangible national coordinating structure or body, through which county PPNs could share examples of best practice, pool training and knowledge exchange, standardise practices and coordinate responses and structures – while recognising and honouring the independence of PPNs and the sometimes quite different organisational, political, economic and cultural contexts of PPNs within different counties.

One participant, who has held a range of roles within and adjacent to PPNs, was particularly vocal about the importance of a national co-ordinating structure, something that was echoed in interviews with PPN resource and support workers. From the perspective of this participant, who is held in high regard by both the DRCD and individual PPNs:

What's really frustrating is that [the challenges all PPNs face, despite the diversity of local contexts, are] common challenges, and they're the same challenges. No matter where you go. What context you're working in. They haven't changed in 10 years [...]

I've had this conversation multiple times with the [Department for Rural and Community Development]... long-term planning for PPNs... and the conversation always starts with... apart from a centralized national structure what can we

do? And I'm like the most basic solution, the one that would make [the biggest] impact is the one you're not willing to do.

This suggests that despite ongoing and consistent research and consultations with PPNs, reforms and development work has to conform to the political, organisational and logistical framework set out by the DRCD. On a deeper level, then, this suggests that PPNs' autonomy only goes so far as is allowed by local and central government. This reinforces the argument that although progress has been made in recent years on decentralising politics and policymaking, Ireland remains a highly centralised country when it comes to political structures.

Agential Issues

It is undeniable from the grey literature, reports and talking to PPN stakeholders themselves, that there is incredible enthusiasm for and commitment to PPNs. However, it is clear that this enthusiasm exists within a context of PPNs and their staff putting in incredible effort to navigate a series of barriers and challenges that impact the day to day running of PPNs and, ultimately, their efficacy.

In particular, all participants working within PPNs, as well as some stakeholders working adjacent to PPNs, remarked on the significant time and workload pressures faced by PPN staff. Of particular note is the large number of 'goodwill' hours undertaken by PPN staff; the hours that are necessary to complete tasks that benefit PPNs, but are not compensated for, either through pay or time in lieu.

In part, this is because of the large number of tasks that fall to PPN staff, of which there are usually only one or two employed on a significant enough contract (i.e. 50%+ part time or a full time post). Participants mentioned that on any given day they may be required to undertake roles and tasks such as: Social Media work, campaigning and campaign organisation/oversight, organising and supporting members in their day to day tasks relevant to the PPN, organising and running events, advocacy work, engaging with political actors such as councillors, TDs and council staff, finance management, project management, and person management.

In many organisations, namely those with more resources and that are perhaps larger in scale, these roles often are undertaken by dedicated staff. Of course, that people undertake multiple roles is not unheard of, especially in local government and civil society where resources are often stretched. Nevertheless, it is clear that the fewer people taking on such a large number of roles, the more difficult it will be for PPNs to achieve their original remit, not least with the required level of

efficiency and efficacy to achieve their lofty aims of influencing significantly the local policymaking process and ideally helping develop and implement policy.

Linked to this myriad of roles that must be performed by limited staff, there is a corresponding issue highlighted by various participants, that often the success of a given PPN is linked to working relationships with councils, but also the political knowledge and commitment of PPN members themselves. For example, members who volunteer to sit on Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs), need to understand on a more granular level how politics 'works'. PPN staff remarked that whereas an organisation may have a truly excellent campaigner and advocate, this does not always translate well to conducting the business of an SPC, populated by politicians and 'diplomat' personality types, in which an inability to conduct savvy politicking can be a disadvantage. Again, this speaks to the need for more expansive and nationally co-ordinated training opportunities for a range of people involved in PPNs.

Yet there are clear examples of best practice among those best performing PPNs (in terms of support from the local council, community engagement and success in influencing policy). The support and resource workers of one such PPN shared their organisational strategy with the researchers:

> *It's the usual PPN stuff the information provision, making the connections, the engagements, administration of the organisation, the policy development, the finances, the reporting. And then for the members it would be you know the outreach, the training, the support and policy submissions, that sort of thing. I would probably do more submissions, write more submissions (resource worker). [It] might be worth saying that when the department decided to fund the support work, a lot of PPNs seemed to kind of go down the administrative kind of support kind of a way, whereas here we from the get-go thought, no, we really kind of need someone who would be more like myself, would be able to do a bit of admin but would be able to do that bit of development and engagement type work as well. So we approached [the Local Authority] at the time and said, look, this is what we want to do, the department money might not cover that, will you give us some extra money so we can kind of engage someone of that calibre and [the Local Authority] was supportive and they did, so. I have to premise that by saying it's still not a massive wage (support worker)*

These reflections can be taken as examples of best practice, in terms of how to distribute limited resources to have the most impact. Of course, however, this is only possible because the PPN workers put in significant effort, goodwill hours, and were committed to developing strong relations with their local authority.

Likewise, this success is also down to the local authority being receptive to the PPN workers and the mission of the PPN, rather than potentially seeing it as a threat to the work of the local authority or councillors, or a duplication of work already completed. It is for these reasons that this particular PPN should be seen as a success story.

Resource-based

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given some of the other findings in this paper, the issue of resource challenges was prominent in the data. Many of those working with PPNs or for PPNs felt increasingly time-poor, which had knock-on effects regarding the ability to complete tasks, or at the least required significant time management and, where possible, division of labour. These feelings of time poverty were corroborated by those participants who interacted with PPNs, such as TDs, Councillors and Consultants. This 'shared typical' experience suggests that time as a resource is increasingly difficult to manage effectively, and if left unchecked will impede PPNs' ability to play a meaningful role in local politics and policymaking. It can be argued that while PPN workers' incredible commitment to their roles is a strength, it provides an opportunity to perhaps not increase resources despite them being badly needed.

Similar problems were identified for PPN members. For example, multiple participants reflected on the benefit of having even a small stipend for those community organisation members who volunteer to sit on SPCs. Meetings for these committees usually take place within core working hours, meaning many volunteers could potentially lose income or have to take time of work from their primary jobs in order to attend meetings. One participant remarked about the potential for churn and turnover on SPCs, often because of time pressures, financial pressures, and a disconnect between members' expectations and reality.

Again, a core finding around resources came back to the importance of sharing knowledge resources, particularly around not just formal training but also knowledge exchange and fora in which best practice, and individual contextual considerations can be discussed. Significantly various participants discussed the challenges that PPNs face when members do not feel adequately connected or knowledgeable, or listened to, particularly by local government - even if this is perception rather than reality:

> *it can be difficult when you've got so many different organizations that you're trying to represent at that table as well. So I think I think that's where the training*

comes in, I think, prior to going on an SPC. It would be very helpful for the PPN member to get a briefing. A good briefing now to say, Look, you're going to get frustrated. You're going to feel unlistened to at times (A TD from one of the PPN case study counties).

This participant emphasises the importance not only of training in formal procedures and so on, but also preparing people for the reality of local politics. This echoes the sentiments of a PPN worker who remarked that although many community groups have fantastic activists and community advocates, this does not always translate directly into being successful in the formal political sphere. Again, illustrated by the TD:

[The] local authority level is where the rubber hits the road. It's where those things are executed and implemented. You're nearly better off entering into this five-year cycle to say, here's 3 things I want to drive. Here's 3 things that they're going to be so sick of me, bringing this up at every ... SPC meeting or opportunity that they are going to act on it sometimes. What can happen is if you get a weak chair of an SPC it almost undermines the purpose of that. SPC. If you have a strong chair, who wants to drive agendas and is willing to listen, that's key to it. That's outside the control of the PPN. [...] And we see a lot of churn. We see a lot of PPN members going on to these and finishing up after a year or 2 years, and somebody else coming in. And you don't have the continuity, then it can be difficult, because those SPC meetings are during normal working hours, whereas these are volunteers.

Tentative Recommendations

The data collected with the participants, although only analysed on a preliminary basis, has already revealed some key issues to address, which means a number of tentative recommendations for action or focus can be made. As these recommendations have been drawn from the preliminary findings and analysis, these too can be organised broadly into structural, agential and resource-based categories.

Recommendation	Category			Details/notes
	Structural	Agential	Resource-based	
Focus on relationship development		X		
Standardise support mechanisms and resources from Local Authorities to PPNs where possible	X		X	
Increase targeted financial support such as stipends		X	X	
Emphasise formal and informal training and briefings		X	X	Expectation management, understanding SPC processes, clarity on individual roles and the limits of the possible
Examine overlap and differentiation of roles and tasks, internally and externally	X		X	Internally (within PPN): strategies for division of labour; externally (focused on Local Authorities and DRCD): consider possibility of funding extra staff positions (e.g. Social Media officer)
Emphasis on joined-up and multi-level governance	X			e.g. national, centralised PPN organisation to share resources, best practice and governance strategies.

Conclusions

Public Participation Networks remain an important conduit in local democracy and local policymaking. Nevertheless, PPNs face barriers and struggles on various levels that can negatively impact their efficacy and effectiveness.

Not all of these are within the control of PPNs, which means a joined-up approach is needed that combines the skills, experience (and experiences) and resources of PPNs across the country, alongside Local Authorities and central government.

PPNs face agential, structural and resource-based challenges that often overlap. However, these can be overcome with co-operation, (political and procedural) support, planning and management.

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Social Justice Ireland **has proposed a policy framework for a new Social Contract that identifies five key policy outcomes:**

- **A Vibrant Economy**
- **Decent Services and Infrastructure**
- **Just Taxation**
- **Good Governance**
- **Sustainability**

We need investment in infrastructure and services to develop a thriving economy. We need just taxation to fund this. We need good governance to ensure people have a say in shaping the decisions that impact them. We also need to ensure that everything that is done is sustainable; environmentally, economically and socially. Each of these five key policy outcomes must be achieved if a new Social Contract is to be realised. This requires working on each of the five areas simultaneously. Focusing only on economic growth and expecting everything else to follow has not worked and will not work. While *Social Justice Ireland* has always recognised the need for a vibrant economy, policies to promote economic development must be implemented in tandem with the provision of decent services, just taxation, good governance, and sustainability.

The chapters in this book were presented at a policy conference on the topic of 'Managing Change to Build a Just Society – Policy Outcomes for a New Social Contract' organised by Social Justice Ireland.

SOCIAL JUSTICE IRELAND

working to build a just society

1-3 Burton Hall Road, Sandyford,
Dublin 18, D18 A094
Tel: + 353 (0) 1 290 3597

Web: www.socialjustice.ie

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