Abstract Booklet - 14th Annual NERI Labour Market Conference

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Earning - Session 1A: Chairperson – Dr. Aisling Tuite, SETU Waterford

Dr. Tara McIndoe-Calder, ESRI & Trinity College Dublin (joint paper with Dr. Barra Roantree, Trinity College Dublin, Dr. Brian E. Higgins, IIES, Stockholm University, Mr. Kun Wu, UCD & Mr. Ciaran Judge, Department of Social Protection) - Boom, Bust, Rebound: Two Decades of Earnings Inequality, Risk & Mobility in Ireland

This paper studies income inequality in Ireland using new administrative social security records spanning 2002–2022. We provide the first comprehensive set of harmonized micro statistics on earnings inequality, dynamics, and mobility for Ireland, contributing to the Global Repository of Income Dynamics (GRID). We document how inequality evolved through Ireland's boom, bust, and recovery, highlighting that the boom in the early 2000s lifted all parts of the distribution, the following recession disproportionately reduced earnings at the bottom, and the subsequent recovery brought strong catch-up at lower percentiles but left persistent gaps at the top. We uncover a sharp rise in top earnings shares, moderate income risk, and relatively high economic mobility compared with other advanced economies. We further show that migration can distort standard inequality measures and that weekly earnings provide a useful complementary perspective on living standards in a labour market with significant entry and exit.

Mr. Albian Krasniqi, TU Dublin (joint paper with Dr. Rory O'Farrell, TU Dublin) - Unveiling the Penalty-Pay in the Hospitality Sector: Evidence from Western Europe

Introduction

Workers in the tourism and hospitality sector have been systematically and persistently underpaid compared to those in other industries (Munoz-Bullón, 2009; Santos & Varejão, 2007; Dogru et al., 2019). This persistent wage disparity is often attributed to the sector's seasonal employment patterns and the prevalence of low-skilled labour, both of which contribute to a structurally low-wage equilibrium.
Over time, this has fostered what Riley & Szivas (2003) describe as a "tolerance for low pay," suggesting that low wages have become institutionally embedded within the industry. It remains unclear whether these wage differentials are entirely explained by workers' observable characteristics (e.g., education), or whether an unexplained component persists—commonly interpreted as a sectoral wage penalty. This study provides the first systematic evidence of such a pay penalty across most of Western Europe's hospitality sectors, with the gap being particularly pronounced among top quantile earners.

Data and Methodology

The analysis draws on microdata from the Structure of Earnings Survey (SES), covering seven Western European countries. The SES contains matched employer–employee records on gross hourly earnings, verified through administrative data rather than self-reports, making it particularly reliable for cross-country wage comparisons.
We apply recent unconditional quantile decomposition techniques (Firpo, Fortin, & Lemieux, 2009, 2018) to decompose the wage gap between hospitality and non-hospitality

sectors into two components: (i) the explained part, capturing differences in wages due to observable characteristics such as tenure, age, gender, and occupation, and (ii) the unexplained part, reflecting wage differences not accounted for by these characteristics and interpreted as a hospitality sector wage penalty.

Results

Findings indicate a persistent wage penalty for hospitality workers in Western Europe, ranging from 4% to 16% per hour, on average. Among top earners, the penalty is significantly larger, reaching up to 35% per hour in the United Kingdom. The penalty persists across education levels, suggesting that low pay in hospitality is not solely a result of lower educational attainment. Moreover, the penalty remains evident when hospitality workers are compared with those in the retail sector or other industries individually, confirming its robustness across alternative reference groups.

Policy Implications and Conclusion

The study provides important insights for policy debates on job quality and labour market inequality within Western Europe's hospitality sector. The evidence of a persistent, unexplained wage penalty highlights the need for targeted policy interventions, including stronger collective bargaining mechanisms, fair pay initiatives, and sectoral wage standards. This research thus offers the first cross-national evidence that even after accounting for worker characteristics, hospitality employees continue to face a significant and enduring wage disadvantage in Western Europe.

Dr. Lisa Wilson, NERI - The prevalence & distribution of low pay in Ireland

This paper examines the quality and character of low-paid work in Ireland using data from the Working in Ireland Survey (WIIS), 2025. While low pay is commonly understood primarily in terms of earnings, the analysis examines whether low-paid employment is also associated with broader forms of disadvantage across multiple dimensions of job quality.

Drawing on a multidimensional job quality framework, the report examines differences between low-paid and non-low-paid workers across a wide range of intrinsic and extrinsic employment conditions, including employment security, working time, access to benefits and training, work intensity, autonomy, workplace relations, organisational support, employee voice, innovation capacity, mental wellbeing, and financial strain. The report also examines variation within low-paid employment itself through cluster analysis, identifying distinct configurations of low-paid work characterised by differing combinations of security, workplace resources, strain, and precarity.

The findings are situated within wider debates concerning job quality, labour market inequality, precarious employment, and employment standards in Ireland. In doing so, the report seeks to contribute to understanding not simply who is low paid, but the kinds of jobs low-paid workers occupy and the broader conditions under which low-paid work is experienced.

Dr. Frank Walsh, UCD - Estimating the impact of the minimum wage on hours worked using changes in Employment contributions

We define employee contributions as the sum of Universal Social Charge, Income tax and PRSI contributions. We focus on minimum wage workers and calculate how the marginal and average rate of employee contributions have changed in Ireland between 2015 and 2026 as a minimum wage workers hour worked and weekly earnings increased. Figure 1 plots the marginal contribution rate over hours for four years beginning at 2015. We see that in each year there is a steep rise in the marginal contribution rate as minimum wage employees' weekly earnings reach the threshold where they become eligible for income tax in particular. A striking feature of Figure 1 (and Figure 2, which looks at the average employee contribution rate) is that the hours threshold at which a minimum wage worker begins to have a substantial increase in the contribution rate shifts down substantially between 2015-2026, from about 38 hours in 2015 to under 30 hours in 2026.

The empirical analysis in this paper uses data from the Irish labour force survey between 2015-25 on minimum wage employees. We code the employee contribution rates for single workers and analyse the response of hours worked using changes in the minimum wage and the employee contribution schedule over time. We test whether the shifting threshold had an impact on hours worked of minimum wage employees. We can also use the tax thresholds to analyse the impact of minimum wage changes on hours worked. The idea here is that we can compare worker above and below the threshold in any year before and after the minimum wage increase, where the net increase in the minimum wage will differ between groups. We can compare the hours response of worker who get different increases in the net minimum wage to estimate the impact of changes in the minimum wage on hours worked.

Note on PRSI allowances: While income tax thresholds and tax credits are calculated based on annual income, thresholds for earnings which determine the liability for employers and employee's PRSI liability is based on weekly earnings. Presumably this is because employees' entitlements for social security payments are dependent on the number of contributions they make as well as the level of the contributions. Employers do not submit any information on hours worked, which means that if an employee works, say two or three weeks in a month, if the employer spreads the same income over four weeks the weekly income may be below the threshold which lowers the employee and/or the employer contribution. The difficulty here is that this may lead to an overstatement of the weeks worked in the data (which is based on weeks worked in the payroll data).

Climate - Session 1B, Chair: Dr. Antoinette Jordan, SETU Carlow

Mr. Paul Goldrick-Kelly, NERI - Political economy & emissions in Ireland, Austria & Sweden

Ireland, Austria and Sweden are small open economies which nonetheless show very different emissions performance. I argue that specific institutional histories, economic strategies and politics have implications for their respective climate performance. This paper analyses varying national emissions trajectories and examines links to political economic institutions, growth regimes and climate policy outcomes, combining comparative political economic perspectives and insights from environmental politics.

Dr. Alexandra Richardson & Vanessa Conroy, National Women's Council - Towards Ecofeminist Reproductive Economies

This paper advances the proposition that reproductive justice (RJ) offers a powerful anchor for designing care-full economies capable of responding to the overlapping polycrises of our time: the care crisis, accelerating climate breakdown, widening wealth inequality, and the erosion of gender equality. Drawing on ecofeminist economics, we argue that centring care provides both an analytical framework and a practical roadmap for building a resilient, life-sustaining Irish society and Irish economy for the future. Care is not merely interpersonal labour; it is the ongoing work of sustaining the conditions that make life possible. When societies fail to care for either people or planet, the result is systemic care-lessness that reverberates across all domains of life.

RJ expands conventional reproductive rights by insisting that bodily autonomy is only meaningful when individuals can access abortion, contraception, safe pregnancy, *and* the ability to raise children in non-violent, non-toxic environments. RJ, therefore, places affirmative obligations on the state to create the material and environmental conditions that make autonomy *real*, rather than theoretical. This aligns closely with the UN-recognised human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, which includes safe climate, clean air, healthy ecosystems, sustainable food systems, sufficient water, and non-toxic surroundings, alongside procedural rights such as access to information, participation, and justice. Through this discussion, we believe it is apparent that environmental rights are foundational for realising many other human rights, including (and not limited to) the right to form a family and the rights of children to life, survival, and development.

Emerging national analyses reinforce this connection. The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) *Ireland's Climate Change Assessment: Synthesis Report* notes that the more equal a society is, the more resilient they are to climate impacts, and thus, more capable of embracing the transformative changes required for a just transition. Prioritising wellbeing, equity, and the value of care strengthens the democratic social contract and supports climate action that enhances quality of life. Mobilising this rationale, we conclude that care-centred economies are essential for the full realisation of RJ and meeting climate obligations in equitable ways in Ireland and beyond. Such economies require universal access to healthcare, childcare, housing, and social services, alongside fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. Addressing the disproportionate exposure of low-income and marginalised communities to pollution, inadequate green space, and environmental hazards is therefore, not peripheral, but central to building just, sustainable futures and economies.

Dr. Micheál Collins, UCD - Ireland's Carbon Tax & Poverty: hidden recycling

Ireland's Carbon Tax was first introduced in Budget 2010, following a design proposed by the 2008/09 Commission on Taxation. The tax is levied on the quantity of CO2 emissions and was slowly expanded to cover all fuel types (petrol, diesel, kerosene, coal and gas). In 2020 the tax shifted from being linked to the cost of carbon credits to the carbon mitigation costs Ireland faces given various national climate change policy commitments. Since then, the rate has climbed from €26 per tonne of CO2 equivalent to €71 per tonne in 2026; and it will increase further to reach €100 per tonne by 2030.

Unusually, the carbon tax revenue is hypothecated and entirely split between: compensatory social welfare payments; a socially progressive retrofitting programme; the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices; and green transport initiatives.

Focusing on the compensatory social welfare payments component, this paper explores how both the taxation and welfare systems have found it challenging to articulate and present this role. Bridgen and Collins (2025: 312) concluded that *"…the delineation between compensation to maintain current living standards and resources to enhance current living standards is not made clear to either policymakers or recipients".* The paper argues that to a great degree this compensation is hidden in the narrative around nominal increases in annual welfare payments and supports to low-income working families.

Resilience - Session 1C, Chair: Dr. Ray Griffin, SETU Waterford

Dr. Paul Hanly, UCC (joint paper with Dr. Marta Ortega-Ortega, University of Madrid) - Labour Market Tightness & the Friction Period in Ireland & Europe: Estimating Illness-Related Productivity Costs after COVID-19

Background and Objectives - The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted labour markets across Europe. While employment recovered rapidly in many economies, the post-pandemic period has been characterised by high job vacancy rates, labour shortages, and persistent skills mismatches. These developments have implications not only for labour market functioning but also for how productivity losses from employee absence are measured. Tighter labour markets may lengthen the time required to replace absent workers, increasing productivity costs associated with illness. This issue is central to the Friction Cost Approach (FCA), a widely used method for valuing illness-related productivity losses. The FCA limits productivity losses to the period required to restore production following worker absence. In practice, many applications rely on fixed friction period estimates or values derived from other countries, implicitly assuming stable labour market conditions. Such assumptions are problematic during periods of rapid labour market change. This paper examines how post-pandemic labour market conditions have altered friction periods across Europe and in Ireland.

Methods - We included thirty European countries and employed standardised Eurostat quarterly data from 2009Q1-2024Q1 across key labour market variables: unemployment rates, job vacancy rates, stock of job vacancies and newly occupied jobs, to estimate country-specific friction periods pre and post the COVID-19 pandemic. Countries are grouped into four regions—Central-Eastern, Northern, Southern, and Western Europe—and regional Beveridge curves are constructed to examine changes in labour market matching efficiency before and after the pandemic.

Results -The results indicate a substantial and persistent increase in friction periods following COVID-19. Across the sample, the average friction period increased by approximately 35%, reflecting tighter labour markets. Regional increases ranged from 30% in Southern Europe to 40% in Central-Eastern Europe. Western Europe experienced an increase of approximately 36%, while Ireland's friction period increased by 14.2%. The mismatch unemployment rate increased (range: +5% to +21%) and the unemployment gap reduced (-49 to -70%) across all European regions. Significant negative correlations were estimated between the unemployment gap and friction periods (Central-Eastern Europe: $r=-0.96$; $p<0.01$; Northern Europe: $r=-0.81$; $p<0.01$; Southern Europe: $r=-0.91$; $p<0.01$; Western Europe: $r=-0.96$; $p<0.01$). Beveridge curve analysis also revealed a clear outward shift across all regions after 2021, signalling declining matching efficiency.

Conclusion - These results underline the importance of incorporating evolving labour market conditions into estimates of illness-related productivity costs. In tight labour markets such as Ireland's, static friction period assumptions may substantially underestimate productivity losses, with implications for productivity measurement, labour market policy, and economic evaluation.

Mr. Michael Taft, SIPTU - Ireland's Domestic Economy in Comparison: Are we Closing the Gap with Our Peer Group?

The economic performance of the Irish domestic sector has increasingly come into focus. Building on the NERI/SIPTU comparative survey of Ireland's domestically-owned market economy, this presentation will update the data for post-Covid years. It will further compare the Irish domestic sector's level of business investment, R&D expenditure and export performance with other European small open economies. This will be supplemented by domestic data covering productivity in the traded and non-traded sectors. The NERI/SIPTU survey identified a wide gap between the Irish domestic economy and other small open economies prior to Covid. Are we closing that gap?

Mr. Joseph Kilroy, The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) - Building Adaptably: Addressing Speculative Vacancy & Urban Resilience in Ireland

Ireland's urban centres are currently grappling with a significant spatial paradox: a chronic housing shortage existing alongside a record high in commercial office vacancies, currently estimated at 15.7% in Dublin. This paper, based on the CIOB report *Building Adaptably*, argues that the current "demolish and rebuild" model of urban development is no longer fit for purpose in a climate-constrained and post-pandemic economy. Instead, it proposes a strategic shift toward adaptive reuse as a means of future-proofing the built environment and stabilizing urban land use.

The research identifies a 'speculative doom loop' in Irish real estate, where the continued development of Grade-A commercial assets—often without pre-let agreements—threatens to create a legacy of stranded assets. These buildings are increasingly incompatible with shifting working patterns and stringent new ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) requirements. To mitigate this, the paper proposes the implementation of an Adaptability Index within the Irish planning system. This mechanism would require developers to demonstrate, at the design stage, how a building's structural and technical characteristics (such as floor-to-ceiling heights and core placement) facilitate future "change of use" with minimal carbon and financial cost.

While the paper focuses on built assets, the implications for the sectoral labour market are significant. A move toward a circular construction economy requires a pivot away from traditional new-build specialisms toward high-skill adaptive reuse, deep retrofit, and design-for-disassembly. By examining international precedents from London, Paris, and Amsterdam, this study outlines the regulatory and fiscal "levers" required to facilitate this transition, including VAT recalibration on refurbishments and the use of Financial Transactions Capital (FTC).

The paper concludes that the most sustainable building is the one that already exists. By mandating adaptability, the state can decouple urban growth from excessive embodied carbon emissions, resolve the roadblock of commercial vacancy, and provide a more stable, long-term pipeline of work for a construction sector in transition. This research offers a framework for policy-makers to align urban planning with the practicalities of Ireland's Climate Action targets and the urgent need for residential supply.

Inequality & Work - Session 2A, Chair: Dr. Tom Boland, UCC

Mr. Alfie Bingham, Queen's University Belfast (Joint paper with Dr. Heather Dickey & Dr. Corina Miller, Queen's University Belfast) - Parents, Partners, Pressures: Gender Norms & Female Labour Supply in the UK

Despite sustained progress toward gender equality, substantial gaps in female labour supply persist across developed economies, particularly following parenthood. While existing research largely emphasises human capital, household specialisation, and discrimination as the key binding constraints, a growing literature argues that gender norms underlie and shape these mechanisms, influencing how labour is allocated within households and rewarded in the labour market. This paper estimates the causal effect of gender norms on women's labour supply in the UK through two channels: women's own gender-role attitudes and the attitudes of their male partners. A central empirical challenge is reverse causality, as labour market participation and household arrangements may shape norms expost through belief adaptation - the avoidance of cognitive dissonance - and assortative matching. To address this, we exploit intergenerational variation in maternal employment during adolescence as an instrument for adult gender norms, leveraging evidence that exposure to working mothers is a primary determinant of more egalitarian attitudes for both women and men. Using harmonised longitudinal data from the British Household Panel Survey and Understanding Society (1990–2023), we present results along two dimensions. At the individual level, women holding more traditional gender norms are significantly less likely to be employed, less likely to work full-time, and supply fewer hours. At the partner-level, we find that women partnered with men who hold traditional gender norms are significantly less likely to participate in the labour market. Across specifications, instrumental variable estimates exceed corresponding OLS estimates, indicating that conventional approaches understate the true impact of gender norms. These findings provide causal evidence that gender norms — formed intergenerationally and reinforced within relationships — are a central driver of persistent gender inequality in labour supply in the UK.

Dr. Ebru Isikli, UCD - Occupational Gender Composition & Gender Backlash Attitudes: Cross-National Evidence from ESS Round 11

Despite sustained progress toward gender equality across European labour markets, hostile attitudes toward women and resistance to gender equality policies remain widespread.

This paper examines whether occupational gender composition — specifically, working in a male-dominated occupation — is associated with more pronounced gender backlash attitudes among men in Europe.

Drawing on the European Social Survey Round 11 (ESS11, 2023–24), which includes a dedicated module on gender attitudes fielded across European countries, I exploit ISCO-08 occupational codes to classify respondents by the gender composition of their occupational group.

I focus on two outcome dimensions introduced for the first time in ESS11: measuring the degree to which respondents endorse negative generalisations about women, and support for gender equality policies, including pay gap legislation, equal parental leave, and gender quotas. I will use multivariate regression models control for education, age, religiosity, and country fixed effects.

I hypothesise that men in heavily male-dominated occupations will score higher on hostile sexism and express lower support for gender equality policies. Results are discussed in terms of their implications for labour market policy and the structural determinants of gender backlash in contemporary Europe.

Ms. Gabriela Lobianco, UCC - Flexible Work, Migration & Gendered Career Inequalities in Multinational Corporations in Ireland

Flexible working (FW) arrangements have increasingly been promoted by multinational corporations as mechanisms to improve work–life balance and support gender equality in labour markets (Kossek and Thompson, 2016; Chung and Van der Lippe, 2020; Goldin, 2021). This paper examines how flexible working policies intersect with gender, class and migration in shaping the career trajectories of women employed in multinational information technology corporations in Ireland, with a comparative focus on Brazilian migrant women and Irish women.

While workplace flexibility is frequently framed as a solution to long-standing gender inequalities, a growing body of research suggests that such arrangements do not necessarily translate into improved career outcomes for women. Organisational norms and labour market institutions may instead reproduce existing hierarchies, reinforcing structural inequalities embedded in capitalist labour systems and organisational norms. These dynamics reflect the “flexibility paradox” and the persistence of “ideal worker” expectations within organisations (Chung, 2022; Goldin, 2021; Hochschild, 1997; Williams, Blair-Loy and Berdahl, 2013).

Drawing on feminist political economy and intersectional frameworks (Crenshaw, 1989), the study situates workplace flexibility within the historical development of capitalist labour markets and neoliberal restructuring, including the gendered division of labour and the institutionalisation of the male breadwinner model (Fraser, 2013; Glenn, 1992; Mies, 1986; Federici, 2012; Rose, 1992). Within these systems, expectations of continuous availability to paid work continue to shape labour market outcomes, career progression and access to leadership roles.

Despite growing attention to flexible work, limited research examines how such policies shape career trajectories for migrant women within multinational corporate settings. This study addresses this gap by asking how flexible working arrangements influence career progression and whether these dynamics differ between migrant and non-migrant women.

Methodologically, the paper is informed by feminist approaches to research design, which emphasise capturing gendered experiences often obscured in aggregate labour market analyses. In line with Hughes and Cohen (2022), it recognises both the value and limitations of quantitative approaches and positions qualitative insights as essential for understanding how structural dynamics are experienced within organisations.

The paper contributes to debates in gender and labour economics in three ways. First, it extends research on flexible working by examining how workplace flexibility interacts with migration status and organisational power structures. Second, it contributes to the literature on gender and migration by highlighting how organisational practices shape labour market outcomes for migrant women. Third, it provides insights into gendered career trajectories within multinational firms in Ireland.

Ms. Sandra Donohoe, SETU Waterford - Equality, Diversity, Inclusion Strategy: What Works?

This presentation will outline findings concerning how Equality, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) policies are being received by employees within the Irish insurance sector. Insurance is a highly regulated key subsector of the Irish International Financial Services industry (IFS), subject to recent compliance and legislative regulations regarding the European Union's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), that directly implicate the EDI metrics of organisations. This PhD study explores how EDI policies are functioning based on the perspective of employees, and this presentation centres on findings related to the operationalisation of EDI within organisations.

The research undertaken was a mixed-method, convergent parallel study, grounded in egalitarian principles, focused on elucidating the lived experiences of workers to ascertain a clear picture of how EDI policies are functioning on a day-to-day basis. This approach enables a fuller examination of a persistent policy-to-practice gap, where formal commitments coexist with conditional inclusion, by illuminating both measurable associations, and lived realities.

EDI Operationalisation Strategy is the third of four themes of the broader study therefore this presentation examines organisational mechanisms and employee-perceived outcomes, with natural overlaps to interconnected elements such as leadership modelling of norms and commitment consistency. These findings contribute timely empirical Irish evidence on workplace regimes and relational barriers in a key professional sector where advancing EDI supports fairness, innovation, and regulatory compliance. This presentation will outline findings that highlight while formal infrastructure is essential, it requires alignment with organisational and cultural realities for meaningful inclusion outcomes.

The Welfare State - Session 2B, Chair: Dr. Rory O'Farrell, TU Dublin

Dr. Ray Griffin, SETU Waterford - When Rules Meet Reality: Appeals as Sites of Discretionary Repair in Ireland's Means-Testing System

This paper examines how means-testing shapes access to income supports and labour market participation by analysing five years (2020-2024) of data from Ireland's Social Welfare Appeals Office. Focusing on means-tested schemes, it identifies persistent gaps between formal eligibility rules and the lived economic circumstances of claimants. The consistently high overturn rate in Disability Allowance appeals (43.2%) suggests not isolated decision errors, but structural misalignments between rule design and social reality.

Drawing on longitudinal trends and recurring appeal case narratives, the paper shows how key features of means-testing, such as capital assessments, household income calculations, and the treatment of different forms of employment, can and do generate unintended consequences. These include "poverty traps", disincentives to take up work, and administrative burdens that disproportionately affect those with complex or unstable incomes. In this sense, means-testing operates not only as a targeting mechanism, but also as a source of procedural friction within the welfare system.

The paper introduces the concept of *discretionary repair work* to describe how appeals officers re-evaluate decisions that are technically correct but substantively unjust. While initial determinations are governed by increasingly standardised rules and processes, the appeals system provides a secondary site in which context, nuance, and judgement can be reintroduced. However, this displacement of discretion comes at a cost, often involving delays, uncertainty, and unequal access to redress.

The findings speak to current policy debates on welfare adequacy, activation, and administrative reform in Ireland. They suggest that reforms to means-testing should address not only incentive structures, but also the capacity of the system to accommodate complex and changing life circumstances.

Dr. Claire Keane, ESRI - (joint paper with Dr. Brendan Walsh & Ms. Simona Sándorová) - Medical Card coverage & the impact of income limit freezes

Ireland is one of the few European countries without a universal healthcare system (UHC). Instead, a complex system of means-tested schemes that provide free access to various healthcare services or reduced cost medication exist. The most central component of this complex system is the Medical Card scheme, which is used to cover primary, community, and acute hospital healthcare costs for lower income groups. Despite the importance of the scheme, income limits for the scheme for most population groups have not increased since 2005, despite price inflation of 26% and wage inflation of 45% since then. To prevent the loss of Medical Cards due to social welfare benefit increases, a rule was introduced allowing those solely on welfare to retain their cards even if they were above the income limit. This decision created horizontal inequity and a work disincentive, whereby families who have the same income amount are treated differently if some of their income comes from employment. This research examines Medical Card coverage across different societal groups and estimates the impact of this lack of indexation on card holding. We estimate that cardholder numbers would be significantly higher if income limits had kept pace with inflation and that over 80,000 (or 6% of cardholders) now qualify due to the social welfare rule. The study highlights the horizontal inequity and work disincentive created by the social welfare rule and the need for indexation of income limits to ensure access to necessary medical care for those in lower income deciles.

Mr. Niall O'Donnellan & Mr. Aidan Campbell, Centre for Cross Border Co-operation – Place-based Economic Inactivity in the broad NW border regions of Northern Ireland & the Republic of Ireland

Description:

1. **Key Questions:** The project sets out to address the following research questions:

Q1 How has economic inactivity in border regions on the Island of Ireland been studied, and what existing data and insights are available regarding the relationship between geographic location and economic inactivity?

Q2 What is the scale and profile of economic inactivity in the border counties of Ireland/Northern Ireland

Q3 What role does place play in economic activity, and how can we identify the multi-level factors—such as community support, accessibility, transportation, generational impacts, and the availability and affordability of childcare—that contribute to higher levels of economic inactivity in certain border regions, despite similarities in demographic profile, remoteness from larger towns, and educational attainment?

Q4 What engagement with economically inactive is currently being undertaken by service providers (statutory, com/vol, private sector) and employers in our target communities in the border region?

Q5. Can we identify the specific challenges faced by border regions in relation to Economic inactivity among individuals seeking training or employment opportunities, and recruitment difficulties for employers? Is there a specific Border Regions challenge with Economic Inactivity?

b) Methodology

The methods the project used to address these questions are as follows

· **Literature review** of relevant literature, mainly in both jurisdictions Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland

· **Data review and analysis** of economic inactivity at jurisdiction/regional/local authority levels, and related variables of the types of health conditions and business sectoral profile primarily using data from the NISRA and CSO Censuses of Population (NI 2021 and 2011, and RoI 2022 and 2011) There was also data review at small/local area level.

Interviews

- **Contextual Interviews** with stakeholders and experts to develop a deeper understanding of the issues facing various groups of people who are not in, and currently have no access to suitable, paid employment or self-employment.
- **Qualitative Interviews**
  - "Activation actors", those working to support people re-enter employment, training or education.
  - Employers, a combination of large and small and of private and public

· **Participants workshop** on interim report findings for sense checking and feedback

Communication: The means of sharing will be by a short Powerpoint presentation by the two authors, followed by short questions and answers.

Dr. Elish Kelly, ESRI - The Labour Market Impact of Covid-19 on Individuals with Disabilities: The Case of Ireland

The COVID-19 health pandemic had a profound, and multifaceted, impact on economies and their labour markets worldwide. This included Ireland, with its labour market experiencing substantial increases in unemployment due to the implementation of a number of public health measures that resulted in many businesses being forced to close. In February 2020, the adjusted unemployment rate was 4.9 percent but by September it had increased to 14.7 percent (McQuinn et al., 2020). In response to the crisis, the Irish government introduced a series of comprehensive policy measures (e.g., the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP), and the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme (TWSS)) aimed at providing immediate financial support to workers and businesses.

The labour market disruptions caused by the pandemic disproportionately affected certain sectors (e.g., accommodation, food services, retail, and construction), and the composition of job losses was also uneven, with younger workers, lower-wage earners, women, and non-Irish nationals disproportionately affected. There is also reason to suspect that individuals with disabilities were disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Based on a 2023 spending review of the Disability Allowance Scheme (Doyle, 2023), just prior to the pandemic in 2019, in-work Disability Allowance recipients had higher employment concentrations in some of the low wage sectors most severely impacted by COVID-19.

In general, prior to the pandemic, people with disabilities already faced significant labour market inequality with their employment rate across the EU27 in 2019 being 51 percent compared to 76 percent for those without disabilities. In Ireland the employment rate of people with disabilities has always been particularly low by international standards, with the rate being 33 per cent in 2019 (compared to 77 per cent for those without a disability).

Despite extensive research on the broader impacts of COVID-19 on the global labour market, and its effect on various sectors and some demographic groups, there remains a notable gap in the literature concerning the labour market impact of the health pandemic on people with disabilities. This research attempts to address this gap in the literature for Ireland by using data from the 2020 and 2023 Labour Force Survey to examine the impact of COVID-19 on disabled peoples' unemployment status relative to those without a disability. Specifically, the paper will explore the following key questions:

1. Was the unemployment impact of COVID-19 between people with and without disabilities equal?
2. Did the impact vary by type of disability?
3. Was the pace of labour market recovery the same between disabled and non-disabled people?

Artificial Intelligence & the Digital Transformation - Session 2C, Chair: Mr. Paul Mac Flynn, NERI

Ms. Emma Holden, SETU Waterford - Legibility, Classification and Access in Digital-First Welfare

Street-level encounters have long been recognised as sites where categorisation and moral judgement influence access to rights and resources (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). As welfare provision becomes increasingly digital-first, these processes are no longer confined to face-to-face interaction. Instead, they are mediated through what might be considered screen-level processes, including eligibility architectures, documentation protocols, data fields, and interface designs which organise how claimants are rendered legible to the state.

Drawing on ethnographic research tracing the administrative journeys of economically marginalised young adults navigating digital-first government services in Ireland, the work examines how power operates within these mediated arrangements. The study combines interviews and engagement with service providers, insights from young people, and analysis of policy materials to follow how access is structured in practice.

Early findings suggest that administrative processes establish the terms of recognition in advance of any interaction, positioning young adults as capable, compliant, risky or deficient through embedded categorical and procedural logics. In this context, exclusion cannot be understood solely as an individual deficit or isolated service failure. Rather, it emerges through the interaction of policy rules, procedural sequencing, interface structures and residual frontline judgement.

The work argues that digitalisation does not displace street-level power but reconfigures it, embedding decision-making within infrastructures that appear routine and technical while shaping access in consequential ways. Foregrounding how legibility is produced through these processes allows the work to centre questions of power and inequality in street-level bureaucracy. This, in turn, connects to wider debates on access to welfare and labour market participation in a digitalised policy context.

Mr. Kevin P. O'Kelly, TransFormWork 2 Project Co-ordinator Social partners together towards a better & effective regulation of Artificial Intelligence for a just transition to the work of the future - TransFormWork 2

TransFormWork 2 was a two-year project, part-funded by the European Commission, which was completed end-March 2026. The project focused on finding joint solutions by national social partners for the managing the effects of workplace digitalisation, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and algorithmic management and their possible impact on the workplace of the future. It also addressed:

- Important issues related to the employment relationships in the digital age
- Appropriate mechanisms, practices and initiatives for a timely anticipation of the skill needs for tomorrow's workforce.

The general objectives of the project included:

- To find joint solutions by the national social partners for managing the impact of digitalisation, AI and algorithmic management and their expected impact on the workplace of the future, in particular in seven EU Member States:

  Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Poland and Romania
- To address the important issues related to the employment relationship in a future digital work environment
- To find appropriate mechanisms, practices and initiatives to provide the skill needs of tomorrow and a forward-looking up/reskilling of existing workforces, which is fundamental to the success of *AI that works for all*
- To raise awareness of how, with the implementation of right strategies and by guaranteeing the *Human-in-Control* principle, a digital workplace and AI can bring clear benefits and added value for employers and workers, by providing new labour market opportunities, new ways of organising work and improvements in working conditions.

This presentation proposal for the 14th Labour Market conference builds on the presentation to the 2025 conference. It draws on the project findings across the five business sectors researched:

Education; Financial services; Health services; Industrial production; and News media

and outlines the key findings for managing the introduction of digital systems, AI and algorithms.

It is also hoped that the recommendations from the project will enhance the capacities of social partners in the Member States to address the challenges of digitalisation, including the possible impact of AI on industrial relations, the interaction between the H*uman-in-Control* principle and the use of algorithmic management and decision-making processes, without compromising human dignity and without entering the field of personal data monitoring and surveillance in the employment relationship.

Dr. Aisling Tuite, SETU Waterford - Digital Welfare & the Limits of Human Oversight: Rethinking Power & Expertise in PES

The digitalisation of welfare governance has generated hybrid administrative environments in which discretionary judgment is distributed across public service caseworkers, digital interfaces and encoded decision rules. As policy attention has shifted toward artificial intelligence and the risks of automated decision-making, the principle of human oversight has emerged as a central safeguard to preserve discretion and mitigate bias. This paper traces the development of this principle in European policy and policy discourse since the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in 2018, culminating in the human oversight provisions of the EU AI Act (2024). While these developments are widely framed as enhancing trust, accountability and fairness, this paper argues that the emphasis on human override may inadvertently limit the transformative potential of digital welfare systems.

Drawing on a trace methodology, the study examines policy documents, regulatory texts and associated debates from European institutions, the OECD and advocacy bodies to explore how human oversight has been conceptualised and justified. These policy traces are analysed alongside qualitative empirical data from the HECAT EU Horizon 2020 project, which developed an ethical algorithmic platform designed to visualise labour market information for use in Public Employment Services (PES). The empirical material consists of vignette-based focus groups with caseworkers in Denmark, France and Ireland (n = 37), eliciting their interpretations and anticipated uses of digital tools in client interactions.

The findings indicate that policy discourse consistently positions human oversight as a necessary and positive feature of digital welfare systems, primarily in relation to data protection and system trust. However, this discourse implicitly assumes that the relevant “human” actor is the caseworker, with limited consideration of unemployed citizens as active users of digital systems. Empirically, caseworkers interpret digital tools as advisory resources that support, rather than transform, their professional judgment, often mediating or restricting the information available to clients. As a result, hybrid digital/human systems tend to reproduce existing casework practices and hierarchical relationships.

The paper argues that, in prioritising human override without addressing underlying power asymmetries, current policy frameworks risk re-entrenching discretionary authority and limiting opportunities to democratise expertise through data access. This represents a missed opportunity to support more collaborative and transparent forms of welfare governance, in which unemployed people can meaningfully engage with labour market information and participate in decision-making about their own trajectories.

Mr. Damian Hrynczuk, Department of Finance - The emerging impact of AI on employment patterns in Ireland

This paper examines the emerging impact of AI on employment patterns in Ireland. Ireland’s labour market is particularly exposed to AI given the high concentration of employment in knowledge-intensive sectors such as ICT, financial services and professional activities. Recent job postings data from Indeed.com indicate that the demand for AI skills in Ireland is accelerating rapidly, while LinkedIn data suggest that Ireland has one of the highest concentrations of AI talent globally. Against this backdrop, we find evidence that AI may have already influenced employment patters in Ireland, with ‘at risk’ sectors recording significantly weaker employment growth since 2023 than lower exposed sectors. These effects are particularly pronounced for younger workers in highly digitised sectors, consistent with the emerging international literature.

Plenary session, Future Forty Report (2025-2065) Chair: Mr. Paul Mac Flynn

Mr. Kevin Daly & Rob Barnes, Department of Finance –
Presentation on the Future Forty Report (2025-2065)

Dr Tom McDonnell, NERI – respondent to the Department of Finance

Collective Bargaining - Session 3A, Chair: Ciarán Nugent, NERI

Mr. Ger Gibbons, ICTU - Ireland's action plan to promote collective bargaining

The presentation considers Ireland's Action Plan to promote collective bargaining, published in November 2025, in the context of the provisions of the Adequate Minimum Wages Directive concerning collective bargaining, particularly the obligation to provide a 'framework of enabling conditions for collective bargaining'. It compares Ireland's response to the collective bargaining provisions to those of a number of other EU countries so far. And, it identifies a number of forthcoming developments that should clarify how Ireland's response is viewed in Brussels.

Dr. Daryl D'Art BL, Dublin City University - Ireland & the EU Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages; Looking a gift horse in the mouth?

This paper aims to explore the potentially positive and negative outcomes of the EU Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages for the Irish union movement and workers generally. The origin of the Directive can be found in the failed promise of neo-liberalism and the resultant increase in income inequalities and in-work poverty. To correct these deficiencies the Directive aims to ensure that all workers in the European Union are protected by adequate minimum wages allowing for a decent living where ever they work. Thus, the Directive aims to promote collective bargaining on wages in all Member States. This approach is taken because the countries with high collective bargaining coverage tend to have fewer low wages workers and high minimum wages. The Directive requires, all Member States, where collective bargaining coverage is below 80% of employed workers, to provide a framework for collective bargaining and establish an action plan to promote union recognition and collective bargaining.

Danish and Swedish unions apart, union movements across Europe enthusiastically support the measure. The General Secretary of the ICTU has characterised the Directive 'the most positive labour proposal to come out of Europe in the last two decades.' When Denmark's ECJ application to annul the Directive in its entirety was not upheld the ETUI welcomed the result as 'here comes the sun'.

When the Directive came to be transposed into law the results may have fallen below the expectations of some labour movements. An ETUI study divided the 27 EU member states obliged to implement the Directive into three categories; laggards, minimalists and frontrunners. The study placed Ireland among the minimalists. Indeed, the Irish governments approach to implementing the Directive is to focus on minimum wages by expanding the existing Joint Labour Committees and Sectoral Employment Orders. The action plan to promote collective bargaining and union recognition remained at best vague and aspirational. It was however clear in ruling out any possibility of statutory union recognition.

It is likely that extending collective bargaining coverage through the JLCs and SEOs would benefit unorganised and vulnerable workers in the private sector by providing predictable and standard wage setting. Wages negotiated by a union on a JLC would likely increase, bringing them closer to the Directive's target of establishing and maintaining a living wage. Yet as unorganised workers they would remain disenfranchised, mere passive beneficiaries or free riders. Within their individual enterprises they would exercise little if any influence on decisions affecting their daily working lives. Of course, some worker might rest content with improved wages and conditions. Others however who wish to organise and seek recognition might be dissuaded by the existing and well documented employer opposition. In the absence of a right to recognition collective bargaining coverage might very well increase. Yet union density or the percentage of employed workers organised in unions, might stagnate or decline. This seems to be the case in France, Portugal and Spain.

The above potentially negative outcomes could be avoided or at least minimised. This would involve the Irish trade union movement adopting a dual strategy. The object would be to ensure that union density and collective bargaining coverage would grow roughly in tandem. In the absence of a right to recognition, an approximation to this outcome is unlikely.

Finally, there is potentially, an additional pitfall posed by a great disparity between high levels of collective bargaining coverage and low levels of union density. Undoubtedly a central concern of trade unions is the maintenance and improvement of wages and conditions of employment. Yet in Western Europe at any rate trade unionism has broader objectives as a social movement. Generally, in capitalist democracies union act to promote the values of social solidarity. They oppose a conception of society dominated by the calculus of profit and loss. In Britain and Europe trade unions in alliance with labour or socialist parties have been instrumental in the creation of welfare states. The International Labour Organisation and the European Court of Human Rights have highlighted the vital contribution made by unions to social justice. By enhancing the democratic nature of the state, restricting abuse by the economically powerful, contributing to social justice and the common good unions create socially beneficial outcomes. Yet the probability of these outcomes being realised largely depends on the weight of union influence that can be brought to bear on employers and government. That in turn will be determined not by high levels of collective bargaining coverage but by the percentage of workers organised in independent trade unions. Employers and government when considering union demands might sensibly ask how many battalions have the trade unions. If the answer is very few then it might become easy to ignore the demands of an apparently unrepresentative interest group.

Professor John Geary, UCD (joint paper with Dr Maria Belizón, Comillas Pontifical University, Madrid) - Workers' Orientations to Union Voice in Ireland: Findings from the Working in Ireland Survey, 2025

This paper examines workers' orientations and views of trade unions in Ireland. The data are drawn from the Working in Ireland Survey (WIIS), 2025. This is the second such WIIS survey. The first was conducted in 2021. Here, we look specifically at the structure of union membership, members' and non-members' disposition towards unions, the perceived effectiveness of unions, the incidence and reasons for union free-riding (-loading), and the coverage of collective bargaining. Our findings from the current survey are compared with those derived from WIIS 1 where appropriate and are set against the public policy context, particularly the potential influence of the Adequate Minimum Wages Directive and the Irish Government's attendant Action Plan.

Dr. Tom Turner, University of Limerick (joint paper with Dr. Daryl D'Art BL, Dublin City University) - Hard times for trade unions in Ireland in the 21st century? Attracting a growing immigrant work force in an era of union decline & exclusion

Immigrant workers pose significant recruitment difficulties for trade unions particularly in the private sector of the economy. This paper assesses the extent to which unions have been successful in recruiting non-national workers especially in the private sector in the 21st century. Union density levels in the private sector more than halved for both nationals and non-nationals between 2003 and 2025. The large influx of immigrant workers into the Irish labour market in recent years has exerted a further downward effect on the underlying secular decline in the proportion of workers in a trade union.

Unemployment - Session 3B, Chair: Dr. Michelle O'Sullivan, University of Limerick

Dr. Jerry Dixon, South East Technological University (SETU), Department of Lifelong Learning, Carlow - A regression analysis of the personality traits that mediate job seeking and reemployment

This Irish study collected biographical data and self reported ratings of traits from 430 job seekers nationwide to explore what psychosocial constructs mediate the reemployment process. Using a quantitative (within participants) design; this study performed a regression analysis on 85 traits deemed in the literature to impact upon job seeking. The dependant variables consisted of measures of i) period of unemployment, ii) a job seeking self efficacy score, and, iii) a job seeking intensity score. Using stepwise regression analysis, the 8th model for prolonged unemployment (R = .362, R^2 .131, *adj.* R^2 = .112) revealed that environmental perception was the largest single negative factor and over all accounted for 13% of the period of unemployment. The 8 traits contained in the model for the job seeking self efficacy accounted for 27% of the variance (R = .518, R^2 .269, *adj.* R^2 = .253). The highest factor was courage / fearlessness reflecting a need for resilience. Job seeking intensity revealed 5 traits in the regression model (R = .465, R^2 .216, *adj.* R^2 = .205) which found openness to experience to be the highest scoring factor. Although the power of the models was moderately low, when other known unemployment variables like gender, level of education etc. were added, the power of the more specific models began to rise considerably. Collectively, the findings present an interesting psychological profile of reemployment. When applied they could benefit reemployment training programmes and guidance coaches assigned to help reduce long term unemployment.

Dr. Tom Boland, UCC - Activating the Economically Inactive: Get Britain Working as extended governmentality

After over a decade criticising the conservative government for workfarist or at least work-first approaches to welfare, the UK Labour party launched its *Get Britain Working* policy. While moderating the harsh conditionality of previous years, the new policy extends new forms of 'governmentality' (Foucault, 2007). In particular, the policy re-categorises those outside the labour market as 'economically inactive' and proposes new measures to re-connect them with productive work. This ranges from soft activation to therapeutics, with ill-health particularly highlighted as a barrier to participation. Strikingly, the absence of work is equated with negative physical and psychological health and therefore, activation is proposed as a remedy to social ills, both at a personal and state level. Young people are targeted with a youth guarantee. Those with caring duties are to be offered flexible work. Career Guidance is promised for the directionless. Effectively, work is positioned not just as an economic good, but as a solution to social problems. While welcome as a de-escalation of welfare conditionality which was widely criticised, *Get Britain Working* envisages a new range of insidious governmentality which poses anything other than work as a political and social problem.

Dr. Neil Rowland, Queen's University Belfast (joint paper with Professor Duncan McVicar, Queen's University Belfast & Dr. Ian Shuttleworth, Queen's University Belfast) - Catholic-Protestant Unemployment Differentials in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and the Republic of Ireland 1991-2011: A Comparative Study

We use census-based microdata to compare Catholic and Protestant unemployment rates in Northern Ireland, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland in 1991, 2001 and 2011. Despite differences in Catholic population shares and the extent to which institutions of the state are thought to have advantaged one group over another, unemployment rates for Catholics were higher in all three countries. We assess the extent to which this can be explained by measurable differences in productive characteristics between Catholics and Protestants in each country and, by comparing across countries, the extent to which unexplained gaps might reflect labour market discrimination.

Dr. Antoinette Jordan, SETU Carlow - "The Unemployment Problem" - External influences in Irish Labour Market Policy, 1926-2026

Dáil debates in the 1920s returned repeatedly to 'the Unemployment Problem', a significant challenge of the newly formed Irish state, resulting in new unemployment legislation in 1926. One hundred years later, the release of the 1926 Census, the first undertaken by the new state, provides a critical opportunity to review a century of Irish labour market policy and examine the influences that shaped it.

All states draw on external models when developing labour market policy. However, this paper argues that the Irish experience represents something qualitatively different: not selective learning filtered through domestic policy capacity, but a persistent pattern of adoption, imposition and external influence - from a British administrative system to Troika-imposed sanctions to EU digital aspirations. Rather than a historical account, the paper looks towards what's next, tracing unemployment and labour market policy across key moments in a century of Irish statehood, looking forward to 2030.

The 1926 Census provides a critical window into the labour market conditions that early policymakers confronted. Despite achieving political independence, the state inherited a British system designed for an industrialised economy - a poor fit for an Irish labour market characterised by agricultural underemployment, seasonal work, high emigration and returning soldiers from several conflicts. Using census data on occupation, employment status and household structure, this paper examines the gap between the inherited policy framework and the lived realities of unemployment and underemployment, noting that political sovereignty did not translate into policy sovereignty, where many populations of interest were not counted in the 1926 census.

The paper traces how this pattern persisted across the following century. International Labour Organisation conventions, EEC/EU membership and financial crisis conditionality represented moments where Irish unemployment policy was significantly reshaped by external frameworks. More recently, EU policy on digitalisation of government services and gender pay gaps continue this trajectory, consistently adopting externally designed instruments.

The paper asks whether this pattern of external dependency continues to produce a mismatch between policy design and the needs of unemployed people in Ireland. Building on earlier work exploring the absence of lived experience in Irish labour market policy (Jordan & Griffin, 2025 NERI paper), this paper argues that externally framed policy is structurally disconnected from the realities of those it purports to serve. A century of borrowed frameworks has consequences for policy coherence, adequacy, responsiveness and lived experience. Building stronger policy capacity, informed by lived experience, is essential as Ireland faces digitalisation and evolving European integration.

Workers Rights' - Session 4A, Chair: Dr. Cormac O'Keeffe, SETU Waterford

Dr. Michelle O'Sullivan, University of Limerick (joint paper with Dr. Caroline Murphy, Dr. Tish Gibbons & Dr. Sarah MacCurtain, University of Limerick) - "Silent assassins" & "slick HR". A Study of Anti-union Tactics in Ireland

Background - There has been increasing acknowledgement of the role of unions and collective bargaining in society. Collective bargaining can facilitate high employment and lower unemployment, reduce income and wage inequality, and protect vulnerable groups in society, and union recognition and collective bargaining have been recognised as essential features of a democratic society. Despite these recognised benefits, union density and collective bargaining coverage has declined substantially since the 1980s. The EU Directive 2022/2041 on Adequate Minimum Wages (AMW) has identified the need to strengthen collective bargaining in the EU because of its erosion and the decline in trade union membership in recent decades. The Directive identified several factors contributing to the decline in unionisation including union-busting practices, which is the focus of this study. Based on the experiences of union officials, we investigate anti-union tactics by employers in Ireland using a schema developed by Roy (1980) and Gall (2004) which categorises tactics as awkward, fear, sweet and evil. We also examine union officials' perspectives on potential policy measures to address anti-unionism and their expectations for the AMW Directive.

Research Methods - An online survey was sent to approximately 293 union officials in 2024. Of these, 179 responses were received, representing a response rate of 61%. The survey data was supplemented by interviews with 32 union officials undertaken in 2025 which add rich insight into anti-union practices.

Findings - We find that the three most common anti-union tactics union officials encountered were the employer stonewalling the union, victimisation of union members/activists, and line managers briefing employees against unions. Antiunionism in research generally refers to organisations which refuse to recognise unions but from our interviews, we find that the category of antiunion employer is ambiguous, and it would be more accurate to describe employers as having varying approaches to unions, whether they recognise them or not. We develop a typology that identifies five employer approaches to unions: archetypal antiunion (silent assassins), double breasters, double standard, hostile unionised (slick HR) and cooperative unionised organisations.

In terms of policy measures to address anti-unionism, survey respondents favoured stronger legislation to achieve union recognition and penalties for employers who victimise union representatives. Union officials had positive expectations about the potential impact of the AMW Directive, but they were cognisant that its effectiveness depends on its transposition.

Dr. Alan Eustace, Trinity College Dublin (joint paper with Paul D. Maier BL, Law Library) - Just & Equitable in all the circumstances? Remedies at the Workplace Relations Commission & Labour Court

Ubi jus, ibi remedium, so the legal maxim goes: where there is a right, there is a remedy. A legal right or protection is worth little without consequences for its violation. When an individual has suffered a financial loss or experienced pain, distress or indignity because someone else broke the law, a decision-maker is supposed to vindicate their rights and deter future breaches of the law by providing for a remedy. A remedy might be a direction that a party corrects their wrongdoing, but more commonly the law measures rights and wrongs in monetary damages payable by the wrongdoer to their victim. The quantum of damages provided is supposed to reflect, as best money can, both the severity of the harm suffered by one party and the seriousness of the other's wrongdoing.

This paper will examine, in light of these basic principles, the remedial powers of Adjudication Officers of the Workplace Relations Commission and members of the Labour Court. It will draw out common formulas for remedies which are used across a wide spectrum of employment legislation. It will identify key elements of these formulas, such as the principle of income-proportionality (a cap on damages expressed as a multiple of a claimant's wages). It will ask whether decision-makers' existing statutory powers are sufficient to vindicate the rights of employees who suffer wrongdoing by their employers, and to deter such wrongdoing by employers; and what should be done where these powers are insufficient, especially to uphold Ireland's obligations under European Union law. It will also discuss whether the way in which remedial powers are used in practice is predictable to employees and employers.

This paper will be of interest to those who work in, practice before and study the operations of the WRC and Labour Court and equivalent bodies in Northern Ireland and further afield. It will contribute to a fuller understanding of an aspect of the powers and practice of labour market institutions (remedies following adjudication) which has been under-investigated in academic and policy circles.

Mr. Eoin Coates, Maynooth University & Trade Union Official - Beyond Karshan: Tackling bogus self-employed through comprehensive legal testing

In the wake of the *Karshan* case, the issue of bogus self-employment has come to the fore in Ireland and state bodies are responding accordingly in an attempt to distinguish between bogus and actual self-employment in all sectors of the economy. While the issue of bogus self-employment as a means to avoid tax is getting some attention in Ireland, it has been a contentious labour rights topic across Europe for many years. Despite the definition of self-employment remaining a national competence, European courts have regularly addressed the issue and are beginning to align around core principles as to what qualifies as bogus or legitimate self-employment.

As part of my ongoing research into hypermobile work and complex employment models in the European aviation industry, the issue of bogus self-employment arose as a significant issue for pilots across Europe. While the broader research is continuing separately, the issue of bogus self-employment was further analysed and in-depth research carried out to help understand in clear terms what constitutes as bogus self-employment and what does not.

The review of literature and *jurisprudence* on the topic identified a wide breath of cases at national and European level, each with their own nuanced perspective on what can be considered bogus self-employment. Through this analysis, I have sought to design a comprehensive but accessible legal test bringing in a broad scope of questions designed to help parties understand if a work situation could be considered as bogus self-employment based on the primacy of CJEU *jurisprudence* and European law.

This test aims to be a practical and useful tool for trade unions, employers and regulators to better understand and categorise employment, and in turn prevent labour exploitation and the continuance of bogus self-employment in Ireland and beyond.

Immigration - Session 4B, Chair: Ciarán Nugent

Mr. Yusuf Mohamed Adan, Member of Parliament, Federal Government of Somalia & former Minister of Labour & Social Affairs - Bilateral Labour Agreements & Worker Protection: Evidence from the Somalia-Saudi Arabia Labour Migration Corridor

Somalia's Bilateral Labour Agreement (BLA) with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia represents a strategic shift from predominantly informal labour migration toward a regulated labour mobility framework. This paper assesses the extent to which the agreement advances worker protection, promotes fair recruitment, and strengthens labour migration governance, with reference to international labour standards.

Using qualitative policy analysis, the study examines the institutional and legal architecture of the Somalia–Saudi Arabia labour migration corridor. It analyses core provisions of the agreement, including employment contract standardization, recruitment regulation, dispute resolution mechanisms, and bilateral oversight arrangements. The analysis is benchmarked against relevant International Labour Organization (ILO) instruments, particularly the Migration for Employment Convention (No. 97), the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention (No. 143), and the ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment.

The findings indicate that while the agreement is normatively aligned with international standards on fair recruitment and migrant worker protection, its effectiveness is constrained by enforcement deficits, weak regulation of private recruitment intermediaries, and limited institutional and inspection capacity. Gaps in pre-departure systems, grievance mechanisms, and cross-border coordination further undermine implementation.

The paper argues that BLAs in fragile and post-conflict contexts require robust compliance mechanisms, digital monitoring systems, and stronger bilateral accountability frameworks to translate formal commitments into tangible worker protection outcomes. It concludes with targeted policy recommendations to enhance enforcement, improve recruitment governance, and operationalize rights-based labour migration systems.

Dr. Majka Ryan, University of Limerick (Joint paper with Dr. Caroline Murphy, University of Limerick) - Individualised risk in platform-mediated home care & domestic work: Insights from migrant workers in Ireland

Platform-based home care and domestic work in Ireland is predominantly performed by migrant workers, with digital platforms profiting from regulatory conditions that reinforce gendered, racialised and migration-related inequalities and labour precarity (Rodríguez-Modroño et al. 2022). These intersecting vulnerabilities deepen social invisibility, economic insecurity and marginalisation, enabling intensified precarisation and "flexploitation" (Kluzik, 2022, p.3). Rather than expanding autonomy, digitalisation often consolidates employer power and fragments the conditions needed for meaningful worker participation. Drawing on in-depth interviews with migrant workers in Ireland, this presentation focuses on a subset of findings from the broader Origami - Home Care Digital Platforms and Industrial Relations research project. In this presentation we evidence migrant workers' perspectives on the drivers, lived experiences, and consequences of individualised risk within platform-mediated home-care and domestic-work environments.

The presentation shows how the interplay of immigration status, precarious earnings, algorithmic management and limited access to social protection compels workers to internalise responsibility for managing unpredictable income, unsafe working conditions, and even discriminatory client behaviour. This individualisation of risk is experienced through increased surveillance, intensified emotional and physical demands, and heightened dependency on both clients and platforms for ongoing work. It produces significant impacts, including chronic insecurity, fear of retaliation, reduced capacity to refuse unsafe or exploitative tasks, and the erosion of collective agency. Despite legal protections against discrimination (Employment Equality Acts 1998–2007; Equal Status Acts 2000–2004) and government initiatives such as the regularisation scheme, migrant workers in the Irish home-care sector continue to experience exploitation, marginalisation, discrimination and, in some cases, verbal and physical violence. These risks are rarely reported, as workers fear income loss, immigration consequences, and face substantial structural barriers in seeking redress. Ultimately, the presentation argues that resisting the digitally mediated commodification of migrant labour (van Doorn et al. 2023) and countering the individualisation of risk requires an intersectional, multi-level response. Such an approach must include transformative policy interventions across social protection, immigration and employment to address the systemic conditions that produce and sustain migrant workers' precarity, and to ensure meaningful voice and democratic participation at work.