

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE STATISTICAL AND SOCIAL INQUIRY SOCIETY OF  
IRELAND**

**One Hundred and Fifty-Eighth Session—2004/2005**

**First Meeting**

The Society met at the ESRI on Thursday, 14th October 2004 at 6.30 pm. Aidan Punch, President, was in the Chair. A paper by Mr. Dónal Palcic and Dr. Eoin Reeves of the University of Limerick entitled "An Economic Analysis of Privatisation in Ireland 1991-2003" was presented. This paper presented the first detailed analysis of Privatisation policy. It explored how the rationale for selling State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) has evolved and argued that privatisation has been pursued on the basis of multiple (sometimes conflicting objectives). A vote of thanks was proposed by Mr. John Evans of the Competition Authority and seconded by Mr. Patrick Massey of Compecon.

The President closed the meeting by thanking the speakers and all who had contributed.

**Second Meeting**

The Society met at the Economic and Social Research Institute on Wednesday, 17th of November 2004 at 6.30 pm. Aidan Punch, President, was in the Chair. A Lecture was delivered by Frank Barry, University College Dublin and Clare O'Mahony, Dublin Institute of Technology entitled "Making Sense of the Data on Ireland's Inward FDI". This examined the conflicting picture provided by the international data series on Ireland's inward FDI. The paper documented these conflicting stories and, through analysis of the items that the various databases include and exclude, searches for any underlying consistency that may be present. The policy implications for FDI data collection were also explored. A vote of thanks was proposed by Mr. Michael Connolly of the Central Statistics Office and seconded by Dr. Ronnie O'Toole of Forfás.

The President closed the meeting by thanking the speakers and all who had contributed.

**Third Meeting**

The Society met at the Economic and Social Research Institute on Thursday, 24th of February 2005 at 6.30 pm. The President, Mr. Aidan Punch was in the Chair.

A paper by Dr. Chris Minns, Trinity College Dublin entitled "Immigration Policy and the Skill of Irish Immigrants: Evidence and Implications" was presented. This paper documented the rise of the "new" immigration into Ireland, and uses a recent OECD data set to compare the education of Irish immigrants to their counterparts in other European economies. The data suggest that Ireland's immigrant population is remarkably skilled. These findings were used as a backdrop to explore three major issues in Irish immigration: the likely impact of EU accession of new member states, the appropriateness of current immigration policy, and the relationship between current immigration and future population flows. A vote of thanks was proposed by Dr. Alan Barrett of the Economic and Social Research Institute and seconded by Mr. Gerry O'Hanlon of the Central Statistics Office.

The President closed the meeting by thanking the speakers and all who had contributed.

#### **Fourth Meeting**

The Society met at the Economic and Social Research Institute on March 29th, 2005 at 6.30 pm. Aidan Punch, President, was in the Chair.

The meeting was dedicated to the presentation of the 2005 Barrington Prize Lecture by Dr. Ronnie O' Toole of Forfás. This lecture examined the reasons for the recent divergence in US and European productivity performance, revealing how the structure of European industry is ill suited to the challenge of innovation which has to be faced given the rapid development of ICT technology, together with the fact that the ability to grow economically by imitating US innovation becomes more limited as convergence to US levels of output is approached. Turning to Ireland, the lecture revealed that while Ireland's productivity growth over the last decade has been impressive, we still compare unfavourably with Europe when adjustment is made for transfer pricing.

The President closed the meeting by thanking the speakers and all who had contributed.

#### **Fifth Meeting**

The Society met at the Economic and Social Research Institute on Tuesday April 14th, 2005 at 6.30 pm. Aidan Punch, President, was in the Chair.

The meeting was the annual symposium which addressed "Irish Housing Market: Issues and Prospects". The Irish Housing market has expanded rapidly in recent years with significant increases in activity and prices. This has raised a number of issues for policy-makers in the area of planning, taxation and social housing. Issues of sustainability and affordability have been key elements of the policy debate raising questions about the stability of the financial sector and the continuance of current social and affordable housing policy. There is also the growing importance of the construction sector for the economy as a whole and the implications for economic prospects of a slowdown in activity. We had three Speakers to consider these issues: David Duffy, Economic and Social Research Institute, Rory O'Donnell, Director, NESI and Aideen Hayden, Chairperson of Threshold. The President closed the meeting by thanking the speakers and all who had contributed.

#### **Sixth Meeting**

The Society met at 4.00 pm Manorhouse Hotel, Enniskillen on the Thursday 19 May 2005. Aidan Punch, President, was in the Chair. A paper was delivered Sir Tony Atkinson (Nuffield College, Oxford) on the review of the measurement of government output and productivity for the National Accounts. The Atkinson Review was commissioned by the UK National Statistician in December 2003 to advance methodologies for the measurement of government output, productivity and associated price indices in the context of National Accounts. The paper sets out the principles that should underpin future work in the measurement of government output and productivity. It also recommends broad approaches for developing the measurement of the output of public services that will improve the accuracy, coverage and interpretation of figures, with publication of methods and figures to ensure transparency and debate on ways of achieving further improvements. The President closed the meeting by thanking the speakers and all who had contributed.