



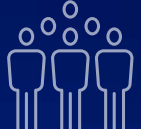
OLLSCOIL NA
GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY
OF GALWAY

An Institiúid Cúrsa Saoil
& Sochaí
Institute for Lifecourse
& Society

ENABLING
EQUITY
ACROSS THE
LIFE COURSE

Institute for Lifecourse and Society - ILAS

Public Policy Innovation Series



Policy Implementation for Impact

How do implementation issues and concerns affect policy design processes? How do civil servants respond to implementation challenges? What factors drive successful implementation? How do we know when implementation is successful?

These will be some of the questions in focus for this third event in the Institute for Lifecourse and Society's Public Policy Innovation Series. Addressing **Implementation**, the third pillar of Ireland's Policy Handbook, the seminar builds on previous events focused on **Evidence** and **Legitimacy**.

The goals of the seminar are:

1. To establish what are the factors in policy design which determine successful implementation in the "real world".
2. To explore the complex challenges of responsive policy implementation towards impact.
3. To identify feasible pathways towards more effective policy implementation under-pinned by evidence and public engagement.

The seminar will be built on a selection of case-studies of recent public policy, chosen to reflect a variety of policy sectors and types, and spanning the range of experiences of implementation. The case-studies will be discussed by panels, comprising senior civil and public servants, academics and civil society actors, who will bring content and policy expertise to the discussion. Through the case-studies' discussion and a dedicated session, the seminar will contribute to existing initiatives seeking more systematic connections between Ireland's HE sector research and state policy making processes.

DATE: Tuesday, 26th May 2026

TIME: 10:00-16:00

VENUE: ILAS, University of Galway



[Register here](#)

INVITATION



Schedule

Time	Speaker
10:00	Registration, Tea and Coffee, Networking
10:30	Welcome & Introduction <i>Prof. David Burn, President, University of Galway</i> <i>Jack Chambers, Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation - (Recorded Message)</i>
Event Focus Overview from a Policy and Research Perspective	
10:40	Beyond Business as Usual: Rethinking Research and Policy in Changed Times <i>Elizabeth Canavan, Assistant Secretary General, Department of the Taoiseach</i> <i>Prof. Caroline McGregor, Director of the Institute for Lifecourse and Society</i>
Plenary Speaker	
11:00	Getting Governments to Deliver Effectively in Turbulent Times <i>Prof. Michael Kenny, Bennett School of Public Policy, University of Cambridge</i>
Case Study 1: Pension Reform	
11:30	Presented By <i>John McKeon, Secretary General, Department of Social Protection</i>
11:50	Panel Discussion Moderator: <i>Fergal Lynch</i> <i>Richard Bruton, Research Economist and Former Politician</i> <i>Camille Loftus, Head of Advocacy & Public Affairs, Age Action Ireland CLG</i> <i>Dr Áine Ní Léime, Deputy Director of the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, University of Galway</i>
Case Study 2: A Plan-Led Approach to Delivering Ireland's Offshore Energy Ambition	
12:20	Presented By <i>Philip Nugent, Assistant Secretary, EU, International and Marine Affairs, Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment</i>
12:40	Panel Discussion Moderator: <i>Fergal Lynch</i> <i>Richard Bruton, Research Economist and Former Politician</i> <i>Captain Brian FitzGerald, Community Liaison Service, National Designated Maritime Area Plan, Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment</i> <i>Dr Thomas van Rensburg, University of Galway</i>
13:10	LUNCH
Case Study 3: Online Youth Safety	
14:10	Presented By <i>Triona Quill, Assistant Secretary, Broadcasting & Media Division, Department of Culture, Communications & Sport</i>
14:30	Panel Discussion Moderator: <i>Fergal Lynch</i> <i>Fiona Jennings, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, ISPCCRyan Meade, Government Affairs and Public Policy Manager, Google</i> <i>Prof. Eoin Whelan, Prof. of Business Analytics and Society, University of Galway</i>
15:00	Policy, Research and Engagement Futures
15:45	Conference Close: <i>Prof. John Canavan, Institute for Lifecourse & Society</i>
16:00	End

Seminar Highlights:

Getting Governments to Deliver Effectively in Turbulent Times

In this plenary talk, Michael Kenny engages with the emphasis upon the development of skills relating to 'implementation' within the Three Pillars Framework published by the Irish Government's Civil Service Management Board in 2024. He connects this to a growing concern about central government's struggles to implement major projects and other policy priorities which is apparent across the democratic world. He introduces some of the factors which lie behind worries about implementation. And he highlights the need to address institutional and cultural deficiencies, alongside the improvement of civil service capabilities, in order to create a more effective and strategic approach to implementation.

Beyond Business as Usual: Rethinking Research and Policy in Changed Times

Public services are operating in an environment of rapid change, rising expectations and increasing complexity that challenges many of the assumptions underpinning how research informs public policy. *Beyond Business as Usual* invites us to rethink not only what evidence we generate, but how, when and with whom it is produced and used. Effective research-policy engagement must move beyond linear models towards more adaptive, collaborative and impact-focused approaches. At the same time, it must be timely, practical and responsive to the complex decisions facing policymakers today, supporting them to navigate uncertainty, make informed trade offs, and respond to emerging challenges with confidence.

Case Study Information

Pension Reform

The impetus to progress pension reform has arisen from the inter-related concerns to ensure the sustainability of public finances as the population ages, to assure adequacy of retirement incomes (and by extension sustain consumption over the lifecycle) and to promote inter-generational equity. Although the evidence clearly points to the need for reform, communicating these temporal challenges and securing public support to accept the postponement of income now for income in the future has proven to be very challenging and is one of the most contentious political issues in many countries. Against this backdrop, this case study will be access how pension reforms in Ireland are addressing these temporal challenges. whilst charting a feasible course that secures social acceptance.

A plan-led approach to delivering Ireland's Offshore Energy ambition

Ireland's offshore renewable energy (ORE) ambitions require a step change in how marine infrastructure is planned and delivered. A plan-led approach to marine planning provides the framework to ensure that development is strategically located, environmentally sustainable, and aligned with long-term national energy objectives. As Ireland seeks to scale up low-carbon and renewable electricity over the coming decade, coordinated spatial planning at sea will be essential to underpin energy security and system transformation. Delivering ORE at scale will depend not only on robust planning frameworks, but also on public confidence in how decisions are made. A plan-led system offers greater transparency and predictability for communities, marine users, and developers alike, helping to build trust and legitimacy. Engagement with coastal communities, maritime stakeholders, and the wider public will remain critical to ensuring that development is both supported and sustainable.

Online Youth Safety

Online safety, especially for children and young people, is a matter of increasing concern, particularly as we spend more time on social media and other platforms. While there are many positives, there are also the dangers of harmful content or even criminal contact. The challenge is how to strike the right balance between keeping children safe while recognising that the online world is their world too. The current debates as to whether social media should be restricted for young people and, if so, how, mean that questions of effectiveness and feasibility loom large as national governments attempt to address trans-national issues brought about by some of the most powerful corporations. And it is important to understand the viewpoint of young people when the discourse is largely driven by adults. Given the circumstances, the speaker will address how a practical and progressive public policy might emerge.



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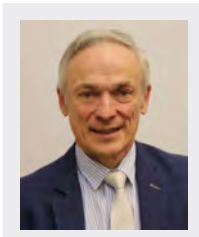
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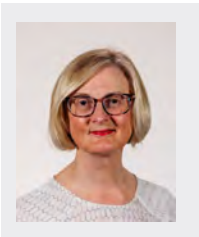
Speakers



Prof. David Burn, became the 14th President of University of Galway in September 2025. Previously, he served as Pro-Vice Chancellor of the Faculty of Medical Sciences, Newcastle University since 2017 where he led transformative change initiatives to restructure faculty, accelerate research performance, advance equality, diversity and inclusion and drive internationalisation. Until July 2025, he was also Prof. of Movement Disorders Neurology and Honorary Consultant Neurologist for Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Trust. He served as Director of an Academic Health Science Centre, the Newcastle Health Research Partnership, which works to deliver improvements to health and wellbeing for the over 3 million people living in the Northeast of England and North Cumbria. He became President of the International Parkinson & Movement Disorder Society in October 2025.



Richard Bruton is a Research Economist and former politician. He served as a Cabinet Minister at Enterprise and Employment, at Education and Skills, and at Environment, Climate, and Communications. In each department, he implemented purposeful reforms through a consolidated rolling Action Plan. During his parliamentary career, he authored over 25 substantive Policy Papers across a wide range of portfolios. While chairman of the Fine Gael Parliamentary Party, he established its Policy Lab, a unique body in the Irish political landscape. He currently chairs two bodies: the Research Co Centre for Climate Biodiversity and Water; and Social Enterprise Republic of Ireland. He is a Research Associate of the Wilfred Martins Centre.

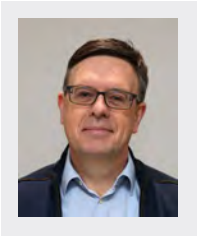


Elizabeth Canavan is Assistant Secretary General of the Social Policy and Public Service Reform Division in the Dept of the Taoiseach. She is the Secretary to several Cabinet Sub-Committees and Chair of the associated Senior Officials Groups. She is Deputy Chair of the National Economic and Social Council, Secretary to the Civil Service Management Board and a member of the Public Service Leadership Board. She is a career civil servant and has worked extensively in the policy development in the areas of Health, Children & Families and Public Service Reform. Previously, she held the position of Assistant Secretary General in the Dept of Children and Youth Affairs, Acting Secretary General in the Dept of Children and Youth Affairs and Department of Rural and Community Development; Chief Executive Officer of the Adoption Authority of Ireland; and Deputy Director of the then National Children's Office. She is a native of Galway and a graduate of Dublin City University and the Institute of Directors.



Jack Chambers is the Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation. He was appointed to this role on 23 January 2025. Before this, he served as Minister for Finance. He is the Fianna Fáil TD for Dublin West. He was elected to Dáil Éireann on his first attempt in the February 2016 general election and was re-elected in the 2020 and 2024 General Elections. Before entering the Dáil, he served as a Fingal County Councillor and as Deputy Mayor. He has been an active member of a number of Oireachtas committees including Climate Action, Justice and Equality and the committee on Seanad Reform. Born in Galway, Jack moved to Dublin West at a young age. He is a Medical Doctor, having studied Medicine at the RCSI, and he holds an honours degree in Law and Political Science from Trinity College Dublin.

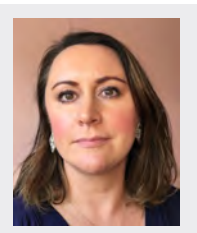
Speakers



Prof. John Canavan is the UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth, and Civic Engagement. Professor Canavan, a Personal Professor in Political Science and Sociology, is the Director of the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (UCFRC), and his main research interests are Family Support, evaluation theory, and connecting research, policy and practice. His most recent book is *Systems Complexity in Child Protection and Welfare* (2026, Routledge) authored with colleagues from the UCFRC.



Captain Brian FitzGerald delivers the Community Liaison Services for both the National Designated Maritime Area Plan (DMAP) for Offshore Renewable Energy and the South Coast DMAP at the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment. Brian served a full career in the Naval Service including two periods as a ship's Captain, was a senior lecturer at the National Maritime College of Ireland, and ultimately as the Officer Commanding Naval Operations. He has served as a military observer in the Sahara Desert and as an operational commander as part of Europe's response to the humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean. Brian holds Master's degrees in Marine and Maritime Law (UCC), and Leadership, Management and Defence Studies (NUIM), a degree in Law (UCC), and a diploma in Public Relations (PRII) in addition to his seafaring qualifications. Brian lectures in maritime law at UCC and is passionate about offshore renewable energy and the safety of life at sea.



Fiona Jennings is Head of Policy and Public Affairs at the ISPC and one of Ireland's leading voices in child safeguarding. She brings conviction to her advocacy, combining legal and policy expertise with evidence-driven insight to champion children's rights and wellbeing. Fiona leads ISPC's work on the EU Commission co funded Irish Safer Internet Centre, under the coordination of the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration. She is Societal Impact Champion for TU Dublin's prize winning GroSafe project tackling grooming and previously supported the university's N-Light initiative detecting hidden patterns in child exploitation webchat logs through AI. Fiona is advisor to the COR Sandbox project, contributes to Coimisiún na Meán's Youth Advisory Committee, and collaborates with EU partners on related matters.



Prof. Michael Kenny is Professor Michael Kenny is Professor of Public Policy and Inaugural Head of Department at the Bennett School of Public Policy in Cambridge. He is a Professorial Fellow at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, a visiting Fellow at the UCL Constitution Unit, and a member of the Advisory Board of the Constitution Society. In 2021 he was made a Fellow of the UK's Academy of the Social Sciences. His research interests include public policy; governance and devolution; territorial politics; British politics and political ideas. He is currently writing *The World Island: How Britain's Relationship with the Seas has Shaped its Politics and Government*, with Nick Pearce, which will examine the policy and ideological implications of shifting conceptions of the UK as a maritime state.

Speakers



Camille Loftus, Head of Advocacy & Public Affairs, Age Action Ireland CLG. Camille Loftus has extensive experience of the formation and delivery of public policy. She has worked in the NGO sector providing effective representative advocacy for a wide range of marginalised groups experiencing poverty, inequality and social exclusion, both during and following social partnership. She has worked in the private sector as a socio-economic consultant and researcher, for Government, NGO, and political clients. Camille has also served as a Special Advisor to the Ministers for Health, and for Children and Youth Affairs. She has lectured in social policy at NUI Maynooth, UCD, and Trinity College Dublin.



Dr Fergal Lynch is Chair of the National Council for Special Education. He is a Trustee of the Katharine Howard Foundation and a board member of Genio. Until recently he worked in the University of Galway to help foster closer links between policy practitioners and academics in the development, implementation and evaluation of public policy. Fergal was previously Secretary General of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (20215-2022) and Deputy Secretary General of the Department Health (2012-2015). He was Chair of the Board of the Institute of Public Administration from 2019 to 2022.



Prof. Caroline McGregor is the Director of the Institute for Lifecourse and Society (ILAS) and a Senior Researcher at the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre. Her expertise is in social work, with extensive experience in teaching, research and publishing on issues related to children, young people, and families. She co-authored "Support and Protection Across the Lifecourse" (2021) with Professor Pat Dolan. Her current work is focused on 'protective support and supportive protection', safeguarding across the lifecourse and public engagement in policy, research, practice and education.



John McKeon joined the Department of Social Protection in October 2010 and was appointed Secretary General in July 2017. He has held Assistant Secretary positions with responsibility for activation policy, the development and implementation of Pathways to Work programme, and the modernisation of the department's office (Intreo) services. He also held responsibility for staff relations and Finance, Legislation and PRSI policy. He has worked for the Department of Post and Telegraphs / Telecom Éireann / Eircom over a period of 31 years, latterly as Managing Director of Eircom Wholesale.



Ryan Meade, works with Google in Ireland as Government Affairs & Public Policy Manager. In this role he leads Google's engagement with government, policy makers, and other stakeholders on content and media issues, including online safety, content regulation, media literacy and information quality. Prior to joining Google in 2018, he worked as an independent public policy consultant with clients in the private and NGO sectors. Before this he spent 10 years in politics, working in various roles including as Special Adviser to the Minister for the Environment. Ryan is a member of the steering group of Media Literacy Ireland and of the advisory board to the UCD Centre for Digital Policy.

Speakers



Dr Áine Ní Léime is Assistant Professor in Ethics, Business and Society, and Deputy Director of the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, University of Galway. Her research examines ageing, pensions, and extended working life, with a focus on gender and work. A Marie Curie Fellow, she has conducted comparative research on older workers in Ireland and the U.S. She specialises in qualitative lifecourse and policy analysis, with interests in critical management and the political economy of ageing. She has published in leading journals and led the COST Action IS1409 on gender and health in extended working life. Her work is funded by national and EU bodies. She teaches at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and supervises PhD research on decent work and worker identity.



Philip Nugent is the Assistant Secretary for EU, International Affairs and Marine Affairs at the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment. His role includes governance of Ireland's energy brief with the EU, UN, IEA and various other international forums and agencies. He also leads teams that are responsible for shaping Ireland's engagement on EU and International climate, energy and environment / circular economy issues, as well as marine planning and environment policy, legislation, oversight / governance of Ireland's marine regulatory system and the delivery and implementation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Designated Maritime Area Plans (DMAPs).

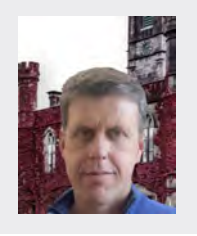


Triona Quill is Assistant Secretary, Broadcasting and Media Division, Department of Culture, Communications and Sport. In her current role, Triona has led the development of the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act and the establishment of Coimisiún na Meán, as well as the implementation of the recommendations of the Future of Media Commission and the Expert Advisory Committee reports on RTÉ. Triona previously worked in the Department of the Taoiseach on Economic and Social Policy, HR, European Affairs and Public Service Reform. She served as Deputy Secretary to the President in Áras an Uachtaráin. She moved to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on its establishment and worked on Civil Service HR policy reform. Triona subsequently worked in the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment where she led the Broadcasting Policy Division.



Dr. Thomas van Rensburg is a Senior Lecturer in Economics in the School of Business and Economics at University of Galway. His teaching and research covers environmental, marine and renewable energy economics and governance and he has coordinated numerous research projects funded by SEAI, EPA, SFI and the European Union on renewable energy and policy spanning more than 20 years. He is currently involved in several projects on hydrogen, energy storage, energy management and community renewable energy in Europe, Africa and China. His work has a strong policy focus and he has over 50 academic papers and 6 PhD completions on economic aspects of renewable energy. He has consistently made his research applicable and accessible to statutory agencies and policy makers working on a wide variety of energy topics in Ireland and abroad.

Speakers



Prof. Eoin Whelan is a Professor in Business Analytics and Society at the University of Galway. His research explores the psychology underlying engagement with interactive digital media such as social media, smartphones, fitness tracking apps, and online gambling sites. In other words, how do different attributes of digital media interact with the persons motivations, personality, beliefs, cognition, and situation, to influence the processes and outcomes such as wellbeing, conflict, and performance.

Register HERE

or

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ILAS Constituent Centres

Centre for Disability Law and Public Policy (CDLP)

Centre for Applied Linguistics & Multilingualism (CALM)

Community Engaged Research in Action (CORA)

Community Engagement

Health Economics and Policy Analysis Centre (HEPAC)

Irish Centre for Social Gerontology (ICSG)

Irish Centre for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Research (ICAN)

PPI Ignite Network

UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (UNCFRC)