



Irish Society for Women in Economics 'Planning Workshop' 19th Feb 2021

On Friday the 19th February 2021 the first meeting of the *Irish Society for Women in Economics* (ISWE) was held. Over 120 people registered for the online event, which was attended by 84 participants. Attendees represented a broad spectrum of public and private sector organisations including all the main higher-level institutions, government departments, public sector organisations, and some private organisations. The list of all participating organisations is set out below. The gender breakdown of registered participants was 90% women and 10% men.

The event was organised by the Irish Economics Association (IEA) who will ultimately house *ISWE*. The aim of the event was to learn from other similar societies and to elicit the views of potential members about the development of *ISWE*.

The event was opened by Dr. Orla Doyle, the Vice President of the IEA, who gave a short presentation on why such a society was needed in Ireland and the plan for the workshop. Dr. Doyle then introduced the keynote speaker, Dr. Leonora Risse, who was one of the founding members, and is currently the National Chair, of the Women in Economics Network (WEN) in Australia. Dr. Risse spoke about how they set up WEN, what worked well for them, what challenges they faced, and how to keep the momentum going. This insightful presentation spoke to the importance of utilising existing structures and adopting a multi-sector approach including both the public and private sector. This was followed by a lively Q&A session with Dr. Risse moderated by Patricia Kenny for the Central Bank. Questions were wide-ranging and included topics such as the most popular WEN events, how to support female PhD students on the job market, and the benefits of online technology. A full list of the questions raised can be found below.

For the second half of the workshop, all participants were randomly assigned into 8 breakout rooms charged with a different topic to discuss regarding the development of *ISWE*. These topics included:

1. Is there a need for *ISWE* now?
2. What are the overarching objectives of *ISWE*? Short, medium and long term goals?
3. What does the governance structure of *ISWE* look like? How should it be financed? Who can become members?
4. How can *ISWE* promote the public representation of female economists?
5. How can *ISWE* promote the career progression of female economists?
6. How can *ISWE* encourage more women to study economics at secondary level?
7. How can *ISWE* encourage more women to study economics at third level?
8. How can *ISWE* encourage male involvement?

Participants had 20 minutes to discuss their topic before re-joining the main room to provide their feedback. Below is a short summary of the points raised in each breakout room.

The workshop ended with a discussion of the next steps for *ISWE*, before some closing words from Professor Frances Ruane about her experiences within the economics profession in Ireland.

As evidenced by this event, the enthusiasm, interest, and appetite for developing a network such as the *Irish Society for Women in Economics* is high. Building on this, the IEA will issue an expression of interest for nominations to *ISWE*'s Executive Committee, who will use the information from this planning event to develop *ISWE*'s Strategy Plan and activities going forward. If you are interested in getting involved please email: ieavicepresident@irisheconomicassociation.org

Note that a recording of the event (apart from the breakout rooms), along with Dr. Doyle's and Dr. Risse's presentations, will be available on the IEA website www.iea.ie

List of participant organisations (based on email addresses)

Aspire Recruitment
AstraZeneca Ireland
Central Bank
Central Statistics Office
Department of Finance
Department of Foreign Affairs
Department of Health
Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
Department of the Taoiseach
Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
Economic and Social Research Institute
European Central Bank
EY Ireland
Frontier Economics
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology
IBEC
Institute of Technology Carlow
InterTrade Ireland
Irish Prison Service
London School of Economics
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)
National Women's Council of Ireland
NUI Galway
NUI Maynooth
Queens University Belfast
Revenue Commissioners
Royal College of Surgeons Ireland
Technological University Dublin
Trinity College Dublin
University College Cork
University College Dublin
University of Limerick
University of Ulster

Q&A questions

1. In the Australian example, were men slower to get involved, were there particular initiatives that helped (carrot/stick)? thanks for great overview BTW.
2. Have digital developments under COVID been a positive for WEN?
3. There is quite a bit of evidence that the pandemic has been particularly difficult for women academics who have young children. Has WEN addressed this or have any insights into how best to deal with it?
4. You mentioned that it was best to focus on core principles which fall within the remit of the WEN and be clear on what falls outside the scope of this, when you started what core activities/events/ideas did you focus on?
5. You mentioned committee meetings held via Zoom. Was this a feature before the pandemic? Were events also held online pre-pandemic?
6. What are your most successful initiatives in encouraging/helping female PhD students secure postdoctoral or assistant professor positions in economics? Are female candidates having a harder time in the job market right now?
7. Is there a risk that remote working after pandemic might be more taken up by women pushing them further away from informal discussions and negatively impacting on their careers?
8. Did WEN have much discussion on how best to identify the most leaky part of the timeline (e.g. undergrad to postgrad, or masters to phd/working world) and how to address them specifically?
9. You mentioned that secondary schools are involved with WEN - what type of engagement do you have with them?
10. Just a comment on that not a question: This type of thing sounds perfect for TY.
11. Have WEN any initiatives to encourage women to publish post children given research suggests wage gap is highest for females with parenting roles?
12. What events are the most popular in the network or have you gotten the best feedback on?
13. Did WEN consider offering small research funding for early career researchers?
14. What have you tried that sounded good but didn't work out?
15. Wondering what your views are on recent Stanford research suggesting that during seminars female economists are treated differently than male economists with questions asked of female economists more likely to be more patronising or hostile?
16. I am wondering does this initiative require a change in membership to the IEA from institutional to individual?
17. I think we need to remember eldercare as well. This can create a double caring issue for women, or when they are just completed with raising a family they have to care for their elderly parents.
18. Older women 5 times more likely than men to leave work to provide care than 5. sandwich generation etc.
19. Women on air have a database of female experts on a number of topics for journalists to consult. <https://womenonair.ie/>
20. Yes and many institutions have registries too ... other barriers still persist. A focus on media training could encourage more to sign up these registries/databases.
21. When I was a post-doc my partner was tenured. He had two weeks of parental leave. That affected me too, longer paternity leave and parental leave is also important. It's not only about making more time for women to act as caregivers, but to help men to take up some of that work too, either giving them time or removing stigma.

22. I recall talking to several students at the BT Young Scientists Awards who had really clever projects using RCTs and when I told them that this is what economist do all the time, they were very surprised. They all wanted to do medicine.
23. ISWE needs to make sure that it represents the needs of ALL female economists (not just those in academia). There was a feeling voiced in our breakout room amongst the non-academic economists of "Am I supposed to be here?"

Breakout Room Discussion Points

Breakout Room 1: Need: Is there a need for ISWE now?

- ISWE is needed to provide a networking and mentoring space where female economists can meet.
- There is a need for more women in prominent positions, especially policy positions, as women have different views.
- ISWE is needed to help promote the career progression of female economists and increase their media presence.

Breakout Room 2: Objectives: What are the overarching objectives of ISWE? Short, medium and long term goals?

- Short term objectives: Increase the visibility of female economists. This can be achieved in two ways. First, by increasing their visibility outside of economics, perhaps through creating a database of female economists which is available to the media. Second, by increasing the visibility of the careers in which economists work. This will help attract more students to study economics.
- Medium term objectives: Identify and address legacy issues in economics such as gender bias in top five publications, seminars, and teaching evaluations. Try to change how economists evaluate themselves. Expand ISWE beyond gender issues to incorporate a wider set of inequalities/biases against other groups.
- Long-term objectives: Gender should become invisible.

Breakout Room 3: Governance: What does the governance structure of ISWE look like? How should it be financed? Who can become members?

- ISWE should have representatives from the whole of the island, North and South.
- ISWE's membership base should be as wide as possible and include representatives from public and private organisations.
- The terms of reference for ISWE should consider EDI quotas.
- ISWE should consider having a secretariat (paid or unpaid).

Breakout Room 4: Representation: How can ISWE promote the public representation of female economists?

- Create a media registry (for both male and female economists).
- Have quotas/targets for seminar speakers.
- Help promote career progression by encouraging more women to apply for promotion.
- Promote female economists on social media.

Breakout Room 5: Career progression: How can ISWE promote the career progression of female economists?

- Develop networking opportunities for women.
- Create a mentoring programme with male and female mentors.
- Take lessons from the private sector, e.g. in regards childcare.

Breakout Room 6: Pipeline I: How can ISWE encourage more women to study economics at secondary level?

- Study some of the potential issues to check if they are causes of inequality e.g. that economics is viewed as a 'male' subject; that economics is more likely to be offered in male schools, that there is a lack of female role models in schools and textbooks.
- Reach out to transition year students to showcase the diversity of careers that economics can lead to.
- Create a media registry to ensure female economists are visible to the public.
- Support the Young Economists of the Year Award (YEOTY)
- Reach out to Women in Technology and Science Ireland to learn from them.

Breakout Room 7: Pipeline II: How can ISWE encourage more women to study economics at third level?

- Expose students to the breadth of economics modules in first year, particularly the applied modules.
- Invite students to attend seminars held in economics departments.
- Map out all potential career progressions from a degree in economics.
- Build a culture of acceptance of all genders within economics.

Breakout Room 8: Men: How can ISWE encourage male involvement?

- Hold events that interest men as well as women.
- Focus on how ISWE is marketed to ensure it is not only targeting women.
- Set clear expectations about how men can be involved in ISWE.
- Conduct a survey to find out what male and female members want from ISWE.

Photo of (some) attendees at ISWE Planning Workshop

