



Incomes – Instruments of Recovery

**2011 FEPS/TASC Seminar
Metropole Hotel, Cork
Thursday, September 29th**

Since the economic and financial crisis hit in 2008, incomes have come under severe pressure as a result of unemployment and underemployment, social welfare cuts and increased levies and charges. The resulting collapse in consumer demand has, in turn, resulted in job losses and shrinking tax receipts, further compounding the pressure on incomes. Statutory wage floors and wage-setting mechanisms have also come under pressure. The previous Government reduced the Minimum Wage and, while that was subsequently restored by the current Government, the forthcoming legislation on Joint Labour Committees, made necessary by a High Court judgement which effectively rendered Employment Regulation Orders unenforceable, may impose further wage reductions in low-paid sectors.

This is the context in which FEPS and TASC are hosting this event. The seminar will examine three interlocking themes: incomes and demand; income adequacy and wage floors; and the role they can play in economic recovery.

09.15 am Registration, tea / coffee

09.45 am Opening remarks

Dr Nat O'Connor, Director, TASC

10.00 am Keynote

Vidhya Alakeson, Director of Research and Strategy, Resolution Foundation (UK)

10.30 Why incomes matter to recovery

Chair Dr Clodagh Harris, Department of Government, University College Cork

Where we are now

Sinéad Pentony, Head of Policy, TASC

Incomes protecting jobs

Marie Sherlock, Economist, SIPTU

Why the wage share matters

Dr Rory O'Farrell, Economic Research Unit

Respondent

Seamus Coffey, Lecturer in Economics, University College Cork

11.30 am Coffee / discussion

12 noon What's enough? The right to an adequate income

Chair Fiona Finn, CEO, NASC (Irish Immigrant Support Centre)

What's enough?

Sr Bernadette McMahon, Vincentian Partnership

Redistributing for equality

Dr Tom O'Connor, Cork Institute of Technology

Towards a basic income

Dr Micheál Collins, Economic Research Unit

12.45 pm Discussion / Q&A

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- 1.15 pm Lunch**
- 2 pm Advancing the case for constraining high pay (includes discussion)**
- Paula Clancy, former Director, TASC; Convenor, Claiming our Future Incomes Group
- 2.30 pm A working floor**
- Chair Cathal Kelly, Development Officer, Equality Authority*
- Wage floors in Europe**
- Jorge Cabrita, Research Officer, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
- Wage floors in Ireland**
- Colin Whitston, National College of Ireland
- Who's on Ireland's wage floor?**
- Dr Michelle O'Sullivan, University of Limerick
- 3.30 pm Coffee / discussion / Q&A**
- 4 pm Where now? Some thoughts**
- Siobhán O'Donoghue, Coalition to Protect the Lowest Paid
- 4.15 pm Closing remarks**
- Dr Matthieu Meulle, Economic Advisor, FEPS

Biographical notes

Dr **Nat O'Connor** is Director of TASC. Nat has a strong background in social science research. He previously led the research team in the Homeless Agency for three and a half years. He has as a consultant to local government and has been retained as an occasional lecturer in the Department of Applied Social Studies, NUI Maynooth. Nat holds a PhD in Political Science from Trinity College Dublin and an MA in Political Science and Social Policy from Dundee University.

Vidhya Alakeson is the Director of Research and Strategy at the Resolution Foundation, an independent research and policy organisation that works to improve the lives of Britain's six million low-to-middle income households. In 2010 Vidhya returned to London, having spent three and a half years in Washington D.C., initially as a Harkness Fellow in Healthcare Policy conducting independent, comparative research and then for the Obama Administration at the US Department of Health and Human Services. Before moving to the USA, Vidhya was a Senior Policy Advisor at the UK Treasury in the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit. Here she worked on policy for children, young people and families. Vidhya has an undergraduate degree from the University of Oxford and a Masters from the London School of Economics. Her interests include: life chances and social mobility; policy for children and families; housing; health and social care; and wider public service reform.

Dr **Clodagh Harris** is a lecturer in the Department of Government, University College Cork. Her research interests include: deliberative democratic theory and practice; active democratic citizenship; political participation; and the scholarship of teaching and learning in political science. She was seconded to TASC in 2004-2005 where she managed the Democracy Commission project and worked as a researcher on its Democratic Audit project. Her key publications from this time include *Engaging Citizens: The Case for Democratic Renewal in Ireland – The Final Report of the Democracy Commission* (2005) and *Power to the People: Assessing Democracy in Ireland* with Hughes et al (2007). She is convenor of the Political Studies Association of Ireland's specialist group on participatory and deliberative democracy and is a member of the International Scientific Advisory board of We the Citizens, which recently held Ireland's first Citizens' Assembly.

Sinéad Pentony is Head of Policy with TASC. Sinéad has a background in economics and equality and currently leads the process of translating the organisation's strategic priorities into a programme of evidence based research and policy work. TASC's research and policy programme is currently focused on developing responses to the current economic and fiscal crisis. Previously, Sinéad spent ten years heading up Pobal's research programme. Pobal is an organisation funded by the Irish Government to manage social inclusion and equality programmes. In that capacity, she managed the evaluation of a range of programmes and led a national research study on the development of an Index of Affluence and Deprivation. Sinéad has also contributed to OECD publications on the evaluation of social inclusion programmes.

Marie Sherlock works in the Research Department of SIPTU. A member of the Minister for Social Protection's Advisory Group on Social Welfare and Taxation, she is also a substitute member of the NESC.

Dr **Rory O'Farrell** is an economist working with the Economic Research Unit. He previously worked with the European Trade Union Institute in Brussels. Rory received a PhD in economics from the European University Institute, Florence and a Master's degree and Bachelor of Business Studies from UCC and WIT respectively. He specialises in labour market economics.

Seamus Coffey is a Lecturer in Economics in University College Cork. His teaching ranges across undergraduate and postgraduate courses with a particular emphasis on the relationship between government and the economy for undergraduates and applied statistical techniques for postgraduates. His research area is health economics and some current topics being analysed are: waiting times for hospital services; GP utilisation rates; and differences between Irish and non-Irish national health service utilisation in Ireland. He is a regular contributor to the media across many issues relating to the ongoing crisis.

Fiona Finn holds a Bachelor of Law degree (BCL) and a Master of Law (LL.M) from University College Cork. She has a particular interest in International Human Rights Law and Public International Law. Fiona has over eighteen years of experience in the field of social justice, human rights asylum and immigration issues. Fiona became CEO of NASC in 2010 having joined the organisation in 2008. Prior to that she worked for fifteen years in London, initially with a homeless charity and later as a senior officer within the London Borough of Camden. During her time with the Borough, Fiona worked at a senior level across a number of departments including

the Welfare Rights Section and at an Independent Law Centre. Fiona also holds a Diploma in Business Studies and Marketing and is a graduate of the Marketing Institute of Ireland.

Sr **Bernadette MacMahon** is Director of the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice. She was Provincial of the Irish Province of the Daughters of Charity from 1986 to 1995. During that period the Daughters of Charity worked in approximately 45 centres in Ireland, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Romania and Brussels and were engaged in a wide variety of health, education and social works with and for people from disadvantaged communities. Sr Bernadette was Head of the Department of Education at the Mater Dei Institute of Education from 1970 – 1984. In 1982 she was awarded a Ph.D. in Education by The University of Manchester and published a book based on her thesis *Listening to Youth* in 1987.

Dr **Tom O'Connor** lectures in Economics and Public Policy at Cork Institute of Technology. He is a member of the Economist's Network at TASC and many other progressive organisations. Tom has been widely published in the popular press in recent years on the broad terrain of Irish economic and social policy and is a frequent media contributor and campaigner for a more progressive and inclusive society. He is also an active researcher, winning a large national research award from the National Academy for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning in 2008. One of his core beliefs is that, in recent years, economics as a discipline has moved too far from the integrated focus of its founding fathers. Contrarily, he believes that a new 'blended' economics to include philosophy, sociology, political economy, social policy and politics has never been more necessary. In this context, Tom is planning to publish a book on *New Economics for Ireland* in the autumn of 2012.

Dr **Micheál Collins** is Senior Research Officer at the ERU (Economic Research Unit) Dublin, a think-tank on the Irish economy established in September 2011. Prior to joining the ERU he was Assistant Professor of Economics at Trinity College Dublin. A native of Ennis in Co. Clare, he is a graduate of NUI Galway, UCC and the University of Dublin, Trinity College. His research interests are in the areas of income distribution, taxation, economic evaluation, public policy and development. Micheál is the vice-chairman of the Irish Social Policy Association (ISPA) and a former chairman of the Regional Studies Association (RSA) of Ireland. He was a member of the Commission on Taxation (2008-09) and served as chairman of the Commission subgroup on Tax Expenditures/Tax Breaks. In 2011 he was appointed a member of the Government Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare.

Paula Clancy was the founding Director of TASC. A social scientist, she has authored and co-authored a range of major research projects and papers on political, social and economic issues. She recently co-authored *Mapping the Golden Circle* and is a co-author of TASC's major work on democracy, *Power to the People*. Amongst her other interests, she is convening the incomes group for Claiming our Future.

Cathal Kelly is Development Officer with the Equality Authority. He holds a Masters in Equality Studies from UCD and is currently researching the issue of high pay.

Jorge Cabrita, from Portugal, works on projects mainly related to working conditions and social dialogue. He contributes to the development of comparative analytical reports for the Eurofound Observatories EWCO and EIRO (dealing with topics such as absence from work and the working poor) and minimum wage issues as dealt with by the Stakeholder Enquiry Service. Prior to joining Eurofound in June 2009, Jorge worked as a researcher at Centro de Estudos para a Intervenção Social (CESIS), a research centre in Lisbon where, among other activities, he was part of the national team of correspondents for EWCO. With a background in economics, Jorge holds a Master's Degree from the Technical University of Lisbon in Socio-Organisational Systems of Economic Activity.

Colin Whitston is Senior Lecturer in Industrial Relations with the National College of Ireland. Previously he was Senior Research Fellow at the Industrial Relations Research Unit at Warwick University and Senior Lecturer in Industrial Relations at Keele University. He received a scholarship from the National Union of General and Municipal Workers to study at Ruskin College Oxford where he was awarded a Diploma in Labour Studies. As well as teaching in Ireland and the UK, Colin has taught specialised courses in industrial relations in Germany and Slovakia and has published widely on trade union organisation, policy, and membership. He has also worked in the rubber, engineering, construction and transport industries.

Dr Michelle O'Sullivan is a Lecturer in Industrial Relations at the University of Limerick. She has published widely on the Joint Labour Committee system, trade unions, collective action, employment equality legislation, employment dispute resolution, civil society organisations and bullying in the workplace. She is a Council Member of the Irish Academy of Management.

Siobhán O’ Donoghue is Director of the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, a national organisation concerned with the rights of migrant workers and their families since 2002. She has worked for many years in community sector organisations in Ireland, ranging from local, grass roots groups to national policy organisations and structures. Siobhán was a member of the National Economic and Social Council from 1999 to 2003 and acted as a negotiator for the Community Platform in national social partnership talks in the late 1990s. In the past year she has been involved in the establishment of Claiming Our Future (a new social movement) and the Coalition to Protect the Lowest Paid which emerged initially in response to the decision to cut the minimum wage.

Dr **Matthieu Meaulle** received his Ph.D. in Economics in December 2007. His research was conducted under the supervision of Professor C. Benetti at the University Paris X-Nanterre. He is an associate member of the Research Centre PHARE (Pôle d’Histoire et d’Analyse des Représentations Economiques, University Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne). His work is situated between the history of economic thought and modern economic analysis. Matthieu Méaulle specialises in pure economic theory, macroeconomics and financial macroeconomics. He has worked at FEPS as an Economic Advisor since September 2008.

About the organisers:

TASC is an independent think-tank dedicated to addressing Ireland’s high levels of economic inequality.

FEPS – the Foundation for European Progressive Studies – was conceived as a platform to bring together progressive actors and partners in synergy with an ambition to foster a real European space for debate.