



Taighde, Idirphlé, Comhairle
Research, Dialogue, Advice

Is Ireland Thriving?

**Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery, and Reform
Strategy Away Day, Dublin Castle, March 21st, 2024**

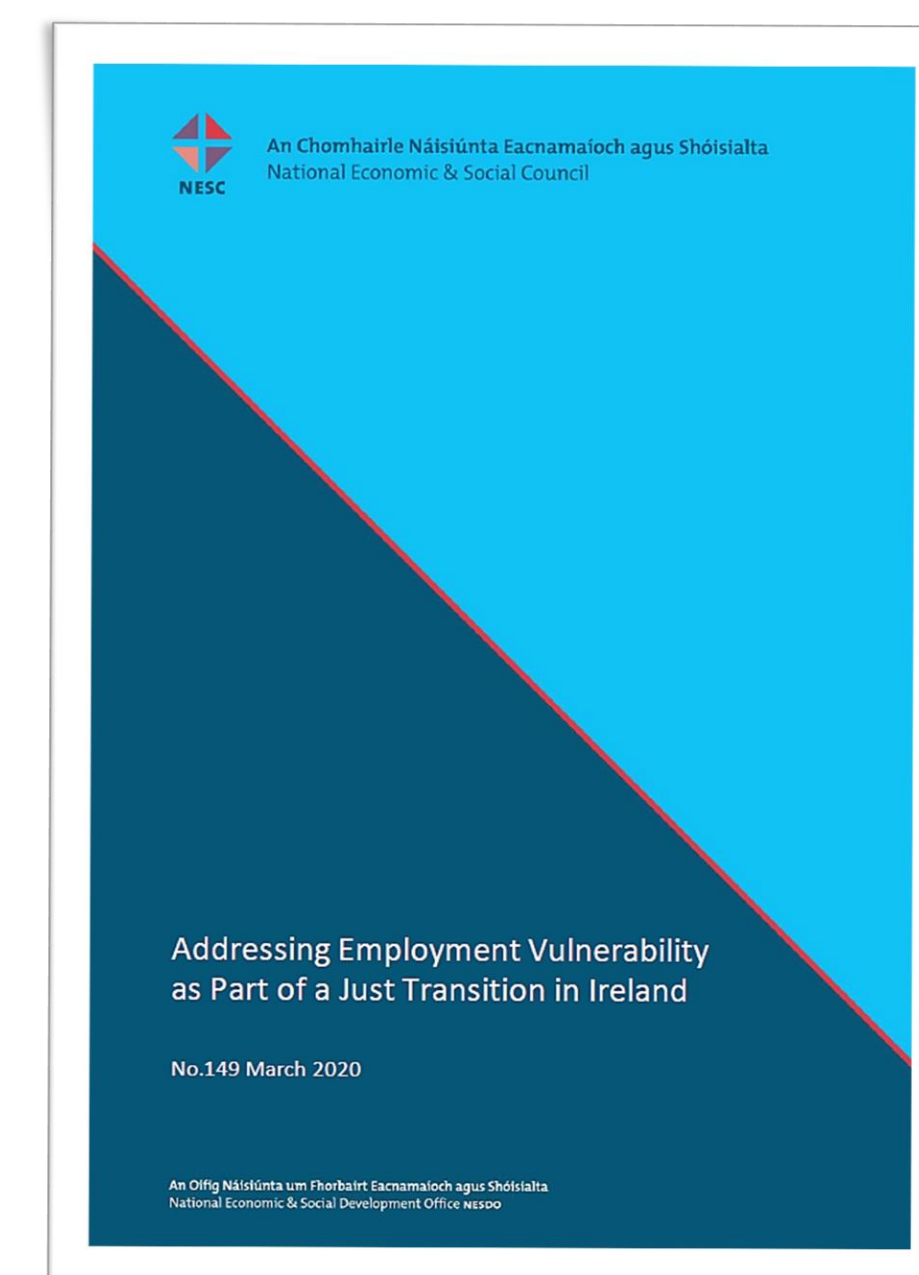
Dr Cathal FitzGerald, Senior Analyst, NESC

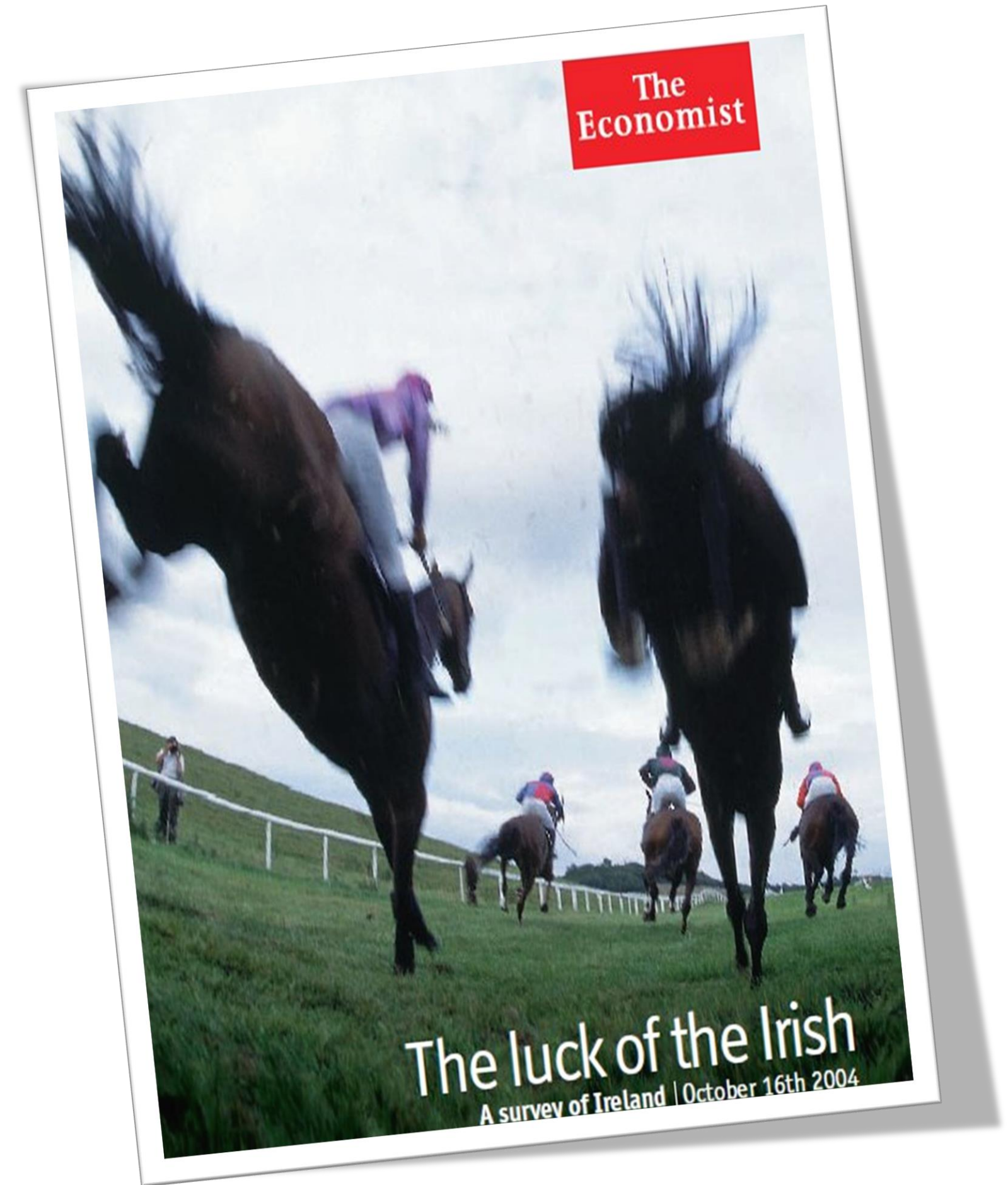
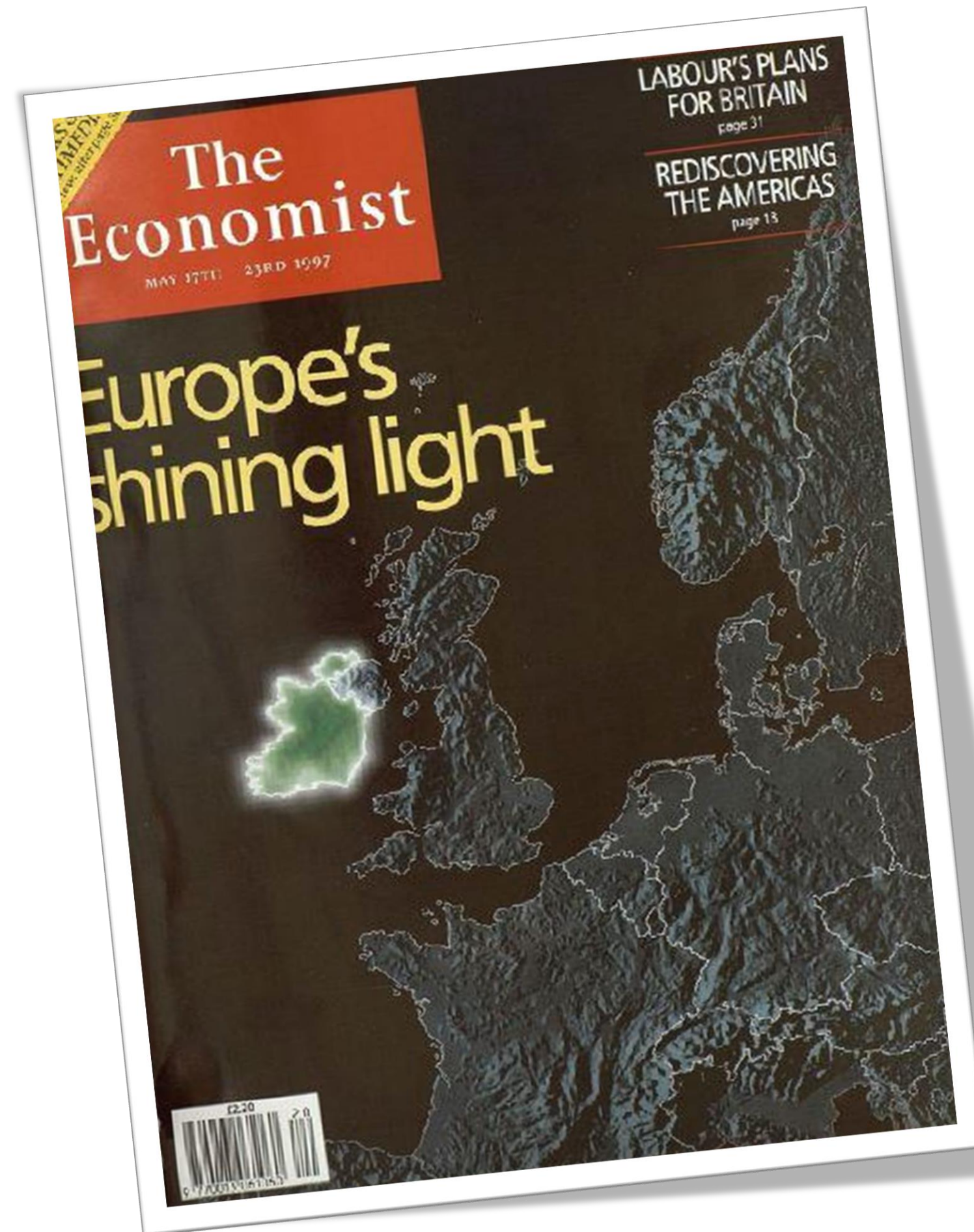
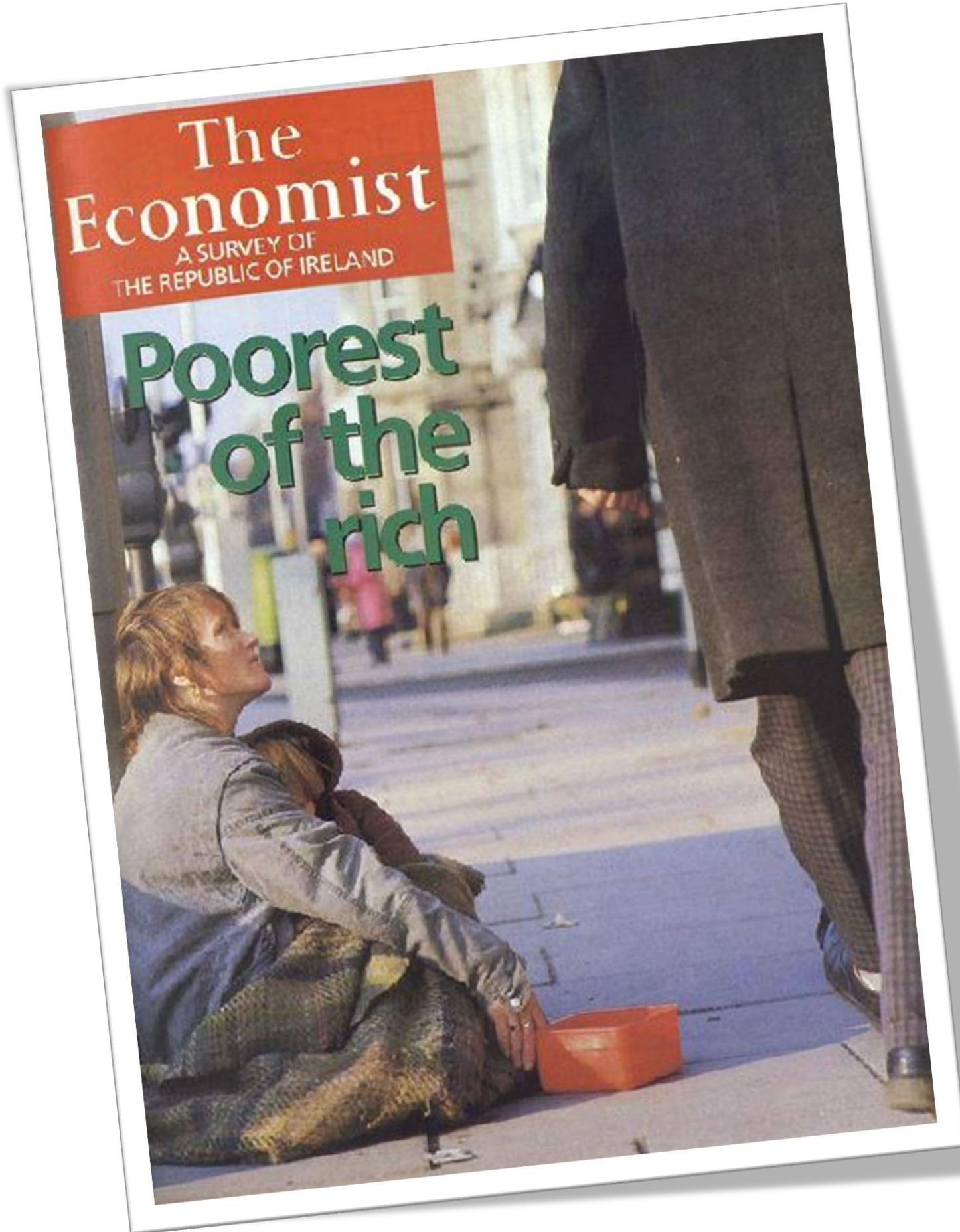
NESC and a Vision for Ireland

- Request from Government in 2020
- Address employment vulnerability during economic transitions
- Take action in the context of a guiding vision

*Ireland will be a resilient, sustainable, **thriving** net zero economy, environment, and society, using innovation and collective preparedness to shape the future we want to achieve*

- Economy, environment, and society on an equal footing
- NESC@50 – *A Thriving Ireland*





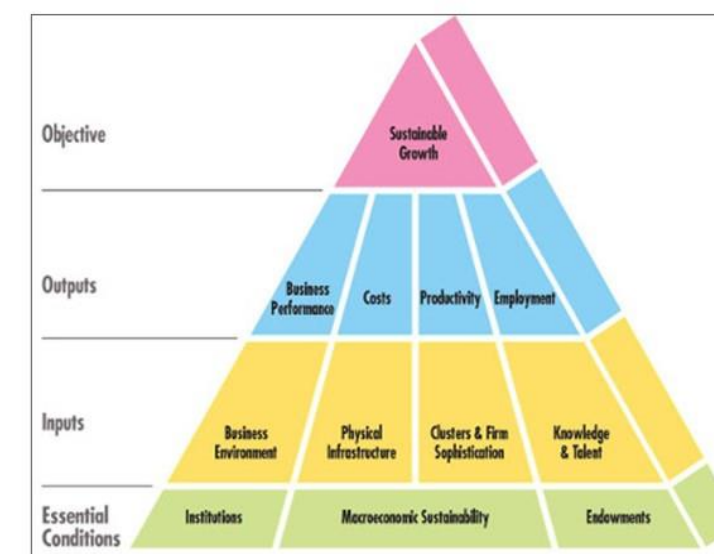
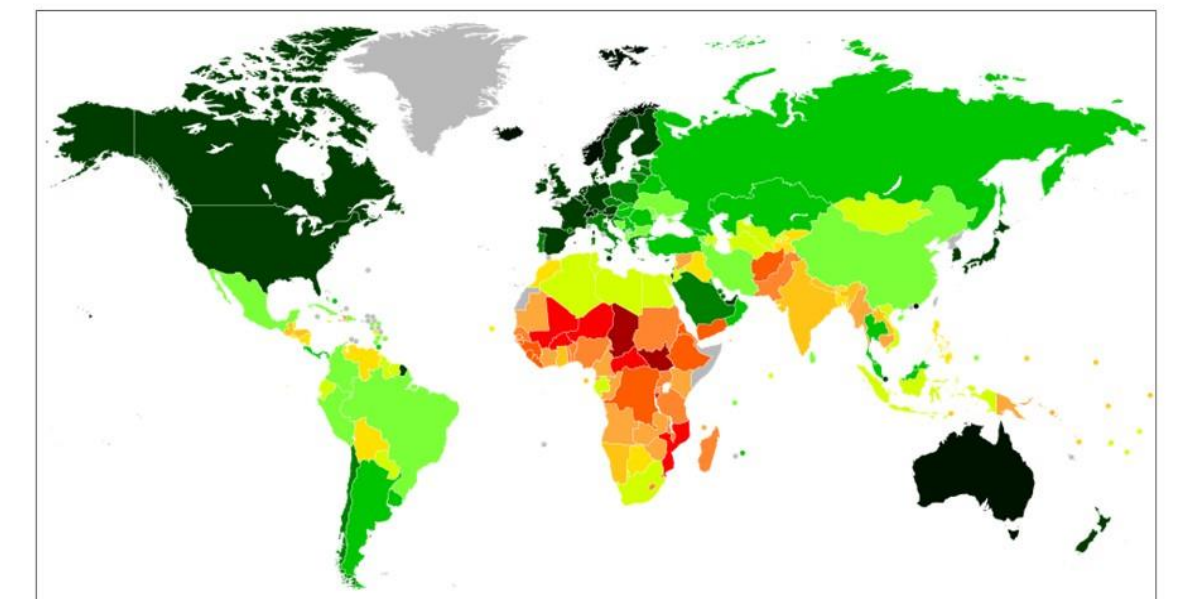
How do you assess ‘thriving’?

- Measures of economic performance on their own are insufficient
- Followed advice of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission (2009)
- Emphasis on non-production measures; not dismissing economic aspects
- Well-being is central; encapsules the idea of ‘thriving’
- Multidimensional approach to the measurement
- Consider current well-being AND the ability to sustain well-being
 - ‘Thriving today’ as well as ‘thriving tomorrow’
- Settled on nine international assessments (could have been 19 or 90...)



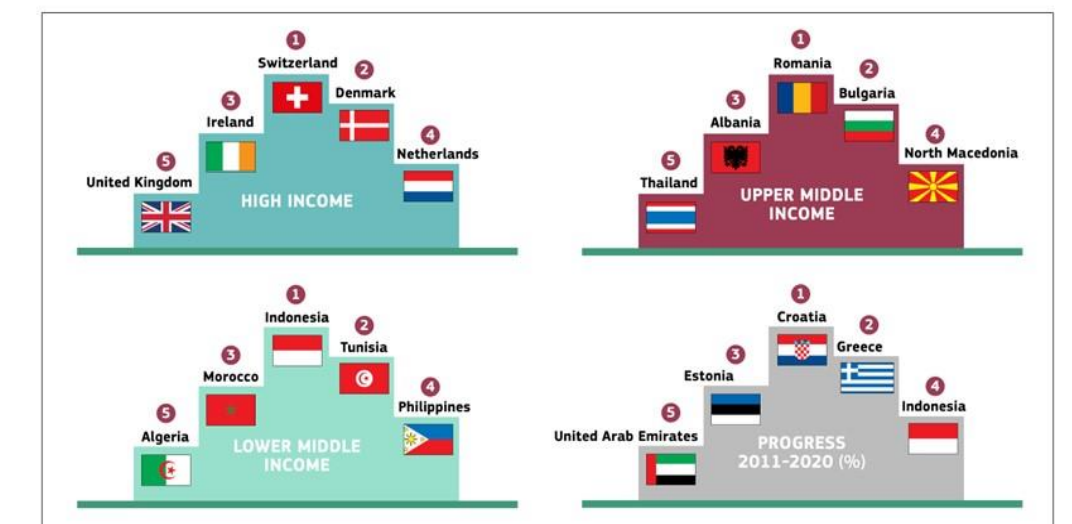
Assessments Reviewed

1. Well-Being Framework (OECD and National)
2. UN Human Development Index
3. UN Sustainable Development Goals
4. EU Transitions Performance Index
5. Social Progress Index
6. NCPC's Assessment
7. Inclusive Wealth Index
8. Biodiversity Intactness Index
9. Doughnut Economics/Planetary Boundaries



2022 Social Progress Index rankings (1)

Tier 1		Tier 2		Tier 2		Tier 3	
Rank	Country	Rank	Country	Rank	Country	Rank	Country
1	Norway	21	Spain	50	Georgia	76	Paraguay
2	Denmark	22	Italy	51	Moldova	77	Vietnam
3	Finland	23	Czechia	52	Ukraine	78	Bhutan
4	Switzerland	24	Portugal	53	Albania	79	Maldives
5	Iceland	25	United States	54	Malaysia	80	Oman
6	Sweden	26	Malta	55	Kuwait	81	Philippines
7	Netherlands	27	Slovenia	56	Panama	82	Jordan
8	Germany	28	Singapore	57	Jamaica	83	Kyrgyzstan
9	Japan	29	Lithuania	58	Republic of North Macedonia	84	Mongolia
10	Canada	30	Cyprus	59	Russia	85	Bolivia
11	Austria	31	Israel	60	Ecuador	86	Fiji
12	Australia	32	Latvia	61	Belarus	87	Indonesia
13	Ireland	33	Greece	62	Brazil	88	Turkey
14	Luxembourg	34	Croatia	63	Bosnia and Herzegovina	89	Lebanon
15	New Zealand	35	Slovakia	64	Suriname	90	Oatar
16	Belgium	36	Chile	65	Kazakhstan	91	Liebkistan
17	Korea, Republic of	37	Costa Rica	66	Mexico	92	Bahrain
18	Estonia	38	Uruguay	67	Peru	93	Botswana
19	United Kingdom	39	Poland	68	United Arab Emirates	94	China
20	France	40	Barbados	69	South Africa	95	Algeria
		41	Argentina	70	Colombia	96	Guyana
		42	Hungary	71	Thailand	97	West Bank and Gaza
		43	Romania	72	Tunisia		
		44	Bulgaria	73	Dominican Republic		
		45	Serbia	74	Sri Lanka		
		46	Trinidad and Tobago	75	Cabo Verde		
		47	Mauritius				
		48	Armenia				
		49	Montenegro				



What the data tells us...

Flavour of Assessments

- Relatively strong performance on well-being
 - Environment is the only concern (!)
- 8th out of 191 countries in terms of human development (19th if adjusted)
- 9th out of 163 countries on sustainable development
- 2nd in the EU, and 3rd out of 72 countries in relation to transition to a more sustainable path
- 13th out of 169 countries and 7th within the EU for social progress
- 2nd out of 64 countries in terms of national competitiveness
- 5th highest growth rate of inclusive wealth
- 13th lowest out of 240 countries and territories for biodiversity
- Meet nine of 11 social thresholds, but none of the six biophysical boundaries.



Is Ireland Thriving?

Yes, but...

/

No, if...

Life Expectancy
 Healthy Life
 Satisfaction
 Social Connections
 Education
 Employment
 Income (after T&T)
 Hours Worked
 Democracy
 Progress
 Competitiveness

Housing
 Cost of Living
 Infrastructure
 Services
 PWD Unemployment
 Market Income
 Low Pay
 Trust in Govt by Youth
 Water
 Waste
 Discrimination

GHG Emissions
 Carbon Footprint
 Share of RES
 Obesity
 Representation
 Engagement
 UN SDGs



High-Level Messages

1. No single, ideal measure performance
2. Ireland ranks highly on many metrics; obvious, significant areas for improvement
3. Must distinguish between current and future performance
4. Must consider distributional issues
5. All countries face huge challenges in living within planetary boundaries
6. Decoupling is possible, but how at the scale and speed required?
7. Not a single country currently resides within the secure space of the doughnut model
8. Selection of indicators involves judgment. Ireland's well-being framework needs ongoing review.



Conclusions from the Data

- Ireland today is thriving in many aspects
- Capacity and distributional challenges
- Focus on:
 - Lived experience
 - Environmental sustainability
 - ‘Thriving’ tomorrow



- A “fair assessment” – An Taoiseach, NESC@50 Conference, November 2023





What our dialogue tells us...



Disconnected Lived Experiences

- Ireland is thriving in many ways, but: capacity, cohesion, distribution, and ‘lived experience’ problems
- Large scale and of a serious nature e.g. children, family carers, and travellers
- Disproportionately affected by poor practice; poverty and deprivation; financial distress; poor health; higher unemployment
- Housing, climate, and biodiversity emergencies
- Other longstanding challenges
- Deep and concerning issues to highlight, discuss honestly, and address
- Lived experiences of many do not match the aggregated view / data
- NESC’s vision for a thriving Ireland is unlikely to resonate
- What’s the advice?

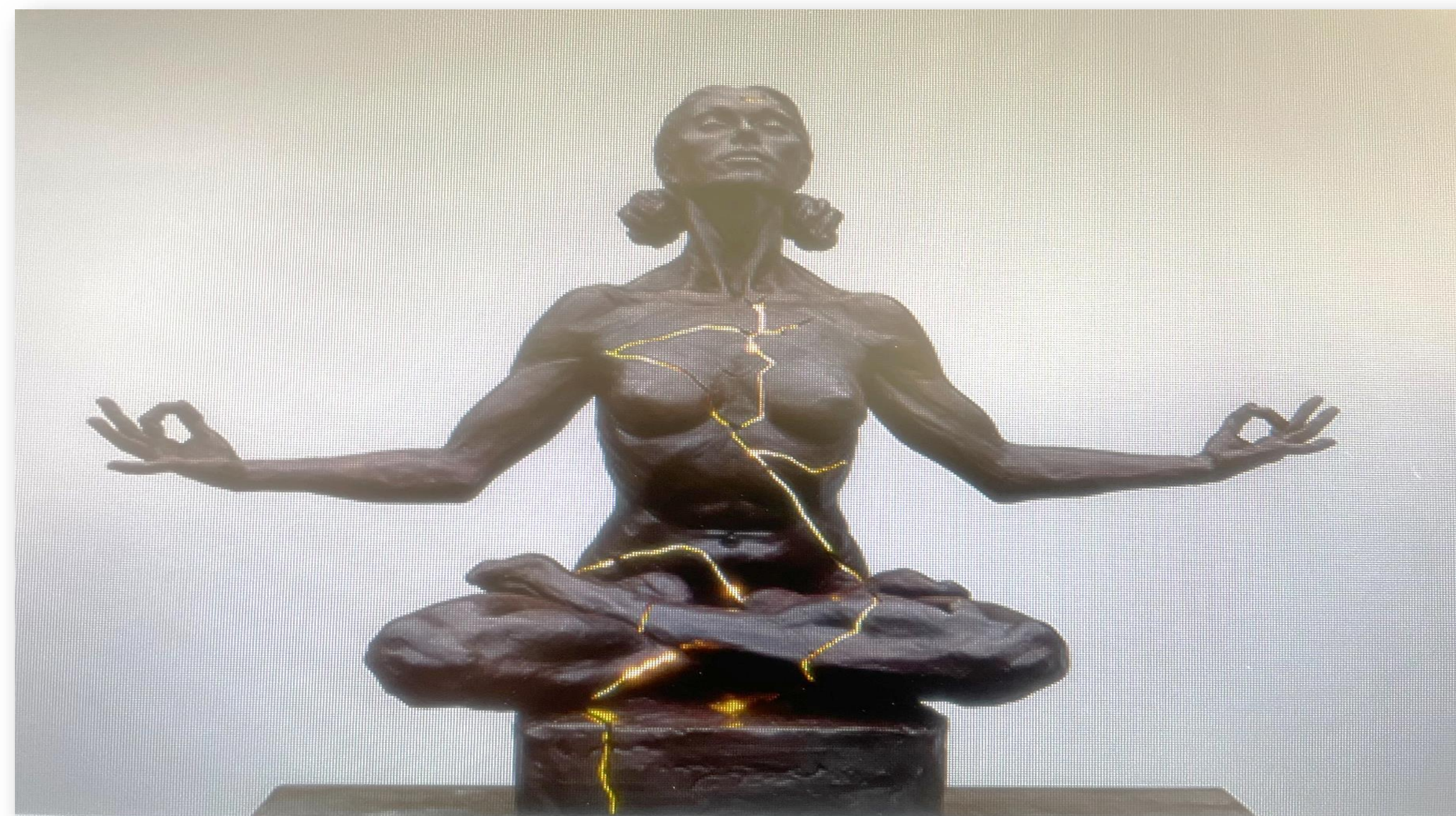
Potential Lines of Action

- Fiscal sustainability and investment
- Acting to realise net zero
- Making work attractive
- Giving public actors a mandate and capacity for housing
- Engineering permanent affordability into development
- Working harder to pinpoint and manage vulnerability
- Deepening engagement with stakeholders and experts
- Installing real-time data-gathering and analytics capability and infrastructure
- Adapting the policy world to the data world
- Improving the capacity to listen and communicate – *be seen to deliver*



Food for Thought

- Nescience and creativity
- ‘State of not knowing’ is OK
- Sustain the ability to step up and step in
- Be willing to destroy and reassemble
- Business as usual is not likely to solve all problems
- Deepen our capacity to listen, understand, empathise
- Respond to ‘lived experiences’
- Meet the appetite for reform (e.g. OECD review **and more**)
- Develop practical ways to live within planetary boundaries
- Refresh and re-invigorate our understanding of complexity
- Understand how values might support our work and build trust





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THANK YOU

Visit our website nesc.ie