



NUI Galway  
OĒ Gaillimh



Institute for  
Lifecourse and Society

Official Opening  
11 November 2015

# INSTITUTE FOR LIFECOURSE AND SOCIETY



Oscailt Oifigiúil  
11 Samhain 2015

AN INSTITIÚID CÚRSA SAOIL  
AGUS SOCHAÍ

The Institute for Lifecourse and Society acknowledges  
the core support of The Atlantic Philanthropies  
and Galway University Foundation.

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*The*  
**A T L A N T I C**  
*Philanthropies*



In addition, a broad portfolio of funded projects are carried out  
at the Institute for Lifecourse and Society with support from national and  
international agencies including:

European Union

European Research Council

The United Nations

The Open Societies Foundations

Lumos

Irish Research Council

Higher Education Authority

Health Research Board

TUSLA

Science Foundation Ireland



## MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT OF NUI GALWAY

A Chairde,

Today is a milestone in the development of the social sciences at NUI Galway.

With the establishment of the Institute for Lifecourse and Society (ILAS), our University marks a concerted commitment to the application of knowledge in the social sciences in order to share knowledge and create positive social change.

The Institute brings together over 150 academics, staff, researchers and doctoral students. Its mission is dedicated to supporting research that informs policy development and practice to make a positive difference to people's lives.

Located on NUI Galway's north campus, this building represents a capital investment of €9 million, comprising significant philanthropic contributions from The Atlantic Philanthropies and Galway University Foundation to create a state-of-the-art research hub.

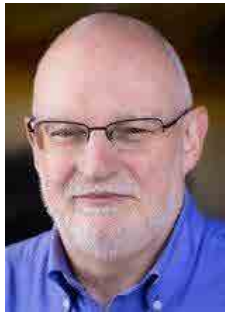
The support of our philanthropic partners has been absolutely vital to this project. I would like to thank The Atlantic Philanthropies and Galway University Foundation most sincerely for their vision and their investment in this research facility.

The Institute brings together existing work in relation to targeted populations, such as older persons, children and families, and persons with disabilities into one domain of research, teaching and policy. It provides greater focus, coherence and direction to applied social science research at the University.

However, the real benefit of the Institute for Lifecourse and Society is to the future generations of citizens who will benefit from new approaches to improving the lives of families, young people, older persons and those who live with disabilities.

The knowledge generated by those working in this Institute will help to shape advocacy, policy and interventions to improve the lives of many such citizens – right across the lifecourse.

Dr Jim Browne  
Uachtarán  
OÉ Gaillimh



## MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR, INSTITUTE FOR LIFECOURSE AND SOCIETY

Welcome to the Institute for Lifecourse and Society (ILAS), a new specially designated research institute in applied social sciences in NUI Galway.

Here at ILAS we are focused on research that positively impacts on people's lives. Apart from our interest in human flourishing, wellbeing and intergenerational connections, we are also interested in research that focuses on civic engagement and participation.

Importantly, we want to advance people's lives in Ireland and internationally who face issues with older life, living with disability, and children, youth and parents who are vulnerable in social and other contexts.

The research at the Institute is underpinned by a team of academic staff and researchers who work to make a difference. Here starts our new beginning and an important crossroads in our development.

Professor Pat Dolan,  
UNESCO Chair in Children,  
Youth and Civic Engagement  
Director, Institute for Lifecourse and Society,  
NUI Galway



## MESSAGE FROM CHAIRMAN GALWAY UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION

The opening of the Institute for Lifecourse and Society marks a further step in the relationships that Galway University Foundation has developed with a range of philanthropic supporters, in particular The Atlantic Philanthropies, in bringing about transformative change to the NUI Galway campus.

This new building supports the University's growing reputation in social sciences research and stands adjacent to the Biomedical Sciences Research Building opened in 2014, also with significant philanthropic support from Galway University Foundation. These buildings together with the J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics and the award-winning Engineering School are the nucleus of the University's North Campus.

Galway University Foundation is proud of its role in assisting with this and other campus developments over the past fifteen years. Since its inception, the Foundation has directly and indirectly generated funds in excess of €200 million. This could only have been possible through the generosity of our donors, including The Atlantic Philanthropies and a range of others including corporate, donors, alumni and many private individuals.

On behalf of the Galway University Foundation, I wish to thank all those who have contributed to this exceptional achievement and wish all of the researchers continued success in the future.

John MacNamara,  
Chairman, Galway University Foundation





## MESSAGE FROM COUNTRY MANAGER, THE ATLANTIC PHILANTHROPIES

It is with great pleasure that we at The Atlantic Philanthropies celebrate the opening of the Institute for Lifecourse and Society building. We are delighted to see our support over several years now culminating in the bringing together of such high calibre research centres into one dynamic Institute, whose focus on applied social research makes a real difference in the lifecourse of people and communities.

We are particularly pleased to see the interests and rights of vulnerable children, youth and families, older citizens and people living with a disability activated through such a vibrant

Institute that challenges and changes social policy and influences frontline practices. We particularly support the ILAS building being utilised to house community action and demonstrating a vibrant gown to town connection between NUI and Galway.

Apart from its deserved international reputation, we know that ILAS will develop and extend its legacy not just for research interests but for civil society. We wish all in ILAS and NUI Galway a long and successful future lifecourse.

Mary Sutton  
Country Manager  
The Atlantic Philanthropies



# WHAT IS THE INSTITUTE FOR LIFECOURSE AND SOCIETY?



Institute for  
Lifecourse and Society

## One domain...

- for teaching
- research
- policy development
- community engagement

## Effecting change in the lives of vulnerable populations.

The Institute for Lifecourse and Society is a rare example of an interdisciplinary university research hub designed specifically to have a positive impact on policy and practice in society. Supported by The Atlantic Philanthropies, it works in partnership with a diverse range of communities towards the development of positive social change and policy development from cradle to grave.

It builds on its already strong record in influencing domestic, regional and international policy and practice affecting a variety of populations including children and families, learners, and disabled and older persons.

## Our Mission

To impact positively on knowledge, attitudes, policy and practice by contributing scientific and practical awareness of human capacity and potential across the lifecourse.

Few such research institutes in this field achieve this kind of deep and far-reaching impact.



## Laying the Foundations

The Atlantic Philanthropies, a limited life foundation, has generously supported the establishment of the Institute for Lifecourse and Society (ILAS) at NUI Galway.

ILAS is a public policy institute focused on the social sciences and committed to shaping policy development and service provision through impact-led research. In supporting ILAS, Atlantic Philanthropies has allowed the social sciences at NUI Galway to flourish and have real-world impact.

ILAS provides a new lens through which to examine and reimagine important social justice and service transformation. Through it, we have learned the power of collaboration. We have created outputs greater than the sum of their parts, realising the synergies to be gained from collaboration.

With ILAS we in NUI Galway want to transform lives, service and societies– locally, nationally and internationally.

We want to continue to put the vulnerable and disadvantaged centre stage. We want to keep asking the question – what can we do to improve individual lives while changing the world for future generations?

We want to take on important challenges by influencing change and we want to change the world.

Our foundations have been laid. We are creating impact.

We need to go further because we want to change the world.

## Improving individual lives and changing the world for future generations

### Core Themes

Life transitions and human flourishing  
Intergenerational relations  
Civic engagement and participation  
Social health and wellbeing

### Our Expertise

#### Research Centres

- UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (CRFC)
- Centre for Disability Law and Policy (CDLP)
- Irish Centre for Social Gerontology (ICSG)
- Community Knowledge Initiative (CKI)
- Irish Centre for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Research (ICAN)
- Health Economics and Policy Analysis (HEPA)

#### Research Clusters

- Health and Wellbeing
- Community-Engaged Research in Action (CORA)
- Population Health and Health Services Research Alliance





# SPOTLIGHT ON IMPACT

**ILAS researchers are passionate about examining the course of life- from the very first breath to the last. Beginning with early childhood and progressing through to old age, our work seeks to understand society today and to improve lives in the future.**

**Here we spotlight on some of that work that impacts real people in real communities.**

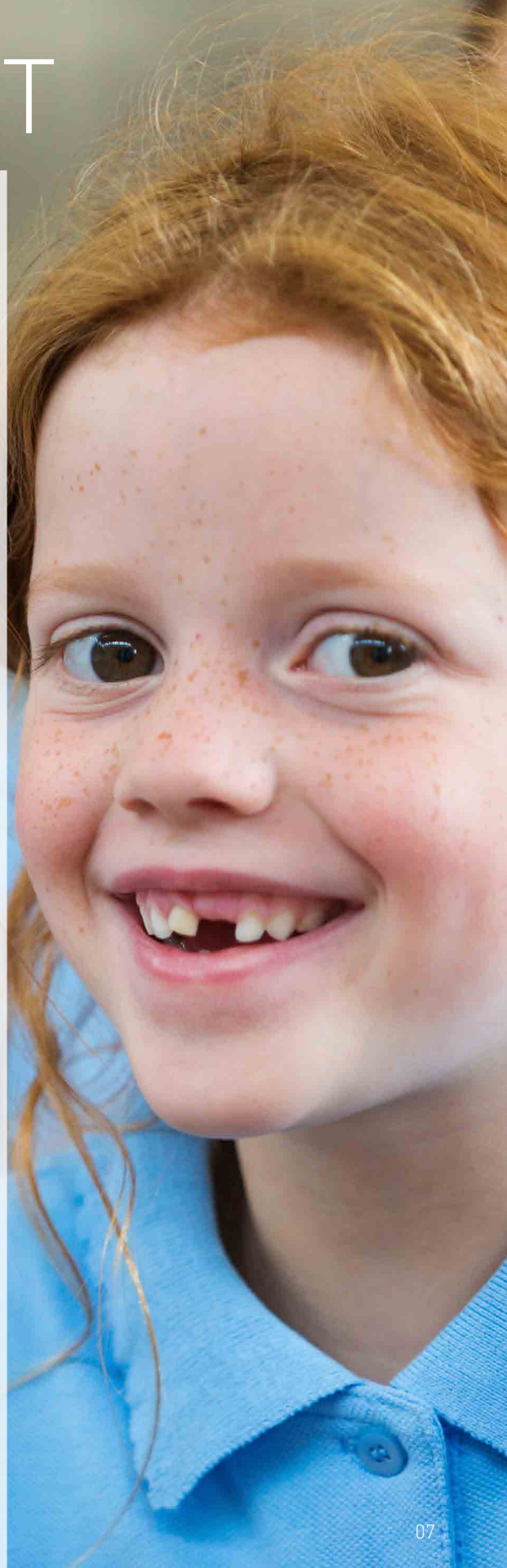
## **LEADING BETTER OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at NUI Galway undertakes research, education and training in the area of family support and youth development. In its work with state and NGO partners, it recognizes the significance of early intervention in meeting the needs of children at risk and achieving their rights and the importance of resilience in sustainable change in children and families' lives.

In Ireland, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, is the state agency responsible for the welfare and protection of children. Parenting and family support is a key element of all aspects of Tusla's work. The Centre is working in partnership with Tusla to undertake a programme of research and evaluation on the national implementation of its Prevention, Partnership and Family Support model.

Globally, an estimated eight million children worldwide live in the context of institutional care, even though at least 80% of these children have living parents, many of whom could care for them with some support. In partnership with Lumos, the J.K. Rowling supported foundation, the Centre is working to increase global understanding of why so many children are separated from their families and placed in orphanages, to evaluate methods of de-institutionalisation, and to investigate the best ways to support families to stay together.

In collaboration with the UNESCO Chair at Penn State University, the Centre is co-leader on a Global UNESCO Chairs Research Network on Children Youth and Communities, focusing on applied research in the field of positive youth development, youth mentoring, youth as researchers, and policy and practice development. The Director General of UNESCO has invited the Chairs Research Network to support the development of global policy to counter the recent growth of youth radicalisation.





## KEY PARTNERS IN IRELAND'S DEMENTIA STRATEGY

Forecasts predict that the population of people with dementia will increase from an estimated 48,000 at present to 140,000 by 2041. Next year alone some 4,000 people will develop dementia, 11 people a day.

ILAS researchers are recognised as leading authorities on dementia research and this has culminated most recently in a prestigious Research Leader grant from the Health Research Board (HRB). This award will consolidate and expand existing research programmes at NUI Galway and lead to the establishment of the National Centre for Social Research on Dementia (NCSRD) at ILAS in 2016. This new Centre will strengthen social research on dementia in Ireland and will ultimately bring together all social researchers on dementia in the country to examine social, economic, civic, cultural and legal aspects of dementia. Creating scale and complexity in the social research of dementia supports an over-arching vision of the person with dementia being at the core of decision-making at all times.

Importantly, the new Centre will provide the research framework to support the implementation of the National Dementia Strategy in Ireland. It will do this by leading on the audit, evaluation and analysis of the Strategy, with a major emphasis on ensuring that the stated goals and principles are realised.

Understanding personhood within dementia is a key element of the dementia research programme carried out at ILAS, particularly how relationships are formed, maintained, nurtured and developed during the caring process. The research programme represents a partnership among researchers, practitioners, stakeholders, policy-makers and people with dementia with a view to enhancing and enriching lives.



## SPEARHEADING INTERNATIONAL CHANGE IN DISABILITY

Over a billion people, about 15% of the world's population, are estimated to have some form of disability. This number is recognised by the World Health Organisation to be increasing due to population ageing and increases in chronic health conditions.

The Centre for Disability Law and Policy is a think-tank recognised internationally as a key source of policy blueprints for governments, agencies and services aimed at achieving equal opportunities for that population of persons with disabilities, including those with disabilities acquired with age.

Its director was a co-drafter of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Centre contributes formally its expertise in this area and in policy entrepreneurship to the debate around the drafting a new UN instrument on the rights of older people.

Amongst its other work, the Centre for Disability Law and Policy has prepared a landmark report for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights highlighting the negative impact of EU structural funds in funding new institutions and the EU's contrary obligations under the UN Disability Convention. This spearheaded a campaign which led to a change in the underlying regulations and a dramatic and historic cessation of the use of new structural funds to build or refurbish institutions.

In drafting its first report to the UN on its record in the disability field the European Commission turned to the Centre for assistance. The resultant study by the Centre became then the basis for the EU's later report on its progress implementing the UN Convention.

The Centre counts the newly appointed UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities amongst its adjunct professors and provides her counsel in carrying out her mandate.



## REAL WORLD LEARNING – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Civic engagement is a key pillar of NUI Galway's ethos and its practice gives hundreds of opportunities annually to connect staff and students of the University with community and societal issues. The Community Knowledge Initiative (CKI) represents Ireland's first University-embedded civic engagement programme and is a recognised leader in the development of this area both nationally and internationally.

CKI employs a programme of student volunteering, service learning, community-engaged research, knowledge sharing and community partnership which marks civic engagement as a hallmark of NUI Galway.

The ALIVE volunteering programme has to date seen over 10,000 students volunteering in a myriad of organisations from local homework clubs to largescale NGOs and charities like Suas, Childline, Irish Heart Foundation and Foroige. Every year 2,000 students in over 40 programmes connect their theoretical knowledge to hundreds of community issues through service learning projects and activities.

The Youth Academy works with high ability 4th, 5th and 6th class primary school children in over 346 schools to support their learning and academic development.

EPIC (Engaging People in Communities) is another key programme in realising the twin missions of both the CKI and ILAS in engaging communities. As a community-based research and knowledge exchange it invites organisations to propose relevant research topics for incorporation into NUI Galway academic programmes.



## LIFESPAN APPROACHES IN AUTISM RESEARCH

It is estimated that 1 in 68 children have Autism Spectrum Disorder – more children than with combined incidences of diabetes, AIDS, cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy and Down Syndrome. It is a lifelong disorder with profound effects on an individual's development and for family, state services and society at large.

The Irish Centre for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Research (ICAN) is dedicated to the advancement of knowledge of Autism Spectrum Disorder and its implications for individuals, families and society, through rigorous scientific and interdisciplinary research.

Whilst research into autism has previously focused almost exclusively on children, ICAN's work recognises autism as a lifelong condition and takes into consideration to adolescents, adults and older adults – hitherto much under-researched populations in this context.

ICAN aims to helping people with disabilities become people with abilities through projects examining assistive technologies, interventions to augment language communication, self-help skills and social skills, as well as the analysis and treatment of unwanted behaviours such as self-injury.



## NEW MODELS FOR ACTIVE AGEING

Since 2006, the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology (ICSG) has filled a major gap in research on the social aspects of ageing in Ireland, contributing to an increasingly vibrant research, education, and policy agenda.

It is recognised by the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics as a centre of excellence and is a key member of its Global Ageing Research Network which fosters the scientific development of gerontology and geriatrics around the world.

The ICSG actively engages with the broader community to bridge the gap between research and practice through a number of activities including the Touchstone programme – a new civic engagement programme aimed at developing the skills and knowledge of people who wish to play a part in helping to make their communities more age friendly.

Touchstone has been developed in collaboration with Active Ageing Partnership and is an initiative of Active Retirement Ireland, Age & Opportunity and Third Age. Participants of the Touchstone programme are regular visitors to ILAS and use the facilities and expertise on hand to support a range of community projects.

Touchstone points to the substantial contributions that older people can make to life in Ireland when they have access to skills training and personal development.

## PROJECT LIFECOURSE AND 3-CITIES PROJECT

Project Lifecourse is a flagship research initiative at ILAS. Funded by the Atlantic Philanthropies, it is concerned with life transitions and events, and the ways in which the life paths of individuals are shaped. It is engaged in understanding human development and how people's life experiences can be framed, directed and enhanced by policy and practice.

As part of Project Lifecourse, the 3-Cities Project engages in a collaborative process to re-imagine services and communities which maximise participation for children and youth, older people, and people with disabilities. Concentrating on Dublin, Galway and Limerick, the Project will produce policy briefs, tool-kits and academic papers designed to inform policy, practice and future research in the areas of population health, social inclusion, health and social care, and service design.

The 3-Cities Project uses a participatory approach to ensure maximum impact and influence and draws together citizens with service managers, service providers and city and community level stakeholders.

By the end of the 3-Cities Project, the Project Lifecourse team will have trained 25-30 local residents (who are children and youth, older people and people with disabilities) to be researchers in social change.



## EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ENTERPRISE

SAOL Café (meaning 'life' in Irish) is a community based social enterprise cafe working with Employability Galway and other disability support services, to give employment to people traditionally marginalised from employment opportunities, including people with disabilities. The Café is the first community-based social

## INFORMING A NEW GENERATION OF HEALTH ECONOMICS AND POLICY

ILAS is home to the largest group of economists working in the areas of health and healthcare on the island of Ireland. The Health Economics and Policy Analysis (HEPA) group develops and fosters the application of economic analysis to health and health care. Its members are internationally recognised for their work in the area and they support and advise numerous national and international scientific advisory panels, professional bodies, state organizations and voluntary organizations. Their work has served to directly inform policy changes nationally and internationally.

HEPA operates the largest health economics Masters programme in Ireland as well as providing a suite of undergraduate, graduate and advanced post-doctoral programmes – all aimed at providing the next generation of economists specialising in the area of health for industry, government and academia.



enterprise café to exist on a higher education campus in Ireland. Located at the heart of the ILAS building it is based on an ethos shared by ILAS and SCCUL of commitment to community, civic engagement, inclusion and partnership.



# NATIONAL IMPACT

**1** – NUI GALWAY IS IRELAND'S LEADING  
UNIVERSITY FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

**1** – NUI GALWAY WAS AWARDED THE FIRST UNESCO  
CHAIR IN IRELAND

**1** – NUI GALWAY ESTABLISHED THE FIRST AUTISM  
RESEARCH CENTRE OF ITS KIND OUTSIDE OF US

**1** – NUI GALWAY APPOINTED THE FIRST PROFESSOR  
OF SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY IN IRELAND

## IMPACTING POLICY

**RESEARCH AT NUI GALWAY STRIVES TO IMPROVE  
THE WORLD FOR THE BETTER, BY INFLUENCING  
POLICY CHANGE AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS. OUR  
WORK INFORMS AND INFLUENCES, BRINGING  
ABOUT CHANGE WITH LASTING IMPACT.**

Around the globe, there has been a shift towards a more proactive stance in relation to overall wellbeing of populations across the lifecourse and recognition of the need to become preventative rather than reactive, and holistic rather than compartmentalised.