SPIRe Newsletter

What's new in this issue?

Spring 2025 continues to be an eventful term for SPIRe, with exciting research, student achievements, and lively discussions shaping our community.

Highlights include the ARINS project's feature in The Irish Times, student success at the Data4Good Festival, and well-deserved recognition for our faculty. We also welcome new colleagues, continue our research seminars, and look forward to upcoming events, including a SPIRe alumni gathering.

We hope you enjoy this issue and look forward to staying in touch with you in future!

Editor, Elifcan Celebi

Democracy Challenged has a new website!

You can now follow the activities of Professor Aidan Regan's ERC project Democracy Challenged via the new website. The project team is interested in the following question: "In a world of growing wealth concentration and economic inequality, who truly holds the power?"

ARINS project on the future of Irish unity published in *The Irish Times*

Dr. Dawn Walsh (SPIRe, UCD) and colleagues Prof Brendan O'Leary (University of Pennsylvania) and Prof John Garry and Dr Jamie Pow (both Queens University Belfast) published articles in *The Irish Times* through 2025, sharing the findings of a major research project into attitudes to a possible future united Ireland and related issues both in the Republic and Northern Ireland. The findings are based on two major, in-depth opinion polls conducted simultaneously in Northern Ireland and the Republic. The overall aim of the collaborations and research is to provide independent and unbiased information on the state of public opinion in both jurisdictions on the constitutional future of the island, especially what influences the views of people, and how people may react to a united Ireland, if it were to happen. The articles can all be found on the ARINS project website.

New research project on "Maternal Healthcare Paradoxes in India"

Smrutimayee Sarangi, a PhD candidate at SPIRe, started her project on maternal healthcare paradoxes in India. Her research uncovers a paradox: tribal women are more likely to receive antenatal care than non-tribal women, yet they are less likely to give birth in healthcare facilities. The research builds on the data from the Indian version of the Demographic and Health Survey. As India advances SDGs 3 and 10, her research highlights the need for culturally sensitive policies beyond financial incentives, as a one-size-fits-all approach may not be enough.

Alumni Spotlight

Elizabeth Zion, BSc Politics, International Relations & Social Justice

Elizabeth completed an undergraduate degree in UCD and began her master's in Sustainable Development, a programme UCD offers with the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

"The greatest thing was doing a TED Talk in second year, on family reunification. That was a really special moment for me, representing UCD and using my academics to inform my work as an activist and campaigner for children's rights. I also had the opportunity to work with UNICEF, Médecins Sans Frontières, the Legal Aid Board, and the Irish Global Health Network during my time at university. I got to experience and use my studies in the professional world and gain an understanding of the Civil Service, NGOs and charitable work"

UCD Student Team Wins Runner-Up for Technical Excellence at Data4Good Festival

Pictured (from left to right): Noah Porter, Emma Fowler, Kilian Plapp, Eoin Curtis, and Harry Alderton

A team of five second-year BSc Computational Social Science students from University College Dublin has secured Runner-Up for Technical Excellence at the hosted by the Hertie School from 20–22 January 2025. At a three-day event, 70 students from 20 European universities gathered to network and create solutions to data challenges. Competing at the three-day Hackathon in Berlin, the 'Byte Me' team (pictured above) developed *Knowledge Link*. This online tool uses Large Language Models to make complex social data more accessible and actionable for policymakers and researchers. The team's achievement at the Data4Good Hackathon showcases how computational social science can transform policymaking by making data-driven insights more accessible. You can learn more about the UCD's BSc Computational Social Science here.

New module on Political Communication and Propaganda

Given the recent developments of social media, misinformation and AI, a new module by Nikita Kohlov introduces students to the field of political communication, centered on the role of information and persuasion in political processes. It also teaches students how to recognize and counter the manipulations of information by media and politicians.

Doris Aja-Eke recently joined SPIRe as an Assistant Professor. Her research focuses on the impacts of corruption and sexual corruption (also known as sextortion) on national and international development, with an emphasis on influencing anti-corruption laws and policies with evidence-based research. She uses mixed methods research approaches and is interested in the broad areas of International Relations, Development Studies, and International Organisations.

SPIRe Seminar Series continue in Spring 2025 until May. This term the seminar is organised by Alexa Zellentin and hosts interdisciplinary researchers. All seminars are on Wednesdays from 12-1 pm in the SPIRe boardroom, F301 Newman. The programme is available here.

KEYNOTE
PROFIT-SHIFTING IN IRELAND AND EUROPE: WHERE DO WE STAND?

GABRIEL ZUCMAN
DIRECTOR OF THE EU TAX OBSERVATORY

MAIREAD MCGUINNESS
FORMER EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR FINANCIAL STABILITY

28 MARCH 2025
ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY
19 DAWSON STREET
DUBLIN 2

Conference on profit-shifting in Ireland and Europe is hosted in collaboration with colleagues from the EU Tax Observatory and UCD's School of Economics. The event will take place at the Royal Irish Academy on Friday, 28th March, from 2:00–4:00 pm, with a networking reception from 1:30 pm. You may register here..

The event will host renowned economist Gabriel Zucman and Ireland's former EU Commissioner, Mairead McGuinness, moderated by Financial Times' Jude Webber.

Post-Election Discussion
by Politics & International Relations Society

Following the elections, PolSoc hosted a panel discussion with James Geoghegan TD, Malcolm Byrne TD and Donna McGettigan TD to analyse the results, look at the future and engage in meaningful discourse on the current political landscape.

Ahead of the General Election, they also organised a dynamic General Elections Debate, which featured speakers from each of UCD's youth party branches to discuss pressing national issues, sparking thoughtful conversations among attendees.

Stefan Müller highly commended in Early Career Researcher of the Year Awards 2024

Now in their eighth year, the Researcher of the Year Awards are legacy awards from the Irish Research Council following its amalgamation with Science Foundation Ireland to form Research Ireland. Stefan Müller was highly commended in the Research Ireland Early Career Researcher of the Year (IRC Legacy) Awards 2024. The "highly commended" citation recognises outstanding and exceptional research. Stefan's work focuses on political representation, party competition, political communication, public opinion, and quantitative text analysis. He also contributes regularly to national and international media on Irish and European politics.

In addition, Krishna Vadlamannati was recognised as one of 67 "Research Allies," honouring the crucial role of mentors, supervisors, and research and technical support staff in supporting the academic research community across all career levels.

Lucia Tiscornia was a Finalist in UCD Research Impact Competition

Lucia Tiscornia was a finalist in the 2024 UCD Research Impact Case Study Competition. Through interviews and a large-scale survey, her project mobilised public opinion and motivated policymakers to address the sharp increase in gang-related violence in Montevideo, Uruguay. Lucia Tiscornia and the research team collected data about over 2,600 neighbourhood residents' experiences with criminal gangs.

SPIRe alumni reception at UCD Festival on June 7

There will be a SPIRe alumni reception during the UCD Festival- on June 7 at 2 pm (location in UCD to be confirmed). Please register here if you would like to attend.

🌐 ucd.ie/politics

🐦 politicalscience.ie

👍 ucdpolitics

🌐 ucdspire

👍 ucdpolitics@sciences.social

Alumni Network

Stay engaged!

As an important part of our strategy for the coming years, we want to significantly increase engagement with our alumni network. You can stay in touch with us through our new LinkedIn group:

www.linkedin.com/groups/12728409

New mailing list !

In addition to this, we now also have a new mailing list for alumni of the School of Politics and International Relations - and its original constituent units, the Department of Politics, the Centre for Development Studies, and the Dublin European Institute - which you can sign up to here: www.ucd.ie/spire/about/alumni

Please note that subscription to the SPIRe alumni list is entirely voluntary. It is different from UCD's general alumni list. Any request under GDPR to end communication on the UCD general list will not affect membership on the SPIRe list. You can withdraw separately from the SPIRe list at any time.