

**Forfás and the Higher Education Authority (HEA)**

**Ireland Ranks Well on the Impact of its Research**

A comprehensive study of publicly-funded research performance has shown that Ireland has improved in terms of the volume and impact of its research. Ireland ranks 8<sup>th</sup> on the impact of research publications within a group of 20 comparator countries, including; Denmark (1), Netherlands (3), US (4), UK (6), Finland (8), Australia (10), Singapore (13) and China (17).

The study was conducted on behalf of Forfás and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) by Evidence Ltd., part of the Thomson Reuters Group. It shows that Ireland is punching above its weight in terms of the impact of its research.

The study notes that the volume of research articles and reviews from Irish institutions, predominantly higher education institutions, published in recognised international journals has more than doubled in the past decade. Ireland contributed 0.5% of the world share of papers in 2007 compared to 0.35% in 1998. Ireland is ranked 18<sup>th</sup> for this indicator.

However, while Ireland has doubled its research volume, it started from a low base. All other comparator countries also increased their research output resulting in Ireland's volume ranking staying steady in the 10 year period. This demonstrates how competitive research is internationally.

Conor Lenihan, TD, Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation commented, "The findings of this research are very encouraging. Ireland has invested significantly in research and development and this study clearly shows that we are achieving high impact. This study provides us with a useful a set of evidence which can assist in guiding policy decisions in this critical area for the future of our economy."

Martin Shanahan, Manager, Science Technology and Human Capital Policy Division, Forfás commented, "The findings show that Ireland has pockets of competitive research within many fields of science. From an enterprise perspective, citation data is also important as it is a good proxy for the quality of research and it can help to influence decisions on the location of the capital investment of companies and venture capitalists. This study is one element of a larger project which is looking at how the publically-funded research system is currently aligned with the enterprise base and how it can support the development of future enterprise. It is clear that we need to prioritise and focus on niche areas related to key technologies of economic importance and become leaders in these areas."

Welcoming the citation trends for Irish research, HEA Chief Executive, Tom Boland said, "While Ireland has only become a really serious player in research over the past decade, it is clear that we are making our mark. Inclusion in some of the world's leading journals of new knowledge generated from Irish researchers is a significant recognition of what our research community is achieving. The challenge now will be maintaining this strong performance and ensuring that optimum benefit is reaped in terms of impact on the economy and society."

The study also notes positively that Ireland's international collaboration is rising. While improving, the need for greater collaboration between Irish institutions is highlighted and shows that the level of co-operation on research between institutions in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is particularly low.

With respect to particular areas of research, the report shows that in terms of citation impact, health research and physical sciences perform particularly well. In volume terms QUB, UCD, TCD and UCC are the largest. Citation impact has increased for most higher education institutions with RCSI, TCD, UCD and DIAS rating the highest.

#### Notes to Editors

- Ireland's percentage share of world higher education and government expenditure on R&D is approximately 0.26% while our publication output is double that number.
- Bibliometrics are about publication data and the rates of citation (cross reference) between those publications. It is generally agreed that more frequently cited papers are associated with other measures of excellent research and can be used as a proxy indicator for research quality.
- All analyses must take both field and year into account because the absolute citation count for a specific article is influenced by its field and by the year it was published. Therefore, comparisons of indexed data can only be made after normalising with reference to these two variables. The common normalisation factor is average citations per paper for the year and either the field or journal in which the paper was published. This is known as citation impact.