

# National Drugs Forum 2023

Building Bridges for  
Evidence Informed  
Public Policy

#nationaldrugsforum23

**Croke Park,  
Dublin**  
16 November 2023



An Roinn Sláinte  
Department of Health



An Bord  
Taighde Sláinte  
Health Research  
Board

The annual National Drugs Forum is an opportunity for stakeholders to learn about and discuss new developments and thinking in drug and alcohol research and policy. This year's event will focus on finding ways to increase policymakers' awareness of research and enabling researchers to align research planning with policy priorities. Both Ireland's and the EU's current drugs strategies will come to an end in 2025, and this is an opportunity to learn about the EU's priorities for its new strategy.

### **Plenary Session 1: Irish and EU drug strategies after 2025.**

The forum will hear from Dr Nada Milisavijevic, a representative from the Innovation and Security Research unit, Migration and Home Affairs DG in the European Commission, who has a particular interest in bridging the gap between research and policy. DG Home has overall responsibility for drugs policy at EU level. A regulation, passed by the European Parliament in July this year, established a new agency with responsibility for monitoring, research threat assessment and competence development. This is a good opportunity to learn about the Commission's plans for working with the new agency.

The Citizens' Assembly on Drugs Use will have completed its deliberation in November and the chair of the assembly, Mr Paul Reid, will offer his reflections on its work and implications for policy.

Dr Sarah Morton from UCD, and chair of the national drugs strategy's strategic implementation group 6 will reflect on the successful implementation of a community-based drugs project and her own experience of working with the Icelandic government on the reconfiguration of its response to drugs.

### **Plenary Session 2: Assessing needs and planning services in the new health system.**

This session will consider the implications of Sláintecare, in particular the newly established health regions, for the design and implementation of area-based responses and the challenges of aligning prevention, treatment and harm reduction interventions with the wider changes in health policy and service planning.

Dr Jonathan Pratschke will present the findings from a HRB-commissioned integrative review on area-based responses. Sarah Treleaven of the Sláintecare Unit in the Department of Health will outline the administrative and structural considerations that will impact on resource allocation and placing of services. Dr Suzi Lyons of the HRB, will describe the output of a collaboration between the HRB and Pobal which mapped treatment demand data to deprivation level using small area codes.

### **Interactive Session on Foresight**

This session will be an opportunity for forum participants to reflect on how to develop preparedness and anticipate both the threats we will face over the period of the next drugs strategy and the type of responses that will be needed. The emphasis will be on young people and how we can build knowledge for a safer and healthy future for them. Participants will work through a scenario building exercise, using the Rip Van Winkle method often used in strategic foresight to imagine a range of possibilities in 2040.

# National Drugs Forum 2023 Programme

09:30 Registration opens

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10:00 – 10:10 Opening of National Drugs Forum  
**Hildegarde Naughton TD**, Minister of State with responsibility for Public Health, Wellbeing and the National Drugs Strategy

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10:10 – 10:30 **Keynote Speaker:**  
**Prof Kerstin Mey**, President of the University of Limerick - Navigating the tension between health awareness and the law

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## Plenary Session 1: Irish and EU drug strategies after 2025

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10.30 – 10.50 **Dr Nada Milisavijevic** – EU security research and innovation programme and the role of practitioners

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10.50 – 11:10 **Mr Paul Reid** – The workings and outcomes from the Citizens' Assembly on Drugs

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11.10 – 11.30 **Dr Sarah Morton** – Drug policy and intervention change: exploring the interfaces

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11:30 – 12:00 Coffee

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## Plenary Session 2: Assessing needs and planning services in the new health system

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12.00 – 12.20 **Dr Jonathan Pratchske** – Place-based initiatives to reduce drug-related threats in communities: an evidence review

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12:20 – 12.40 **Sarah Treleaven** – The new regional health areas, public health and service provision

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12.40 – 13.00 **Dr Suzi Lyons** – Analysis of the relationship between addiction treatment data and geographic deprivation in Ireland, 2019 to 2021

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13.00 – 14.15 Lunch

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## Interactive Session on Foresight

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14.15 – 16.15 **Dr Ania Sacio-Szymańska** - Workshop on strategic foresight; imagining 2040

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16:15 Closing address

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# Speakers



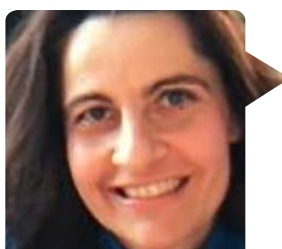
Prof . Kerstin Mey

**Kerstin Mey** studied for an MA equivalent in Art, and German language and literature at Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany, and obtained a PhD in Art Theory and Aesthetics there. She held academic positions in universities in Germany and the UK before she joined University of Limerick (UL) as Vice President Academic Affairs and Student Engagement and Professor of Visual Culture in 2018. She was appointed as Interim President of UL in September 2020 and to the role of President in October 2021.

Over the past 30 years, Kerstin Mey has built a track record of successfully initiating and implementing pioneering institutional change programmes, academic and research initiatives and cultural projects in higher education.

Her research interest focuses on 20th century and contemporary art and theory. It is concerned with art in the public space and public pedagogies, artistic research and the relationship between art, its documentation and archives. Amongst her numerous publications are the book *Art and Obscenity* and edited volumes *Art in the Making; Sculpsit and Cross-Wired*. She was the Director of ISEA2009, the International Symposium of Electronic Arts held on the island of Ireland under the theme 'Engaged Creativity in Mobile Environments'.

Amongst others, she is a member of the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) Kuratorium, the European University Associations Institutional Evaluation Peer Panel and chairs the IUA Council in 2023. She serves as a Board Member of the Irish Chamber Orchestra, EVA International Biennale, the Irish Aerial Creation Centre and the Hunt Museum and acts as a reviewer for international funding bodies and publishing houses.



Dr Nada  
Milisavijevic

**Nada Milisavljević** is the team leader and the scientific coordinator for the area of Fight against Crime and Terrorism (FCT) in the unit "Innovation and Security Research" of the Directorate-General Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME). The research area of FCT encompasses, among others, fight against cybercrime and organised crime, police cooperation, various branches of forensics and counter-terrorism.

Before joining the European Commission, Nada was a researcher at the "Signal and Image processing Centre" of the Royal Military Academy of Belgium, and she is (co)author of around 100 scientific publications, mainly in the areas of image processing and data fusion. Nada holds a Bachelor and a Master degree in electrical engineering, and a PhD degree in applied sciences.



Mr Paul Reid

(@paulreiddublin)

**Paul Reid** is currently the Independent Chairperson of the Citizens' Assembly on Drugs. He was appointed by An Taoiseach to this role in March 2023.

Prior to this he held CEO and senior executive roles in the private, not for profit, central government, local government and health sectors.

Paul was CEO of the Irish Health Service, HSE, from May 2019 until December 2022. In this period, he led the health service through the Covid-19 global pandemic and a potentially catastrophic criminal cyber-attack. He was key in communicating public health advice to government and the public in general and successfully led the implementation a vaccination programme that had the best take up in the world.

## Speakers (cont.)

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From 2014 to 2019 he was Chief Executive of Fingal County Council, one of the largest Local Authorities in the state.

Between 2011 and 2014, Paul worked as the Chief Operations Officer in the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform. He was responsible for leading a whole set of reforms across the public service.

From 2010 to 2011, Paul worked as Head of Corporate Affairs with Trócaire, the Irish International Aid Agency.

Paul's previous career was as the Executive Director of Networks & Operations with eir.

Paul holds a Masters in Business Administration from Trinity College and a BA in Human Resources and Industrial Relations from the National College Ireland. He has received honorary fellowships from the National College of Ireland and Griffith College.



Dr Sarah Morton

**Sarah Morton** is the Director of the Community Drugs Programme, School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, UCD. She has extensive experience in policy, practice and outcome evaluation in relation to addressing complex issues including domestic and sexual violence and drug and alcohol use and her research interests focus on community engaged research as well as creative and participative research methodologies. She has a deep commitment to widening participation and community engaged learning practices, and was joint winner of the CEU 2020 European Award for Teaching Excellence in the Social Sciences and Humanities.



Dr Jonathan Pratschke

**Dr Jonathan Pratschke** is a social and economic research consultant who has participated in almost 100 funded research projects in Ireland and abroad. He has held lecture courses in universities in Ireland and Italy and is well-known for his innovative studies of social mechanisms, spatial effects and complex relationships using complex statistical models. His main research interests relate to inequalities in education, the labour market, health and well-being. Together with the late Trutz Haase, he developed the theoretical model and statistical techniques that have been used to measure deprivation in Ireland since the late 1990s. He has published widely on these themes and has carried out studies of social inequalities in relation to health and health care for the Health Intelligence Unit as well as completing a recent evidence review for the Health Research Board on user involvement in drug treatment, harm reduction and recovery services.

## Speakers (cont.)

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Sarah Treleaven

**Sarah Treleaven** is a Principal Officer in the Department of Health. Working on Sláintecare initiatives, she currently has responsibility for introducing a population-based approach to health and social care service planning and funding. During the pandemic, Sarah provided epidemiological updates to NPHE and worked on establishing the COVID GeoHIVE as a trusted source of information.

Prior to joining the Department of Health, Sarah worked in the Royal College of Physicians on a number of Quality Improvement Programmes. She has received her Bachelor's in Physiological Science from the University of California, Los Angeles and her Master's in Public Health from University College Dublin.

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Dr Suzi Lyons

**Dr Suzi Lyons** (PhD) is a Senior Researcher in the National Health Information Systems Unit at the Health Research Board, responsible for the National Drug-Related Deaths Index (NDRDI) and the National Drug Treatment Reporting System (NDTRS). Dr Lyons has a Masters in Community Health from Trinity College Dublin and a PhD in Public Health and Epidemiology from University College Dublin. She is an alumni of the European Programme in Intervention Epidemiology Training (EPIET). Previously she has worked as an epidemiologist with the World Health Organisation. She also spent several years working overseas with Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF).

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Dr Anna  
Sacio-Szymańska

**Anna Sacio-Szymańska** represents the emerging school of professional foresight, one focusing on the use of anticipation to reach strategic goals in a fluid and uncertain environment. As a principal at 4CF, she manages foresight projects and mandates for international and national organisations from the public sector and private sector. She has published on implementation of foresight in public planning, in the business sector and on futures literacy skills enhancement. She is a former President of Foresight Europe Network, current Co-Chair of the Polish Node of The Millennium Project, a Member of the Polish Society for Futures Studies and a Management Committee Member of the COST Action no. CA21166 - Social Sciences and Humanities for Transformation and Climate Resilience (SHiFT). She holds an MA in international economics and PhD in management sciences. Her recent institutional collaborations include: ENISA, EMCDDA, UNFCCC, UNEP, EIT Climate-KIC, Frontex.

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# Report on National Drugs Forum 2023

Reports from the workshop will be compiled and these will be made available on the website of the National Drugs Library ([www.drugsandalcohol.ie](http://www.drugsandalcohol.ie)) and included in the Winter 2023 issue of *Drugnet Ireland*.

