



Secretary-General's Report 2018

Introduction

The year 2017 was a very significant one for the Society, with the establishment of the Society's London office and the first staff employed directly by the RES taking up their posts. Despite some inevitable disruption during the transition to the new office, the Society was able to continue with almost all of its previous activities, while also beginning the process of mapping out a medium term strategy for the future.

While this report is primarily concerned with Royal Economic Society activities during 2017, I am also taking the opportunity to look forward to some developments planned for 2018 and beyond.

RES Officers and Council

Alongside the staff, many people have contributed a great deal to the work of the Society in various ways. Firstly, I would like to thank the four people who have helped to guide the Society through important decisions in their respective roles as presidents. Peter Neary was confirmed as President and Nick Stern as President-Elect at the 2017 AGM, with Andrew Chesher becoming Past-President. Having helped make pivotal decisions during 2016 about the Society's administrative organisation, Peter continues to play a key role as President in all important decisions. Andrew was similarly involved during 2016 and has unstintingly given his time to assist the Society during 2017, including chairing both the judging panel for the Young Economist Essay Competition and the Communications and Engagement working party. Nick has also played an important role as part of the presidential triumvirate, especially in relation to forward-looking decisions on the Society's development.

After an enthusiastic and influential three years involvement in presidential roles, John Moore completed his term as Past President of the Society at the 2017 AGM. Everyone involved in working with John, including members of the Executive Committee and Council, is delighted that he has accepted an invitation to remain active in RES affairs as a Life Vice-President.

Meanwhile, the 2018 AGM marks the end of the terms of six Council members who have served since 2013, namely Oriana Bandiera, V. Baskar, Sarah Brown, Vincent Crawford, Andy Haldane and Jonathan Portes. In particular, I would like to thank Sarah for her work over the last year as a Council representative on the Executive Committee. Subject to ratification at this year's AGM, Sascha Becker, Allesandra Guariglia, Michael McMahon, Rain Newton-Smith, Barbara Petrongolo and Imran Rasul join Council until 2023.

Executive Committee members undertake substantial responsibilities for the Society, both as its legal trustees and in key administrative roles. Whether *ex officio* members of the Executive Committee

through their roles or as Council representatives, all give a substantial amount of time to the Society and its activities. During 2017, Richard Smith completed his term as Managing Editor of *The Econometrics Journal* after serving in that role for a remarkable ten years. All who worked with him at the RES will join me in thanking Richard for his many contributions to the journal and the Society, including as an Executive Committee member. The Society is also delighted to welcome Jaap Abbring, who has been Managing Editor of *The Econometrics Journal* and an Executive Committee member since May 2017.

Silvana Tenreyro also stepped down during the year as chair of the RES Women's Committee and Executive Committee member. Under difficult circumstances, Silvana undertook a great deal of work to ensure that the 2016 Women's Committee survey and report on the gender balance in academic UK economics was completed as scheduled, for which we are very grateful. Shortly after leaving her RES role, Silvana became a member of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee, an important national role in which we wish her well. Although standing down at the 2017 AGM as a member of the RES Council and Council representative on the Executive Committee, Sarah Smith generously agreed to become Women's Committee chair. Hence, having thanked Sarah last year for her work over the previous five years, we now welcome her back again in a new role, in which she is again an Executive Committee member.

The Society

At the end of 2017, the Society's membership stood at 3,918. Although a decline on the previous year (4,232), this remains substantially higher than the 3,631 members in 2015. The largest decline in 2017 was the number of student members, down from 1312 in 2016 to 1136 in 2017, and represents a return to the numbers between 2013 and 2015. The Society is keen to engage more closely with its student members in future and, by better understanding their needs, to develop a membership package that is sufficiently attractive to recruit and retain student members.

The geographical composition of the Society's membership is largely unchanged, with 44% of 2017 members in the UK, 27% elsewhere in Europe, 16% in the United States or Canada and 13% in the Rest of the World.

The Treasurer reports that the Society remains in excellent financial health. Indeed, *The Economic Journal* made a larger than anticipated surplus of £249k in 2017, resulting in the deficit between the Society's income and expenditure being less than £30,000, and much less than planned in the 2017 budget. In addition, the net gain on investments was £567k, with the Society's net assets standing at around £6.8 million at the end of the year. This large sum not only provides a substantial buffer, but the income on investments is important in helping to finance on-going and planned activities.

Support costs increased significantly in 2017 to over £350k, as a result of centralising the administration of the Society and appointing a Chief Executive and Operations Manager in London, including a period of overlap with the Society's previous support staff based in St Andrews. Further centralisation of administration will take place during 2018 and beyond, in order to provide a professional staff able to help the Society advance its primary aim, namely to promote the study of economics.

Leighton Chipperfield became the Society's first Chief Executive in May, with Marie-Luiza de Menezes preceding him in post by a few months as Operations Manager. Later in the year, Alexander Augustin joined as Office Administrator. Although not able to take up the position until early 2018, Barry Watts was appointed as Communications and Engagement Manager. Other appointments are planned for 2018, largely bringing in-house posts that were previously out-sourced. The new office is working very well and all staff are enthusiastic in their support for the Society.

During 2017, and in one of his first actions as Chief Executive, Leighton Chipperfield initiated a review of RES strategy. This has involved detailed discussions, individually and in relevant meetings, with members of the Society's Executive Committee and Council. A consultation with members is also being undertaken, closing in April 2018. A summer launch is planned for the new strategy, which will underpin the Society's activities over the next five years.

Journals and Conference

The Economic Journal had another very successful year, academically as well as financially, with the total number of regular submissions (1629) slightly exceeding the figure for 2016 (1617). Submissions to the journal have increased by an impressive 53% since 2012. An important indicator of success is the journal's Impact Factor, with that for 2016 (released in June 2017) increasing from 2.370 in 2015 to 2.608 in 2016. The journal continues to be highly international, with 17% of 2017 author submissions from the United Kingdom, 25% from United States and Canada, 37% from Europe and 21% from the Rest of the World.

The Econometrics Journal not only changed Managing Editor during 2017, but it also implemented a fundamental change in editorial policy intended to facilitate the rapid publication of high quality research papers relevant to contemporary econometrics, with primary emphasis placed on important and original contributions of substantive direct or potential value in applications. Although the number of new submissions increased slightly in 2017 to 182 (2016: 176), 109 of these were desk-rejected by the editorial office. In response, the journal website has been updated to more saliently communicate the new policy and to advertise the journal. The journal's Impact Factor (released in June 2017) dropped from 1.116 in 2015 to 0.513 in 2016, though the five-year Impact Factor is stable at 1.583.

Various prizes are awarded by the Society each year in relation to papers published in our journals. The 2017 RES Prize for the best unsolicited paper published in *The Economic Journal* was awarded to Robert Warren Anderson, Noel Johnson and Mark Koyama. Prizes are also awarded for the best unsolicited paper by an author within five years of their PhD. The Austin Robinson Prize for *The Economic Journal* in 2017 has been awarded Josephine Duh and Dean Spears, with K. Ulrich Hounyo and Bezirgen Veliyev sharing the Denis Sargan Prize for *The Econometrics Journal* in 2016.

The Society continues to be grateful to the editors of both journals for the hard and highly professional work they perform on our behalf.

The Society's current journal publishing contract with Wiley, our publisher, comes to an end in December 2018. The Society engaged the services of a publishing consultant and initiated a working group to make a recommendation based on a tender. This process began in 2017 and is expected to conclude in early 2018, with the new contract operating from the beginning of 2019.

The Society's 2017 Annual Conference was held at University of Bristol on April 10–12. Sarah Smith (Bristol) and Michael McMahon (Warwick) were Programme Chair and Deputy, and Leandro de Magalhaes (Bristol) and Senay Sokullu (Bristol) were Local Organisers. Almost 600 people attended the conference, an increase on 575 in 2016. Although 39 non-presenting PhD students registered for the conference under the £10 scheme, this was down on the 61 such students for 2016. Programme highlights for 2017 included keynote lectures given by Gita Gopinath (Harvard), Hilary Hoynes (Berkeley) and James Stock (Harvard), John Moore hosting a plenary session in discussion with the Nobel Prizewinner Oliver Hart, and a policy plenary on Post-Brexit Economics chaired by Diane Coyle. Social events featured a reception at the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery and a Gala Dinner in Brunel's Passenger Shed.

As RES Conference Secretary, Neil Rickman has overseen the Annual Conference since 2013. During that period, the conference has increased substantially in scale and complexity, and Neil has played an active role in these developments. He steps down in autumn this year and the Society is grateful for all the work he has done.

Postgraduate Support

The Society continues to provide substantial support to postgraduate (especially PhD) students in economics. Now in its third year, a Postgraduate Symposium was held immediately following the 2017 Annual Conference in Bristol. Under a student organising committee, this brought together students at all stages of their theses to discuss and disseminate their research. The Symposium continues to be international, with about a third of the 120 attendees travelling from overseas.

In addition, the Society has organised a PhD Job Market Meeting annually in January since 2006. To maximise attendance and to avoid undue competition with other meetings, in 2017 the decision was made to bring forward the next job market meeting to December. This resulted in two meetings during the year, in January and December 2017 respectively, with both meetings held at Westminster Business School (WBS), London. The events followed the format of previous years. Keynote talks were tailored to the audience of delegates who were in the early stages of their careers in economics, while students (who are required to be RES members to attend) from the UK, rest of Europe and the US presented their research either through a formal presentation or a poster and were available for formal and informal interviews with attending institutions. The move to December appears to have been successful, with 360 and 444 students attending the January and December meetings respectively (compared to 350 for the January 2016 meeting), with 16 and 22 recruiting institutions respectively (23 for the January 2016 meeting).

The twenty-seventh RES Easter Training School on "Advances in Industrial Organisation" was held at the University of Essex in April 2017 under the directorship of Professor Eric Smith. The Schools are designed to bring advanced postgraduate students and other early career economists (including from the public sector) together to learn about recent developments in a selected field of economics from internationally renowned experts. The 2017 lecturers were Rachel Griffith (Institute for Fiscal Studies and Manchester), Rocco Macchiavello (London School of Economics) and Aviv Nevo (Pennsylvania). This was the second School held at the University of Essex and, like the Schools in previous years, received excellent feedback from participants.

After a thorough review by an Executive Committee working group, the Society decided in 2017 to discontinue the previous RES Junior Fellowship Scheme. Although the fellowship awards were valuable to individuals who received one and also to their departments, they were heavily concentrated in a few institutions. After considering costs and benefits, the Society concluded that the benefits did not justify its costs and hence no awards will be made in future under this scheme. Nevertheless, the Society is committed to continuing to support PhD students through a range of activities and to exploring the best ways to help develop their careers.

Undergraduate and Departmental Support

Last year the Society, in conjunction with the Economics Network, launched a video competition for undergraduate students. Students, individuals or teams, were asked to produce short films that use economics to shed light on the real world. Although only a small number of entries were received in this inaugural year, the quality was high, with Oskar Birol (University of Edinburgh) and Robert and Fraser Clark (London School of Economics) being joint winners.

To date, the Society has supported undergraduate education primarily through the Economics Network, for which the RES provides a substantial grant each year. The Network's activities include organising a biennial conference on economics education (including a very successful one in 2017), running GTA and early career workshops, and publishing the *Economic Review*, a magazine for A-Level students of economics.

A new development in 2017 was the decision by the Society to provide three years funding for the CORE project. The funding will help train and build networks of teachers who wish to adopt CORE's approach to teaching economics and to introduce the material to PhD students. CORE will partner with the Economics Network to deliver this work.

Economics units in UK universities are also supported through CHUDE, the Conference of Heads of University Departments of Economics. CHUDE is a committee of the Society and comprises Heads of Economics at universities in the UK. Bi-annual meetings, which offer a forum for discussion of issues of interest, include representatives from the Government Economic Service and the Bank of England. CHUDE often acts as the lead for the Society in providing feedback to official consultations, in 2017 contributing to two consultation exercises following the Stern Review of the REF process, and is preparing a consultation response regarding the future creation of a Knowledge Education Framework (KEF). The chairperson is co-opted to the Society's Executive Committee and sits on the Economics Network managing board. Eric Pentecost and Daniel Zizzo complete their terms as CHUDE chair and secretary, respectively, at the end of 2018, and the Society is very grateful to them for the active roles they have played in UK economics.

Communication and Engagement

For many years, the Society has engaged with young people (particularly students of A-level economics) through its Annual Public Lecture and the Young Economist of the Year Essay Competition. The 2017 Public Lecture was presented by Stephen Machin on "Why Commit Crime: Economic incentives for criminal behaviour", and was well received by audiences in both London and Manchester. After three years in Manchester, and following a bidding process, the RES Public Lecture

for 2018-2020 will be presented at the University of York, with the 2018 lecture also to be given in London.

The Young Economist of the Year Competition was established in 2007 and continues to attract a large number of entries from A-level/International Baccalaureate economics students. Each student submits an essay chosen from a range of topics set by the Society and the final judging is undertaken by an RES panel, chaired in 2017 by the Society's President Andrew Chesher. The joint winners were Louise Averill and Matthew Thorne.

With communication and engagement firmly in mind, 2017 saw the organisation of evening events, under the title RES Presents, during the Annual Conference. These well attended and lively events for the general public included two panel sessions on Post-Brexit Economics and Re-Skilling the UK, together with a discussion with Mervyn King hosted by Andrew Chesher (RES President). Thanks go especially to Sarah Smith for her work in initiating RES Presents, alongside overseeing the academic conference sessions. Where feasible, it is planned that RES Presents will be repeated during future conferences, including the 2018 conference at the University of Sussex.

The Society once again supported the 2017 Festival of Economics at Bristol with a grant and the RES promoted itself with a stand at the event. The Society also co-operates with the British Science Association, nominating the President of the Economics Section of the BSA. As the 2017 President of the Economics Section, Oriana Bandiera organised a session at the Festival of Science entitled "How can caring for one another affect economic decisions".

For some years, Wiley has hosted the Society's website and maintained its membership database. This arrangement will cease with the end of the current contract in December 2018. It is planned that membership will be dealt with in the Society's office, enabling more direct communications between the Society and our members.

A working group under Andrew Chesher has been meeting over the last year to review the Society's communication and engagement efforts. One priority has been the website, for which not only is the current contract coming to an end, but it is acknowledged to be outdated. Plans are now well advanced for launching a new website towards the end of 2018, with additional developments taking place over the coming years. As RES Communications and Engagement Manager, Barry Watts is now leading this work.

Until the appointment of Leighton and Barry, Robin Naylor oversaw RES communication in his role as Deputy Secretary-General. This included overseeing the Society's website, liaison with the RES Media Consultant, the Conference Committee (especially on matters relating to filming) and the Economics Network. In conjunction with Leighton, he has recently been heavily involved in the journal publishing tender and the development of the new website and membership systems. Robin will step down from his role at the end of 2018, with the work of the Deputy Secretary-General being taken by the RES office. The Society is hugely indebted to Robin for all he has done over an extended period.

Thanks are also due to Peter Howells, the Editor of the RES Newsletter, who continues to ensure the Newsletter contains interesting articles, correspondence, obituaries and general information. Peter performs a terrific service on behalf of the Society and our members.

The Society has engaged Romesh Vaitilingham as Media Consultant for around twenty years. Over this period, Romesh has overseen the production of press briefings and liaised with journalists in relation to papers presented at the RES Annual Conference or published in *The Economic Journal*. His work has undoubtedly led to more papers attracting media interest than would otherwise have been the case.

Women's Committee and Grants

The Society's Women's Committee aims to identify the current position of women economists in academic departments and in business; to monitor changes in the position of women and to make these data widely available; to support women throughout the economics profession by the establishment of networks; to increase contacts of women in similar situations; to identify the underlying causes of the under-representation of women in economics and to seek to change or affect them. Activities in 2017 included a lively and topical lunchtime session at the Annual Conference presenting new research findings on "Why do so few women study economics". During the year the Committee also published its 11th report on The Gender Balance in UK Economics Departments and Research Institutes, which showed continued slow progress in the representation of women. As already noted, Sarah Smith succeeded Silvana Teneyro as chair of the committee during 2017.

In addition to the above, the Society supports research and scholarship through a range of schemes, including Special Projects Grants, Conference Grants and Small Academic Expenditure Schemes. The last two continue to be administered by Anton Muscatelli, for which the Society is very grateful. The Conference Grant Scheme received 46 applications in 2017 of which 44 were granted funding of over £13k. The vast majority of successful applicants were early career economists, at Ph.D or early post-doctoral level; three-quarters of applications came from the UK and a quarter from overseas. The Small Budget Scheme contributed to the work of 6 individuals, with funds awarded totalling £2.7k.

A total of 23 applications were made to the Special Projects Grants Scheme during 2017, of which 15 were granted funding totalling over £46k. These awards were made to people at 13 different institutions and typically provided support for the organisation of a conference or workshop.

Finally

It is clear that the Society is in good health, in both financial and human resource terms. Many people, not all of whom are named here, put in considerable effort for the Society and the discipline of economics. As always, RES members are key stakeholders; your support for the Society and its work is invaluable.

Denise Osborn

March 2018