

# Irish Social Policy in Recession and Recovery

Dr Michelle Norris

School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social  
Justice

University College Dublin



# Planning for Recovery

## Key questions:

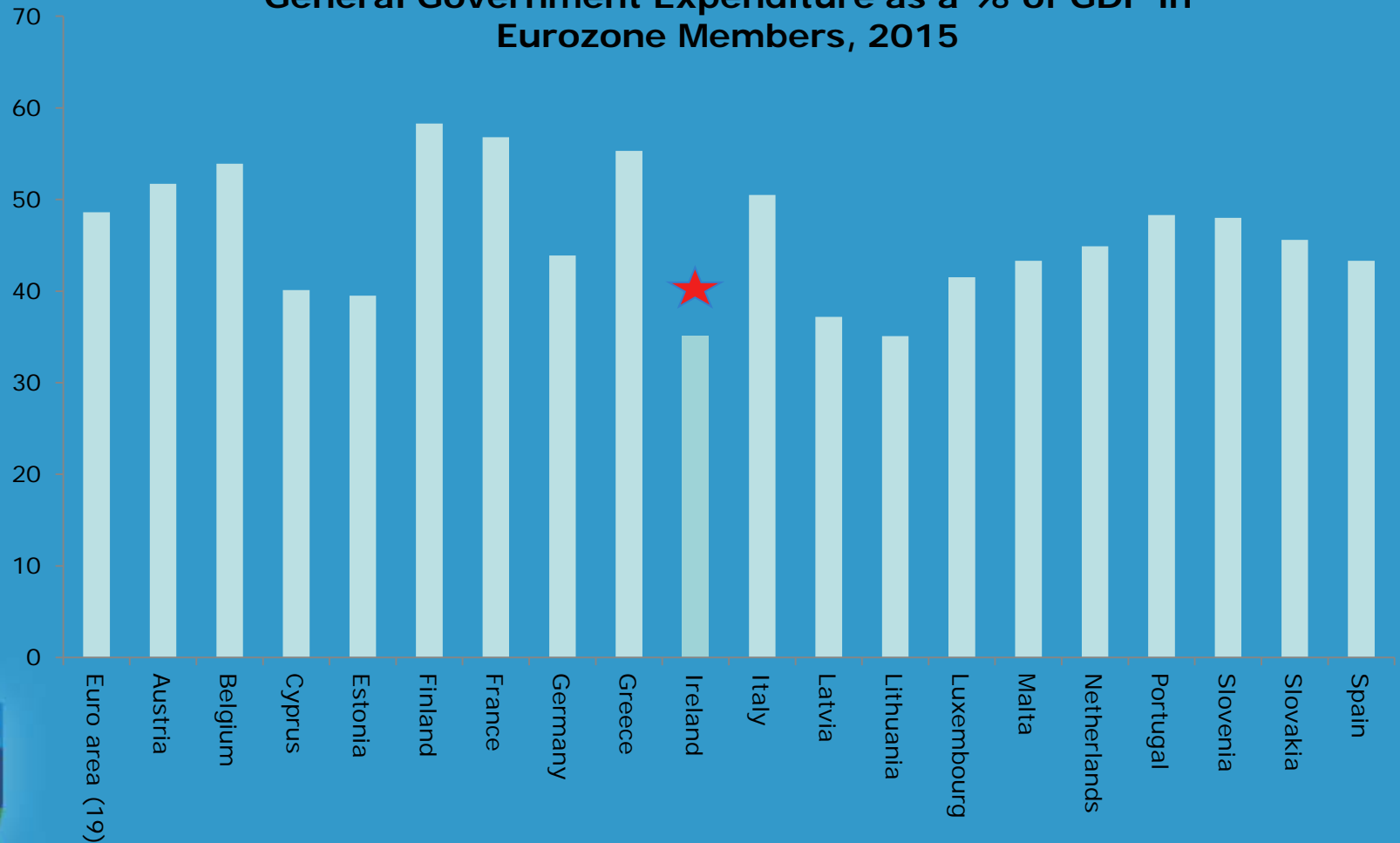
- Macro
  - Scale of spending on social policies
  - Source of funds for spending on social policies
- Micro:
  - Focus of investment
    - Benefits vs services
    - Capital vs current
- Management
  - Moving beyond boom and bust
    - Enabling planning and countercyclical investment
  - Balancing legacy commitments and emerging needs
  - Managing complex services and programmes



These are explored using historical and comparative evidence and some examples from housing policy.

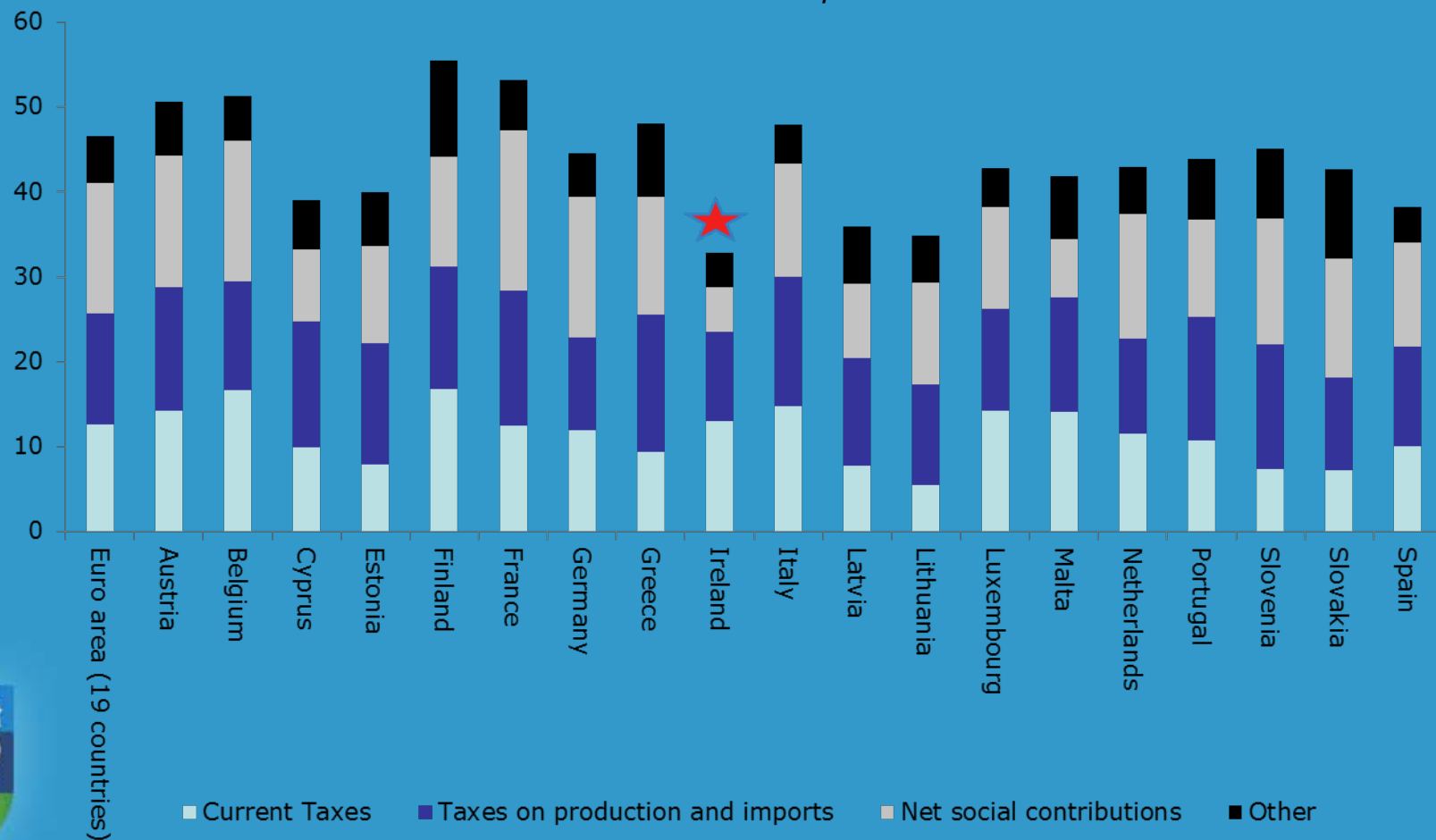
# Macro Issue #1: Scale of Social Policy Spending

General Government Expenditure as a % of GDP in Eurozone Members, 2015

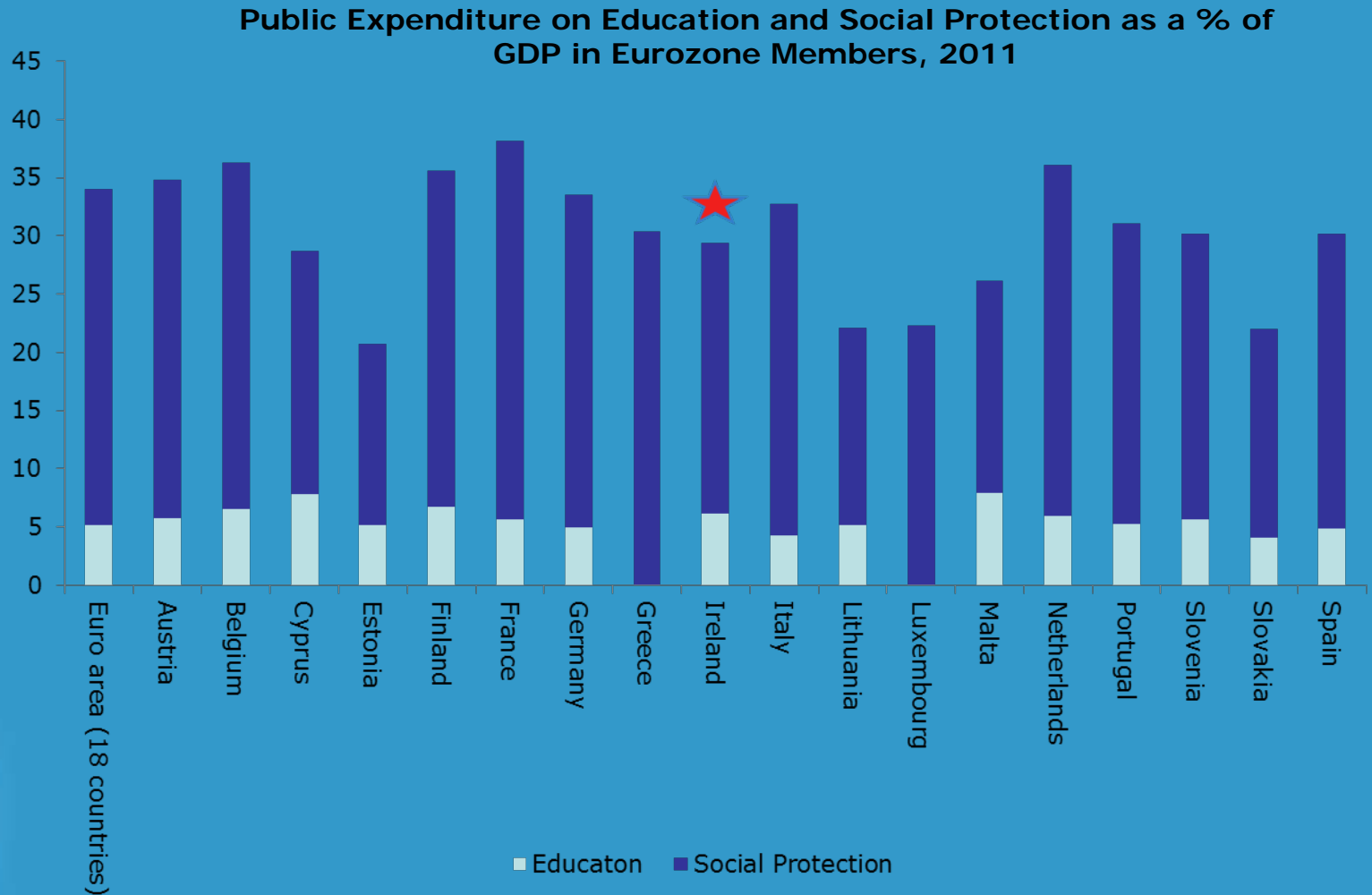


# Macro Issue #2: Sources of Revenue for Social Policy Spending

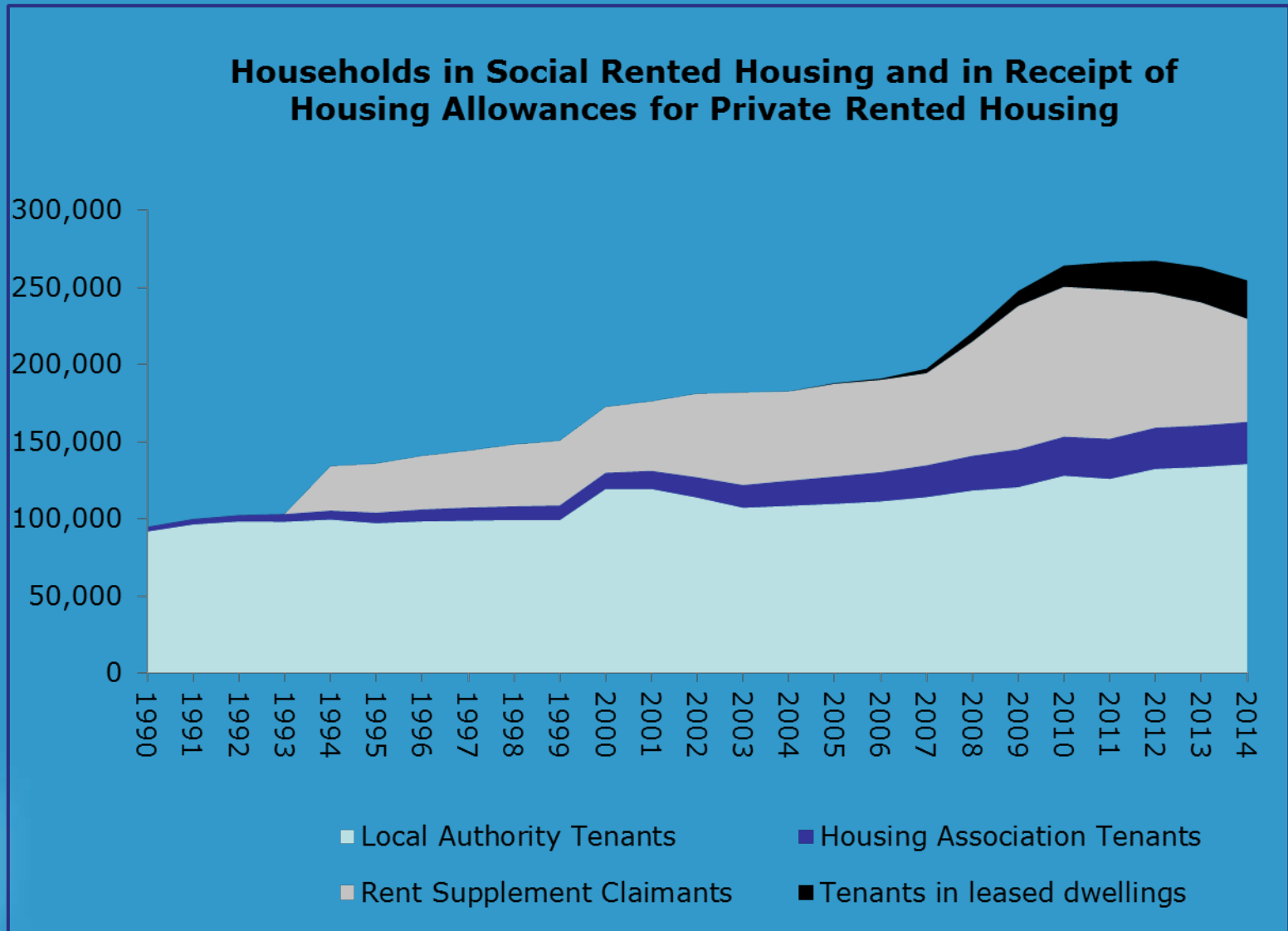
General Government Revenue as a % of GDP in Eurozone Members, 2015



# Micro Issue #1: Benefits vs Services



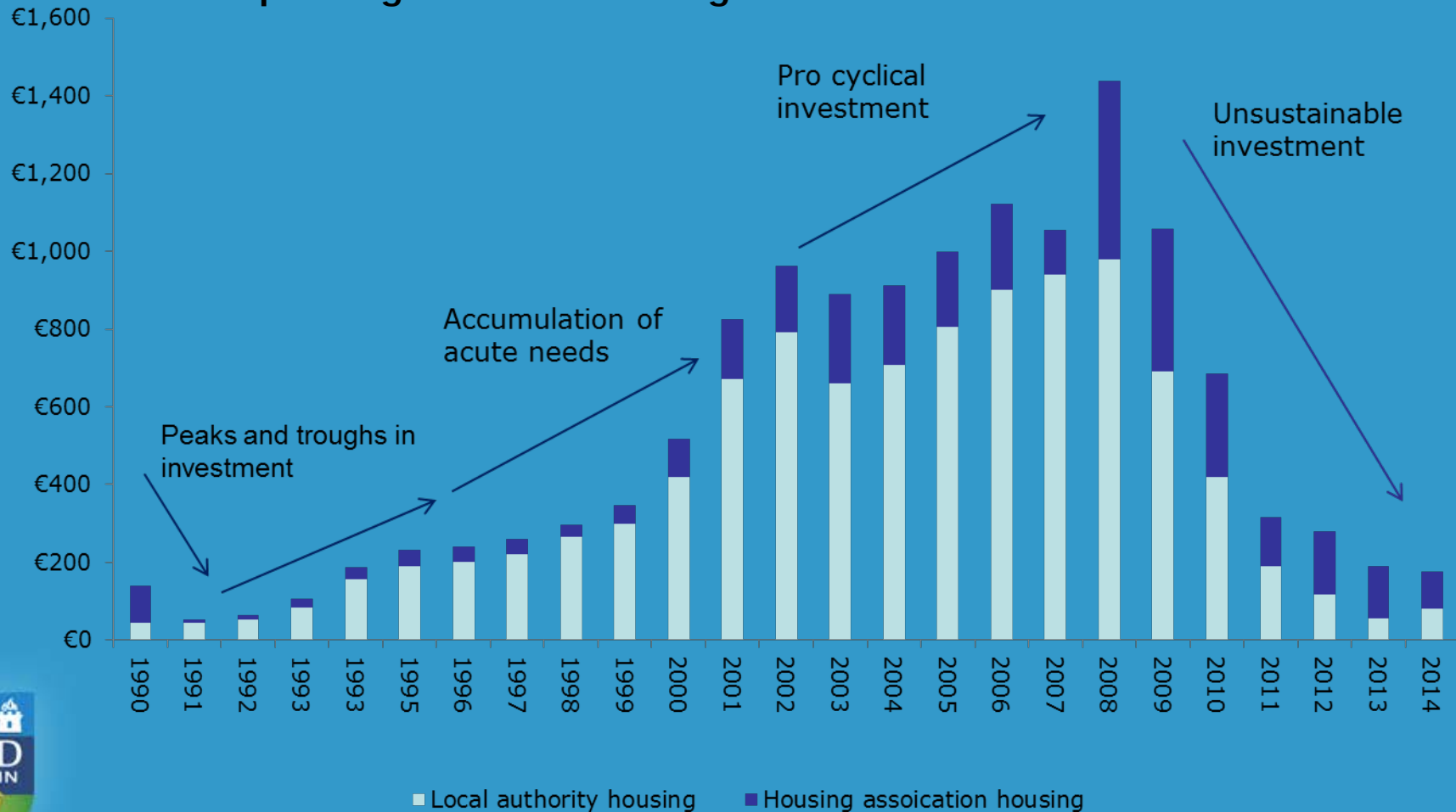
# Micro Issue #2: Capital Vs Current



# Management Issue #1: Beyond Boom and Bust

Millions

## Spending on Social Housing Provision in Ireland 1990-2014



# Management Issue #2: Balancing Legacy Commitments and Emerging Needs

- Poor record of reforming legacy commitments:
  - Land reform versus investment in industry
  - Social protection versus activation
  - General hospitals versus regional hospitals/centres of excellence
- This record limits the potential for spending on emerging needs such as:
  - Childcare
  - Child protection
  - Old age pensions and home care





# Management Issue #3: Managing Complex Services and Programmes

- Poor record in this regard may explain our preference for:
  - low taxes rather than high taxes
  - benefits rather than services
  - Central government rather than local government services.
- Need to value and train managers and enable them implement reforms
- Historically poor record of policy evaluation and monitoring:
  - More analysis of administrative data and the establishment of the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service has definitely improved the situation and NESC does superb work.
  - But the generalist civil service recruitment model is outmoded
  - Why is the evaluation service only economically focussed?
  - Why is little or no independent academic policy research commissioned?
- Weak record of managing contracted out services such as:
  - PPPs
  - Regulation of “voluntary” sector service providers

