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The magazine for  
University of Galway  
alumni, staff and friends

# Cois Coiribe

GLOBAL IMPACT EDITION | SUMMER 24



## In this edition:

Mary Robinson – Trailblazer for Global Justice and Human Rights, **Prof Siobhán Mullally**

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A Global Research Alliance Pushing for Reform in Hospitality Work, **Dr Deirdre Curran**

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Treasuring Irish–US Links in the Climate of America First, **Larry Donnelly**

Island Inspiration: Irish Communities Lead the Way, **Prof Frances Fahy, Dr Benjamin Schmid and Dr Michael Lydon**

Working to Help Europe's Businesses Scale Up, **Prof Esther Tippmann and Prof Jonathan Levie**

...and more.



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# Cois Coiribe *Impact.*

Summer 2024  
Global Impact Edition

The online publication for views and opinions from University of Galway's top academics, researchers and alumni.

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# Foreword from The President Focal ón Uachtarán

Professor Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh,  
President, University of Galway

## Tá an samhradh linn, tráth a gcuireann Gaillimh fáilte roimh an domhan mór.

When John F Kennedy visited Galway in 1963 he said to the gathered crowd that if your eyesight was good enough and the day clear enough, you could see Boston from here. Galway is that unique place, on the edge of Europe but in-between worlds.

Here we know that our city and region are unique. We celebrate the language, culture and landscape that set this place apart. And we are rightly proud of the businesses and industries that define our region too: from our global medtech hub to our creativity and tech sectors, and our vibrant innovation scene.

While we value this sense of place, we are never inward-looking. As a region on the edge, we are naturally eager to reach out and connect, curious about what lies over the horizon.

That's why I'm pleased this summer edition of *Cois Coiribe* is focused on Global Impact. Our university is rooted in a distinctive region but, as a university ranked #1 in Ireland, in the Top 10 in Europe and Top 50 in the world for our impact on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, we are keen to communicate our impact at a global level. Within these articles, you will see how our research is globally interconnected and relevant in and for a rapidly changing world.

We celebrate two women of the West – Mary Robinson and Siobhán McKenna – who have made their own unique impact on the world, and whose legacies we continue to celebrate today.

We mark the impact our students, researchers and alumni are having on human rights and justice in conflict zones around the world, an issue that is sadly so urgent today.

Through our research, we shine a light on how new media and communications can threaten democracy and disrupt social cohesion at home and abroad. At the same time, we celebrate the Irish-US links that have endured over generations.

We also spotlight the work of our Centre for Entrepreneurial Growth & Scaling, which is empowering entrepreneurs to go global with their businesses, a necessary element of scaling. Our university likewise must scale internationally to thrive, which is increasingly seen in our global impact.

In lots of ways, this edition demonstrates how our local engagement can have a global impact. You can read about the Aran Islanders leading the way in the energy transition, or the hospitality workers advocating for decent working conditions. In these stories you will see how our research with communities here and from here can provide a model for others around the globe. And how, with clear insight and on our best days, we can see beyond our horizon.

Bímis bródúil, mar sin, as uathúlacht – agus uaillmhian – na háite seo. Agus bíodh samhradh spreagúil agaibh go léir.





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the latest news and events from your  
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# Dates for *your* 2024 Diary

## 26 July

### Alumni Summer BBQ with Musician

We will hold our annual University of Galway Alumni Summer BBQ and Musician Gavin James in July to coincide with Galway International Arts Festival. Stay connected on our website, social media and emails in the lead-up to summer for details. Click [here](#) for more info.

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## 7 September

### 1984, 1994, 1999 and 2004 Reunion

Did you graduate in 1984, 1994, 1999 or 2004? If so, you will be celebrating the 20th, 25th, 30th and 40th anniversaries of your graduation in 2024. Yes, it is that long ago!

To mark the occasion, we will hold a Reunion Celebration BBQ and party until late, in Sult College Bar on Saturday 7 September 2024.

So, pencil the date into your diary, rev up the social media posts and contact your classmates to ensure as many graduates as possible get back to Galway to celebrate! Click [here](#) to book.

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## 19 September

### Medical Class of 1977 Reunion

Keep an eye on our social media and newsletters for more information. More detail [here](#).

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## Weekend of 20 September

### Medical Class of 1974 Reunion

Keep an eye on our social media and newsletters for more information. More detail [here](#).

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## 12 October

### Cumann Caoga Bliain – 50 Year Reunion

50 Year Reunion for the classes of 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973 and 1974. Keep an eye on our social media and Alumni Links e-newsletter for more information. More detail [here](#).

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# Mary Robinson: Trailblazer for Global Justice and Human Rights

Prof Siobhán Mullally,  
Est. Prof of Human Rights Law and  
Director of the Irish Centre for Human  
Rights at University of Galway

It is not too strong to say that Mary Robinson's life and achievements have been truly exceptional. From her early days as a pioneering barrister, to the Presidency of Ireland, the role of UN Commissioner for Human Rights, and her current role as Chair of the Elders, she has wholeheartedly given her energy to fighting injustice in all its forms, and pursuing peace and equality. In the face of often fierce opposition, she pushed through barriers and upended certainties, always speaking out for those whose voices were not being heard. Here, Professor Siobhan Mullally explores the life and times of a remarkable Mayo woman.

The pursuit of a radical human rights universalism has been at the heart of Mary Robinson's career, as a courageous lawyer, legislator, Ireland's first woman President, and on the international stage, as UN human rights commissioner, Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, and Chair of the Elders.

In each of these roles, Mary Robinson has sought to realise the transformative potential of campaigns for legal change, and of feminist practice rooted in everyday life, in the places and spaces of exclusion and denials of rights.

## Challenging discrimination

Mary Robinson has always been acutely aware of the impact of discriminatory laws on the lives of women and girls. Her legal practice challenged the everyday discrimination that confined women to harmful reproductive roles as bearers of culture, and repositories of tradition. To those who appealed to Ireland's distinctive culture and moral sensibilities, she challenged exclusionary definitions of Irish culture, recalling the deeply gendered and racialised benefits of inclusion and burdens of exclusion. While much of human rights law

addressed violations occurring in the public or political sphere, Mary Robinson challenged gendered boundaries between public and private, expanding the reach of tests of justice and rights to private and family life.

She was keenly aware of the potential of the EEC, as it then was, to break down the gendered inequalities of Irish employment law, and to expand women's participation in paid employment. In 1988, she founded the Irish Centre for European Law, and served as its first Director. She was quick to highlight and express concern about democratic deficits within the EU. Ensuring participation in movements for expanded rights protection and reform, mobilisation for social change was at the heart of her activism.

By presenting the harms experienced as a result of systemic rights violations, Mary Robinson's legal work revealed the failed promises of universal protection of rights. The case of *Airey v Ireland* led to one of the most important judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, securing the right to civil legal aid in family law. More particularly, the Court recognised that states must take positive action to ensure that human rights were not merely 'theoretical or illusory, but practical and effective'.



The pursuit of a radical human rights universalism has been at the heart of Mary Robinson's career, as a courageous lawyer, legislator [and] Ireland's first woman President.

Niamh Ní Charra shows former President of Ireland and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson and President of University of Galway, Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh items from the Mary Robinson archive from the Mary Robinson Centre in Ballina. Credit - Corinne Beatty



## Pursuing equality, human rights and climate justice

In so many landmark cases, Mary Robinson's work contributed to reshaping the representation and participation of women in Irish society. In *De Búrca v Attorney General*, Robinson challenged the exemption of women from jury service as incompatible with the necessary diffusion of rights and duties in a modern democratic society. Further legal challenges led to reforms, hard won, to secure equal treatment in social welfare law (the Hyland case 1988), and to challenge sex discrimination against married women in Irish taxation law (the Murphy case 1982).

At a time when we see expansion of free provision of contraception to women in Ireland, it is important to recall that access to contraception was achieved following a difficult struggle for equal rights. Mary Robinson as Senator advocated for repeal of Section 17 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1935, which made it a crime to sell, or have for sale, or advertise contraceptives, and also categorised contraceptives as prohibited goods. She challenged censorship laws that limited access to information about contraception and family planning.

Restricting access to information, Mary Robinson knew well, was a strategy to limit women's right to the highest attainable standard of health, including reproductive and sexual health. The case of *Open Door and Dublin Well Woman v Ireland* led to a finding that Ireland's restriction on access to abortion information was an unjustified restriction on the right to information, posing a risk to the health of women who were seeking abortions at a later stage in their pregnancy, due to lack of access to information about abortion services.

As President of Ireland, commenting on the X case, in which a 14-year-old girl, a rape victim, was prohibited from travelling with her parents to England for an abortion, she issued a statement on the "very deep crisis within ourselves", calling for "[...] the courage, which we have not always had, to face up to and to look squarely and to say 'this is a problem we have got to resolve'".

Mary Robinson represented Senator David Norris, in a challenge to the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act and, "the existence in Ireland of laws which make certain homosexual practices between consenting adult men criminal offences." The European Court of Human Rights found a violation of the right to private life, and drawing upon the words of Justice Henchy in the Supreme Court, recalled the "subtle but insidiously intrusive and wounding ways" that David Norris and others were denied the necessary expression of their human personality and ordinary incidents of citizenship.

**Calling for [...] the courage, which we have not always had, to face up to and to look squarely and to say 'this is a problem we have got to resolve.'**

In her statement at the opening of the 2001 Durban World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, she stressed that success should be measured by whether or not the outcome brings effective remedies and relief to the victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, noting how closely contemporary forms of racism are bound up with the past.

Speaking at the Irish Centre for Human Rights in 2019, on the launch of the BCL Law and Human Rights programme, and our Human Rights law clinic, Mary Robinson challenged us to radically reform legal education to prioritise teaching on climate justice and the climate crisis. As always, her focus was on practical outcomes and meaningful change. In her campaigning for climate justice, Mary Robinson has highlighted the gendered impact of the climate crisis, calling for gender disaggregated data, and provision of climate finance as critically important to women who face discrimination in control of natural resources. As one of the most prominent climate justice advocates globally, she has called on political leaders to act together to implement urgent, courageous measures to reverse the devastating, life-threatening, consequences of climate change. Climate justice, as she has argued so powerfully, requires a just transition, placing those most affected, at its centre.

**It was that attention to the work of local communities, to everyday lives, that gave her a unique and too often neglected insight into how to work across divisions, conflict, and borders.**



Prof Siobhán Mullally MRIA

## Working for peace

The pursuit of peace has been at the heart of Mary Robinson's human rights advocacy. Commenting, as President of Ireland, on her public handshake with Gerry Adams, then President of Sinn Féin, she noted that her role allowed her to meet people in their work at community level. It was that attention to the work of local communities, to everyday lives that gave her a unique, and too often neglected insight, into how to work across divisions, conflict, and borders.

Mary Robinson has always stressed the necessity of resisting appeals to crisis or emergency to justify denials of human rights. In the aftermath of the attacks on the US on Sept 11 2001, she recalled that human rights law was essential to prevent the use and abuse of emergency and security laws. As Chair of the Elders, Mary Robinson has raised her voice

repeatedly to call for an end to the killing of civilians in Gaza and compliance with international humanitarian law. Commenting on the International Court of Justice's preliminary ruling in *South Africa v Israel*, she has called on Israel to abide by the Court's judgment and implement all the provisional measures with immediate effect, and called on Israel's allies, in particular the United States, to respect the Court's ruling and refrain from any statements or actions that would undermine the Court's authority. That her calls have not been heeded is a deep stain on the principle of humanity at the core of international law. Rather than accepting defeat, however, it is also a reminder of the necessity for continued activism, advocacy and courage to realise the universal promise of human rights and a just peace.

**Mary Robinson has always stressed the necessity of resisting appeals to crisis or emergency to justify denials of human rights.**

**Prof Siobhán Mullally MRIA** is Established Professor of Human Rights Law and Director of the Irish Centre for Human Rights. She is the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children.



# Overview of Mary Robinson's Archive

Niamh Ní Charra,  
Archivist, University of Galway

The 21st of May 2024 marked the 80th birthday of one of Ireland's most influential, celebrated, and hard-working citizens, former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson.

The University of Galway is proud to house her archive, and while work to catalogue it continues, we mark this significant milestone with an overview of the archive's contents and an update on progress. University of Galway is also a partner of The Mary Robinson Centre in the former President's home town of Ballina, Co. Mayo, and together we are honouring her life and legacy by engaging scholars of all ages in the major themes of her archive.

Mary Robinson's archive is a treasure trove of documents and materials that reflect her significant contributions to Ireland and the world.

This immensely rich archive consists of material relating to Mary Robinson's work from 1967 to the present and includes material covering her time as a barrister, legislator, senator, professor, President of Ireland, United Nations (UN) High Commissioner of Human Rights, UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes, UN Special Envoy for Climate Change and for El Niño, Chair of the Elders, founder of Realizing Rights – The Ethical Globalization Initiative, and founder of the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice.

Her archive offers a unique insight into decades of dedicated public service.

## Legal work

Mary Robinson is perhaps best known in Ireland for her role as its first female President (1990-97), but she was breaking records and making waves well before that. In 1967 she became the first female auditor of the Dublin University Law Society (TCD). During her maiden address, 'Law and Morality', she advocated removing the prohibition of divorce from the Irish Constitution, eliminating the ban on the use of contraceptives, and decriminalising homosexuality and suicide.



Booklet on family planning, 1970s





Letter from Senator David Norris thanking Mary for all her help, ahead of the European Court of Human Rights judgment in David Norris & National Gay Federation for Ireland v Ireland, 1988, appears by kind permission of David Norris.

## Senator

At the age of 25, in 1969, she was elected to Seanad Éireann [Ireland's Senate] as an independent candidate and served as Senator for twenty years, during which time many of the issues she raised and campaigned to reform saw some success – contraception had been legalised, women could now serve on juries and the marriage bar on women in the civil service had been lifted.



Selection of photographs taken from Mary Robinson's election flyers for Seanad Éireann, 1969-1983

She was also involved in community campaigns such as the Save Wood Quay campaign in the late 1970s. While the campaign ultimately failed to prevent Dublin Civic offices being built on the site of the Viking settlement, it did lead to a change in the National Heritage legislation and the delays the campaign caused construction allowed for extensive archaeological excavation.



Save Wood Quay campaign poster, 1970s

## Presidency

In 1990, Mary Robinson became the first female President of Ireland, and the youngest president at that time. The archive contains material relating to her election campaign and is a reminder of how unusual her candidacy was considered.

She is widely seen as having revolutionised the role of the Presidency, broadening its scope through her knowledge of constitutional law, developing new political, cultural, and economic links with other countries, reaching out to local communities at home and abroad, and using her platform to bring attention to the suffering of others such as her visit to Somalia in 1992.

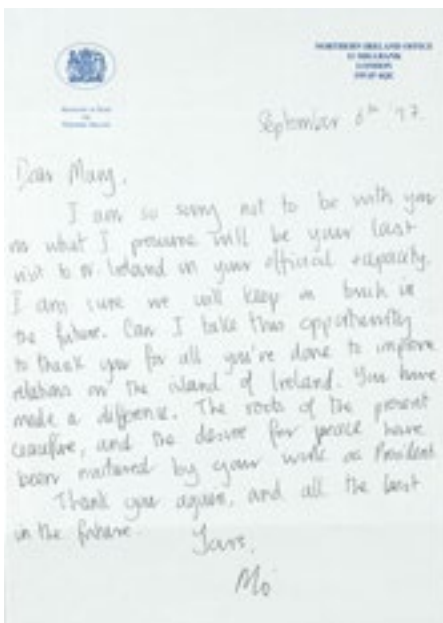


Official Presidential election campaign poster



## Presidential visits

President Robinson's visit to Britain in 1993, where she met Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace, was historic and paved the way for a reciprocal visit hosted by Mary's successor President McAleese. Equally, her numerous visits to Northern Ireland where she reached out to communities on the ground, and politicians of all hues were hailed by people on all sides as vital in the search for peace and laid valuable groundwork for the Good Friday Agreement. She became the first Irish President to make an official state visit to the United States of America while in office and used visits all over the world to promote a modern, progressive Ireland, its culture and its people.

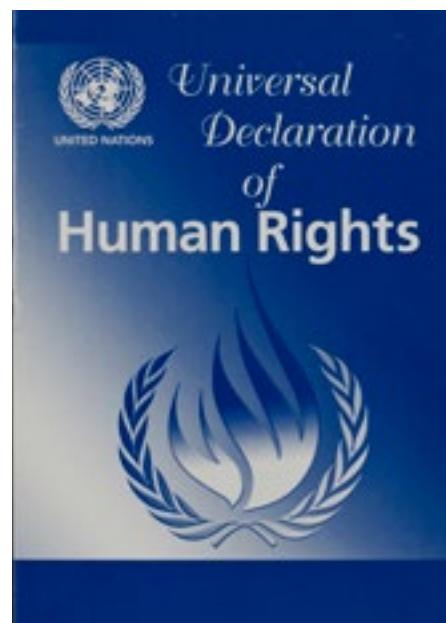


Letter from Mo Mowlam, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, ahead of Mary Robinson's final visit to Northern Ireland as President, September 1997

## The United Nations

Mary Robinson resigned from the presidency a few weeks shy of the end of one term to take up the role of UN High Commissioner of Human Rights, and served until 2002, again reforming and developing the office.

She continues to work with the United Nations through her various roles with other organisations (e.g. The Elders), and from 2013 to 2016 spent time as UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes, UN Special Envoy for Climate Change and UN Special Envoy for El Niño.

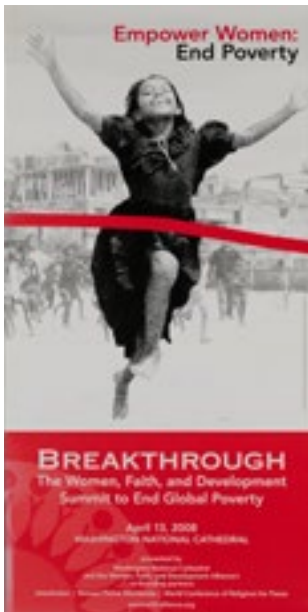


Booklet on United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights



## Realizing Rights – the Ethical Globalization Initiative

In 2002, as she ended her term as High Commissioner for Human Rights, she decided to craft an organisation with similar aims as this UN agency, but with an entirely different institutional framework. A tireless advocate for justice, she was president of this new organisation Realizing Rights – the Ethical Globalization Initiative from 2002 to 2010.



Poster for Summit to End Global Poverty, 2008

## The Elders

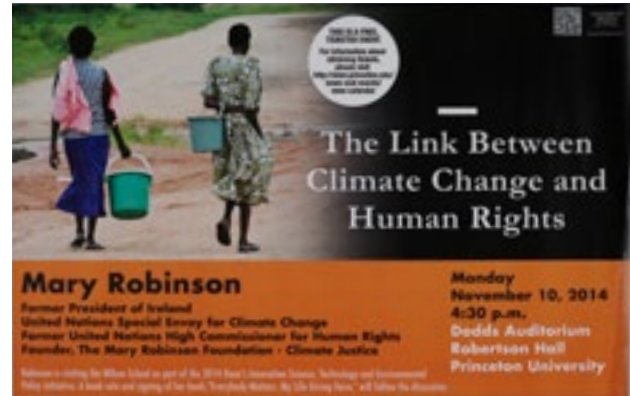
Along with Nelson Mandela, Graça Machel, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and former US President Jimmy Carter, Robinson was a founding member of 'The Elders,' a group of world leaders with a goal of contributing their wisdom to tackle some of the world's toughest problems. She is currently Chair.



The Elders with founder and honorary Elder Nelson Mandela in Johannesburg, May 2010. L-R Graça Machel, Fernando H Cardoso, Desmond Tutu (Chair), Jimmy Carter, Mary Robinson, Kofi Annan, Gro Brundtland, Martti Ahtisaari, Ela Bhatt, Lakhdar Brahimi, Nelson Mandela (seated). © The Elders

## Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice

In 2010 she founded and was chair of the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice until 2019 and continues to push to ensure the most vulnerable communities in the world do not disproportionately suffer from the effects of climate change.



Talk given by Mary Robinson, as founder of Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice, at Princeton University, USA, 2014

## Children's Art

Some of the nicest items in the archive are letters, poems and drawings from children which, it might surprise some, are carefully kept. One lovely drawing by David Horan, features Mary Robinson addressing the United Nations on the crisis in Somalia, as President of Ireland. David was a pupil of Ballyguiltenane National School, Co. Limerick, when a scrapbook of drawings and poems from the pupils was presented to the then President, during a visit to the school in 1997.

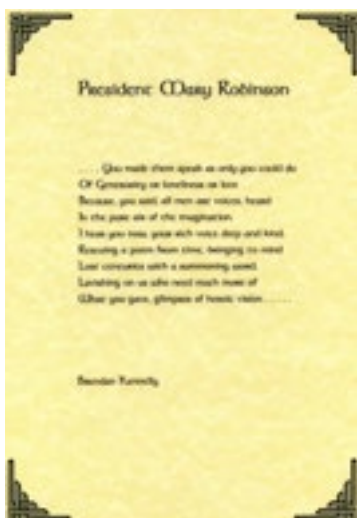


Drawing by 12-year-old David Horan, a pupil at Ballyguiltenane National School, County Limerick, 1997, appears by kind permission of David Horan



## The Arts

Continuing the Arts theme, our former president is a huge admirer and supporter of the Arts, and the archive contains personal correspondence with several poets she considered friends including Séamus Heaney, Paul Durcan, Brendan Kennelly, and Eavan Boland. This poem from Kennelly was most likely written as Robinson's term as President of Ireland was drawing to a close.



Poem by Kerry poet Brendan Kennelly, appears by kind permission of the Brendan Kennelly Literary Trust

## Medal of Freedom

In July 2009, Mary was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honour awarded by the United States. Coincidentally fellow Elder Archbishop Tutu was awarded this honour the same year, along with other noteworthy recipients such as Stephen Hawking, Billie Jean King and Harvey Milk. In presenting the award, former U.S. President Barack Obama said,



Former President Barack Obama presenting Mary Robinson with the Medal of Freedom, 2009

"As a crusader for women and those without a voice in Ireland, Mary Robinson was the first woman elected President of Ireland...Today, as an advocate for the hungry and the hunted, the forgotten and the ignored, Mary Robinson has not only shone a light on human suffering but illuminated a better future for our world."  
– Former US President Barack Obama

The University of Galway continues to celebrate Mary Robinson's legacy, ensuring that her work and its impact are preserved and accessible for future generations. As we mark her 80th birthday, the ongoing efforts to catalogue and share her archive stand as a testament to her enduring influence and commitment to justice and equality. The archive is currently at cataloguing stage and, due to its sheer size at over 670 archive boxes, will be released in tranches. The first tranche of material relating to Mary Robinson's legal work and her time as President of Ireland will be released later this summer.

## Future events

The **Mary Robinson Climate Conference 2024** is taking place 5-7 June in Ballina, Co Mayo. It will be delivered by The Mary Robinson Centre in partnership with the University of Galway and national and local stakeholders and will bring together voices from all sectors, including experts, policymakers, activists, communities and innovators to share climate experiences and discuss pathways for a sustainable future.

**Niamh Ní Charra,**  
Archivist, University of Galway

Niamh Ní Charra is based at University of Galway where she is project archivist for their two largest collections: Mary Robinson and Conradh na Gaeilge archives. She is the Chair for the Archives and Records Association, Ireland, and co-host of the podcast series Archive Nation. She instigated and co-led a project to have over 200 archival terms designated in the Irish language and is the Irish language administrator for the International Council on Archives' Multilingual Archival Terminology Database.

Niamh came to archives from the world of music, is a multi-award-winning musician and composer, she continues to perform and recently released her 5th album. Her work in both the music and archive professions was recently recognised when she was elected to the Irish Traditional Music Archive's board.

# New Media Technology Threatens Democracy – But the Humanities Can Provide a Counterbalance

Dr Kelly Fincham,  
Director, BA Global Media, School of English  
and Creative Arts, University of Galway

When social media first appeared, many embraced it as a great equaliser, but it soon became apparent that the technology, far from being neutral, contained and even magnified the biases of its creators, particularly as regards gender bias and misogyny. The 2014 Gamergate scandal was a missed signal that much technology preferred engagement over ethics. The current controversy around the Scarlett Johansson soundalike AI chat bot illustrates how artificial systems can perpetuate and amplify existing gender bias. As AI spreads rapidly, we must be clear that we are not simply dealing with technology but with a complex instrument that can shape society – and that critical thinking and the humanities can provide a vital counterbalance.

The rapid expansion of social media has transformed how we interact publicly by opening up vast new avenues for engagement, while also revealing deep-seated inequities across those same social media platforms.

Gender-based online violence has become pervasive over the past 10 years and can be seen in the large-scale harassment of women in public roles on social media, particularly those in journalism or politics. The widespread normalisation of misogyny and abuse mirrors and perpetuates systemic inequalities and prompts questions about the obligations of social media platforms to address such gender-based violence, as they – and not the individuals being targeted – are best positioned to prevent and mitigate abuse across their platforms. As new technologies such as generative artificial intelligence become more commonplace there are pressing questions as to how technology companies can address the systemic inequalities that they reflect and reinforce, and what we can learn about doing more to tackle gender issues within technology.

Looking back now, the 2014 online abuse campaign Gamergate highlighted the extent of the entrenched misogyny and served as a crucial missed signal about the inherent biases and gendered nature of social media spaces, while also illustrating the critical need to include the humanities in the development of new media technologies. As we face

a world shaped more and more by technology, it is imperative that we learn from the mistakes of the past and integrate issues of ethical media into new technologies so that we can build more equitable and thoughtful technologies that consider the diverse needs and safety of all users.

## Social media – early promise as an equaliser

Working at the Irish Independent in Dublin some 20-plus years ago I briefly assumed the position of letters editor, a gatekeeping role which included sorting through the sacks of letters delivered to the offices at Middle Abbey Street and deciding which missives were fit to print. Back then, those sealed letters were the only vehicle for readers to make contact with the newspaper or talk about its journalism. Fast forward 25 years and readers can – and do – use all sorts of public social and digital tools to interact with journalists, thus bypassing any human editorial control.

The ability to bypass editors was initially perceived as a net good, as researchers suggested that the addition of newer voices, particularly those from traditionally marginalised communities could enhance the quality of public discourse. This early idealism about rational users operating in a media technology utopia would in fact shape much of the understanding of social media platforms, creating an optimistic vision that dominated the academic literature over the past 15 years.

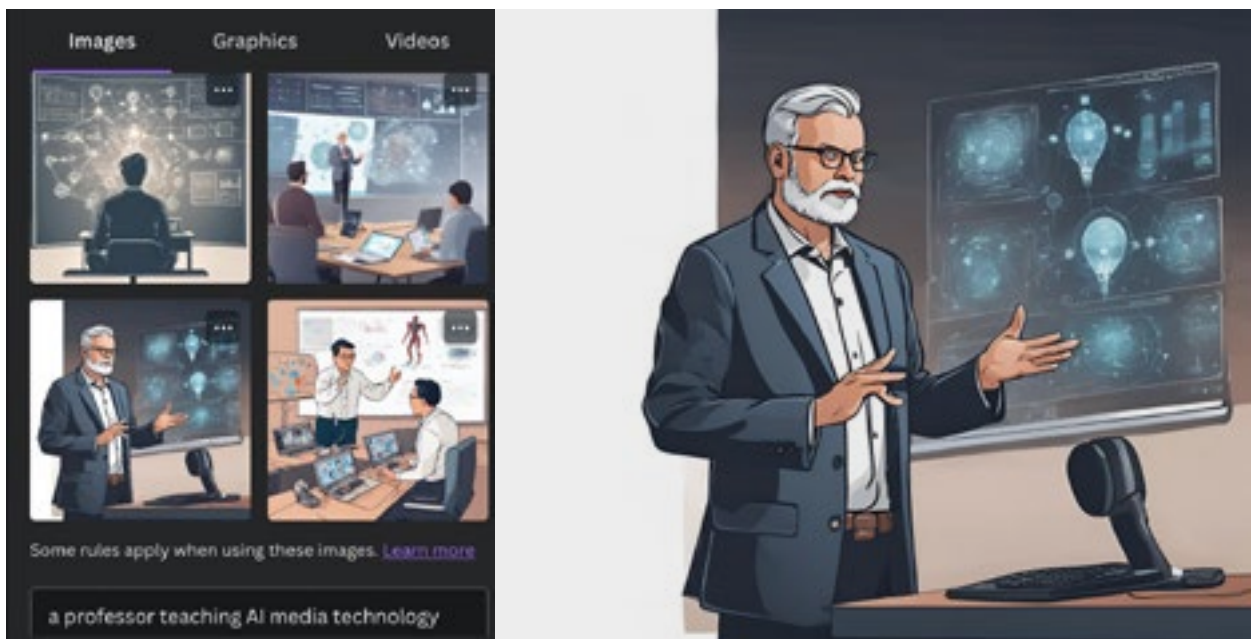


Dr Kelly Fincham

## Anonymity fuels abuse – and media companies profit

However, that optimism and idealism are in short supply now as those same social media platforms have become increasingly unsafe for women or people from under-represented communities, particularly those working in politics and journalism. A 2020 [study](#) from UNESCO reported that 73% of female journalists were targets of online abuse, while a 2024 Irish government [report](#) found that “abuse in political life is prevalent, problematic and is targeted disproportionately at women and minority groups. Online abuse is intensifying and becoming normalised, fuelled by the anonymity provided by digital platforms, and often driven by misogyny, sexism, racism and intolerance.”

Indeed, as Ireland prepares to vote in local elections on 7 June, the [AILG](#) (Association of Irish Local Government) has reported that social media is the main source of safety concerns for elected councillors, with female councillors eight times more likely to be targeted for abuse than their male counterparts. While these figures are clearly shocking, they also highlight the dual burden on women and members of under-represented communities who are compelled to maintain public profiles in these hostile environments if they want to run for public office. Moreover, new research suggests that these high levels of toxic discourse create lucrative revenue streams for the social media platforms, which underscores the difficulties in so much of the so-called public sphere taking place in spaces that are neither regulated nor properly critiqued. ▶



AI generated images for the prompt "A professor teaching AI media technology".

## Gamergate – a warning that went unheeded

Perhaps we should have paid more attention to Gamergate, the 2014 campaign of harassment against women in the predominantly male online gaming community, which now looks like a crucial missed signal in understanding the influence of technological design on gender norms and values. The campaign of online hate, driven under the guise of 'just asking questions' by people who purported to be protesting so-called unethical games journalism – though the ethics claims were spurious at best and most of the women targeted were not even working in journalism – underscored the entrenched belief that gaming was a male preserve and that women should not challenge this traditional space. The harassment, which included threats, heckling and doxxing (where personal documents are released online in an effort to discredit and humiliate), spread rapidly across Twitter and Reddit, where the algorithms escalated the harassment, boosting sensational content to maximise engagement and sharing, all carried out in the absence of human moderators or indeed any ethical safeguards.

The way in which the algorithms promoted the inherently biased content also suggests technological rationality – a 1941 concept from Marcuse, which holds that technology embeds and perpetuates the ideological values of its creators. At a minimum, Gamergate showed how deeply we had been misled by enthusiastic research that had wildly misread the potential for online harm, and failed to understand how technological structures, rather than being neutral, often reinforce societal biases, particularly gender biases. The male-centric biases in the gaming community were not only reflected but amplified by technological designs that favoured engagement over ethical considerations, promoting and amplifying misogynistic content.)

Gamergate could have served as a clear indicator of the urgent need for a deeper examination of the role of social media platforms in shaping cultural and social dynamics, particularly around gender and power. However, the media's inconsistent coverage of the harassment versus the ethics debate muddied the public understanding of these issues, leading to a missed opportunity to address these biases at the time.

**Gamergate showed how deeply we had been misled by enthusiastic research that had wildly misread the potential for online harm, and failed to understand how technological structures, rather than being neutral, often reinforce societal biases, particularly gender biases.**



## A vital role for the humanities

The issues are now pressing. The problems associated with toxic users and 'dark participation' are such that they are now having a chilling effect on public debate and are jeopardising the prospects for gender equality and democratic ideals. But recognising that social media spaces are inherently gendered, we need to consider issues of power, gender, and media if we are to address and transform the inequalities they create.

**The problems associated with toxic users are such that they are now having a chilling effect on public debate and are jeopardising the prospects for gender equality and democratic ideals.**

While media and technology have been intertwined since the emergence of moveable type, the scale and pace of the change wrought by these newer media technologies has been 'nothing short of earth-shattering' and forces all who work in the media technology to think far beyond the practicalities or 'just setting up shop' of learning.

Therefore, studying past events like Gamergate is about understanding and learning from history to inform future technology development such as generative AI, which looms ever larger. Perhaps by looking back to Gamergate we can look forward to ensuring an approach that includes the humanities, to better guide AI development and avoid the mistakes of the past. Gamergate should have been a watershed moment for re-evaluating the impact of gender on digital interactions and the responsibilities of those who oversee and participate in these spaces. Instead, it stands as a lesson on the consequences of underestimating the deeply ingrained biases that media technologies can perpetuate and amplify. In learning from

**While we will never return to the days of the human at the heart of the publishing process it is imperative that we keep the humanities at the heart of media technologies.**

Gamergate, we should treat AI not just as a technological innovation but as a complex social instrument that holds the power to shape societal values and norms, for better or worse. Moreover, those of us who teach and influence the next generation within the media technology space carry a significant obligation to impart these lessons.

While we will never return to the days of the human at the heart of the publishing process, it is imperative that we keep the humanities at the heart of media technologies. The letters editor may be a thing of the past, but the role of critical thinking around new media technologies is more crucial than ever. The recent controversy surrounding the Scarlett Johansson soundalike AI chat bot highlights the urgent need for ethical oversight and human-centred considerations in the deployment of these technologies.

**Kelly Fincham** is a distinguished journalist, academic, and media expert. With an impressive career spanning more than two decades, Kelly has become a leading authority on the impact of digital technologies on media practices and the evolving landscape of the hybrid media system. See her Google Scholar profile [here](#).

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# From Ethiopia to Galway: Pursuing Justice Across the World

Bethlehem Solomon, Kidist Abebe,  
Master's students, University of Galway

What are the chances that the paths of two student activists from Ethiopia would cross thousands of kilometres from home? Serendipity has been at work here in the University to bring together two law students, Bethlehem Solomon and Kidist Abebe, both natives of Ethiopia. Now they have joined forces in pursuit of justice and a more equitable world. Their experiences have convinced them of the need for collaboration to achieve these aims and led to them combining their expertise to build on what each has already achieved.

## Ethiopia, our homeland

From the ancient rock-hewn churches of Lalibela and the historical walls of Harari to the vibrant streets of Galway, our journey has been a testament to unwavering commitment to access to justice. Ethiopia is the origin not only of civilisations but also where justice was once the root.

**As a result of my experiences, I co-founded a local initiative that provides free legal aid and rehabilitation services to underserved communities.**

## Bethlehem's journey: Inspired by a passion for social justice

I, Bethlehem, was born in the small town of Lalibela, Ethiopia, where my formative years were shaped by the stark realities of inequality and the challenges faced by marginalised communities in accessing legal representation. As the years went by, I realised that not only did access to justice need to be improved but also justice itself. Fuelled by a deep passion for social justice, I pursued a law degree at Addis Ababa University, to lay the foundation for my future work. For some years I undertook various internships, from minor community police posts to roles in the Federal Supreme Court, and subsequently the roles of director and legal consultant in both civil society and business associations. These experiences taught me that there are always problems to be solved. It is true what they say: If not you, who? If not now, when?

As a result of my experiences, I co-founded a local initiative that provides free legal aid and rehabilitation services to underserved communities, ensuring that those denied access to justice could have their voices heard and their rights upheld. Currently, the initiative is teaching police officers and prisoners about methods of enhancing human rights, through the medium of legal aid

and case studies. I know there is only so much we can do, but working on a piece of the whole is enough. Doing my Master's at the renowned Irish Centre for Human Rights was a crucial step, as education is essential to finding solutions. I chose the General Master's Degree (LLM) with the aim of acquiring knowledge of various areas of the law. This led to my representing the University of Galway in a commercial arbitration competition. ►

**Doing my Master's at the renowned Irish Centre for Human Rights was a crucial step, as education is essential to finding solutions.**





**Kidist's journey:****Working towards equity**

Similar to Bethlehem, I, Kidist, sought and still seek solutions to at least some of today's problems. For four years I served as a public prosecutor at the Harari Anti-Corruption Commission, playing a pivotal role in combatting corruption and upholding the rule of law even when the environment was not conducive to this. My experiences exposed me to the intricate web of power dynamics and the profound impact that corruption can have on the fabric of society, fuelling my determination to effect realistic change on the ground.

After this, I went into public procurement, where I honed my craft as a legal expert within various government agencies. This exposure gave me a comprehensive understanding of the intricate systems that govern the allocation of resources, and the importance of transparency and accountability in ensuring equitable distribution. Eventually I made it to the Irish Centre for Human Rights at the University of Galway, studying International Migration and Refugee Law and Policy (LLM).

**My experiences exposed me to the intricate web of power dynamics and the profound impact that corruption can have on the fabric of society.**



Ethiopia at a glance; by Laureate Maitre Artist Afewerk Tekle

**Joining forces in pursuit of human rights and justice**

Now, as Master's students at the University of Galway, our individual journeys have converged on a shared path, merging into a collective force for human rights and access to justice. Our chosen field of study is a natural extension of our lifelong commitment, equipping us with the necessary tools to tackle complex issues and navigate the intricate landscapes of law, policy and advocacy.

**The transformative power of women**

Our quest for justice and equality stems from the understanding that women are the bedrock of every community, the very foundation upon which lasting peace and progress are built. We have witnessed first-hand how societies that uplift and empower women are more likely to thrive, as mothers, daughters and sisters become catalysts for positive change. Our roles as legal professionals have taught us that true justice cannot be achieved until the voices of women are heard, their rights protected, and their contributions valued. It is when we, as women, stand firmly on the side of right that communities begin to heal from the wounds of oppression, inequality and injustice. Through our legal work, whether as public prosecutor or in corporate or human rights law, we have aimed to break down barriers and pave the way for a more equitable future. Our stories attest to the transformative power that women possess when enabled to lead, inspire and shape their societies towards greater justice, compassion and unity.





**Collaboration turns a burden into a jewel**

Through our studies we aim to deepen our knowledge, sharpen our skills and forge connections that will enable us to effect meaningful change. Our stories are reminders that determination, coupled with a genuine desire to make a difference, can have a ripple effect that transcends borders and backgrounds. As we forge our paths, our voices resonate in hope, reminding us that the pursuit of a more just world is a collective responsibility that requires the commitment of people from diverse backgrounds and experiences. In sharing our stories, we shed light on the struggles and challenges that countless people face in their pursuit of justice and equal opportunity. Our narratives are calls to action, reminding us of the urgency of addressing the persistent injustices that plague our world and working towards a more equitable, inclusive society for all.

**Our stories are reminders that determination, coupled with a genuine desire to make a difference, can have a ripple effect that transcends borders and backgrounds.**

ህምሳ ሎሚ ለህምሳ ሰው ጌጡ ለአንዱ ሰው ሸክሙ ነው ።

(In Amharic)

**Carrying 50 lemons is a burden for one person but a jewel for 50 people.**

While the weight of pursuing justice may seem an unbearable burden for any one person, when we unite our efforts, that very load becomes a precious jewel that illuminates the path forward for us all. We all need to take on a share of this sacred work, recognising that by dividing up the toil, we multiply our collective strength and hasten towards a fairer world. We hope our stories inspire others and foster a global dialogue that transcends borders, cultures and ideologies, reminding us that we are part of a shared human experience – one that demands our resolute commitment to creating a more just, equitable and compassionate world for all.

# Thriving or Surviving? A Global Research Alliance Pushing for Reform in Hospitality Work

Dr Deirdre Curran,  
College of Business, Public Policy,  
and Law, University of Galway

Research by J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics at University of Galway has found that although workers in the hospitality industry are often passionate about their work, the industry is experiencing a chronic labour shortage. Poor conditions and lack of prospects are some of the key reasons. Now a new global alliance aims to tackle conditions in hospitality through educating policy makers and industry leaders about what is needed to ensure 'decent work', and Ireland is positioned to be a leader in the field.

For more than a quarter century I have been teaching young people about the employment relationship, how that relationship works, what happens if/when it goes wrong, where to look for advice or support. Over that time, I have come to know, through my students, that the employment relationship in hospitality and tourism poses unique challenges by its very nature.

#### Features of the hospitality industry

There is no doubting the importance of this industry to the Irish economy, not least as a very significant provider of jobs. CSO data for the final quarter of 2023 show that accommodation supported 50,300 jobs directly, and food and beverage service activities supported 132,800 jobs. We must also acknowledge that the industry has come under increasing pressures, as detailed in this analysis: 'domestic consumer spending is under some pressure; there is a shortage of accommodation [...]; the costs of doing business have increased significantly [...], particularly labour costs and energy; labour shortages are very obvious; and the cost base is being damaged by a number of State-induced upward pressures on labour costs, which are set to be rolled out this year and in the coming years.'<sup>1</sup>

The hospitality industry is overwhelmingly comprised of small, fragmented establishments, often owner-managed by people who are passionate about food/service, but not necessarily trained to manage people. In contrast, many of the

larger hotels are owned/managed by business conglomerates who may not have direct experience of the sector.

Hospitality establishments are traditionally hierarchical. Activity lulls are interspersed with bouts of intense pressure, in what is a highly competitive, high-risk market. The predominantly low-paid, less-skilled, non-unionised workforce is bottom-heavy with women, migrants and transient labour.

#### Poor working conditions and breaches of employment rights

However, this industry is historically infamous for low pay and poor working conditions. Everyone I speak to about my research – from politicians to employers, customers, workers and students – knows there's truth in what the data is telling us. Many of my students work in hospitality and tourism to support their education expenses. They know what the issues are, and they have wonderfully creative solutions, if only someone would listen.

A proportion of the workforce is transient but many people would like to make a decent living from their work. Similarly to employers, workers are also subject to sharply rising costs of living including accommodation, child-care, transport, energy, etc. Evidence suggests that it is impossible to live on the minimum wage and yet employer representatives consistently decry any move to increase it.<sup>2</sup> The current minimum wage is €12.70 per hour, but the 'living wage', benchmarked against the actual cost of living, currently stands at an elusive

€14.80 per hour. My basic contention is this – convert hospitality jobs to ‘decent jobs’ and people will stay.

Regarding employment rights, too often in hospitality work the ‘minimum wage’ is treated as a maximum and recommendations to increase it meet with warnings of impending business closures. As a trade unionist said to me recently, if your business model relies on low pay and poor working conditions, then perhaps it is time to rethink the model.

Breaches of employment rights are common in this sector. My 2021 research indicates that 70% of respondents did not get their entitlement to a Sunday premium, 52% did not get their entitlement to rest breaks and 43% did not get a proper contract on commencing employment.<sup>3</sup> The law represents a **minimum standard** that all workers in Ireland are entitled to.

Workers in ‘accommodation and food services’ are disproportionately represented in the statistics for low pay, and consistently earn the lowest ‘average hourly earnings’ of all sectors.<sup>4</sup> On the job security front, workers in ‘accommodation and food’ were second highest in terms of insecure work, and second most anxious about future prospects.<sup>5</sup>

There are two primary issues regarding employment rights. Firstly, workers are often unaware of their legal rights and how to source information. Secondly, enforcement is an issue. Workers in precarious sectors such as hospitality are reluctant to raise issues of legal rights for fear of negative consequences. The primary enforcement body is the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), which can ‘visit places of employment and carry out investigations on behalf of the Commission in order to ensure compliance with employment-related legislation.’<sup>6</sup> In its 2022 Annual Report, the WRC Inspectorate reported carrying out 5,820 inspection visits, detecting over 5,700 contraventions of legislation. Inspections in ‘Beverage Service Activities’ revealed non-compliance of 49%, in ‘Food Service Activities’ 46%, and in ‘Hotels’ 30%. These non-compliances resulted in recovery of over €700,000 in unpaid wages.<sup>7</sup>



Dr Deirdre Curran

**Everyone strives for, and I would argue is entitled to, a decent job. Scholars and organisations like the ILO have grappled to identify the elements of ‘decent work’, and generally agree that it includes a fair income; some degree of job security; working conditions that are psychologically and physically safe; legal protections and opportunities for voice.**

#### **The elements of decent work**

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), ‘decent work’ underpins ALL of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>8</sup> I would argue everyone is entitled to a decent job. Scholars and organisations like the ILO have grappled to identify the elements of ‘decent work’, and generally agree that it includes a fair income; some degree of job security; working conditions that are psychologically and physically safe; legal protections and opportunities for voice. While those ingredients may seem logical and unsurprising, my research suggests a shortfall in many aspects, for many workers. ►

### Providing a voice to workers

It became clear as we emerged from the pandemic that those who left the industry did so for better working conditions, rather than because they wanted to leave per se. If the challenges of low pay, unsocial hours, lack of career progression, absence of employee voice, etc. were addressed, there would arguably be no chronic labour shortage in this sector. My research shows that hospitality workers generally really like their jobs. Because the work is often pressured and intense, workers form close, lasting bonds with co-workers, who become the hub of their social network. They love the satisfaction of delivering good service and acknowledgement from customers, whether or not in the form of a tip. They love the ‘buzz’ of the ‘performance’ that is hospitality work, and the dynamic nature of each shift.

Research also indicates that hospitality workers know what is wrong and how to make it right, but they have no voice platform. Fewer than 7% of hospitality workers were members of a trade union in 2021, the lowest density of all sectors.<sup>9</sup> My research, which essentially represents the voice of workers, informed the 11 recommendations of the 2022 government report *Working Conditions and Skills Shortages in Ireland's Tourism and Hospitality Sector*. I firmly believe that these recommendations have the capacity to transform the industry.<sup>10</sup> I was also able to use evidence-based arguments to positively influence new legal protections around tips.<sup>11</sup> Undoubtedly, there is a better way. We need more evidence-based discussions on what is working well and what needs to change. We need more ethical leadership from within the industry.



GHRA TUD hosted by GHRA

### The Global Hospitality Research Alliance

An exciting recent development has been the evolution of the **Global Hospitality Research Alliance (GHRA)**. This expanding collective of scholars using “intellectual activism” to contribute to evidence-informed debate on decent work in hospitality has grown steadily out of the research I began in Ireland. This research was replicated in Scotland, Norway, New Zealand and Australia, giving us the start of a comparative database by which to learn and grow. The Alliance currently has 62 academics from 21 countries, and projects including a book and an exploration of the experience of Ukrainian refugees in hospitality work in Ireland and Scotland.

In May 2024 members of the Alliance will visit our campus for a series of research-informed events. Dr Shelagh Mooney from Auckland University of Technology will act as keynote speaker for a symposium on Mental Health and Gender Challenges in Commercial Kitchens. Dr Mooney will be joined by an expert panel, and it is hoped the event will attract a wide range of industry experts who will contribute to an emerging plan of action. In 2024 the GHRA will launch a global study of hospitality working conditions across 10 countries. This comparative data will facilitate shared learning about what’s working and what needs to change.

**Improving working conditions is not a charity argument; it’s a business case. Better conditions, career prospects and work-life balance, and increased employee voice, will pay dividends for employees, employers, customers and society at large.**





GHRA Launch

### Ireland's leadership role in moving toward decent work

The labour shortages in the hospitality and tourism industry after the pandemic have proved a potential tipping point (pun intended) for hospitality work. Moreover, it is unlikely that Generations Z and Alpha will tolerate current hospitality working conditions. Clearly, change is needed. The economy will always need hospitality. While the retail industry can pivot online, human beings will always feel the need to socialise over food and drink. Why not make hospitality an industry that capitalises on worker passion, by offering decent work that can sustain long-term and rewarding careers? Improving working conditions is not a charity argument; it's a business case. Better conditions, career prospects and work-life balance, and increased employee voice, will pay dividends for employees, employers, customers and society at large. My vision for Ireland's hospitality and tourism sector is that, through the Global Alliance, it moves toward becoming a recognised global leader and an exemplar for the industry worldwide.

Clearly, change is needed. The economy will always need hospitality. While the retail industry can pivot online, human beings will always feel the need to socialise over food and drink.

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# The Future Legacy of (Irish) Theatre: Introducing Nouf Rafea, the Inaugural Siobhán McKenna Award Winner

**Dr Charlotte McIvor,**  
Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor in Drama  
and Theatre Studies, University of Galway

**Nouf Rafea,**  
Theatre Director, Writer, Scenographer,  
Storyteller and Educator.

## Nouf Rafea in Conversation



Signed promotional image  
of Siobhán McKenna

The legacy of the wonderful Siobhán McKenna, actor and University of Galway alumna, lives on in many ways, not least in the recent theatre award created by her family in her honour. Its first recipient, multitalented Nouf Rafea, speaks openly about her journey to date, her affinity with languages, and her fellow feeling with Siobhán McKenna as a theatremaker, linguist and activist.

Siobhán McKenna remains one of Irish theatre and film's most recognisable and iconic faces globally, even as her own beginnings root her firmly in the west of Ireland and at the University of Galway specifically. McKenna's individual success in the mid-to-late 20th century not only in theatre, but also in film and television internationally, was pivotal in laying the foundation for the ongoing success of 21st-century Irish artists globally. This is visible through the stratospheric recent success of individual stars, like recent Best Actor Academy Award winner Cillian Murphy, or the presence of multiple Irish novelists crowding out the Booker Prize longlist in 2023 (including University of Galway's Elaine Feeney), before Limerick author Paul Lynch ultimately took the top prize. ▶

Multitalented Nouf Rafea, speaks openly about her journey to date, her affinity with languages, and her fellow feeling with Siobhán McKenna as a theatremaker, linguist and activist.



Nouf Rafea





Nouf Rafea instructing an audience before her performance *Harmonious Polyphony: What is Pain?* at the O'Donoghue Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance, University of Galway, April 2024. Photograph: David Qualter.

## The Siobhán McKenna Scholarship Award and Lecture Series

Recognising the ongoing draw of Siobhán McKenna's star power in driving the future of Irish theatre and arts, both locally and globally, her family recently established the Siobhán McKenna Scholarship Award and Lecture Series to support the next generation of theatremakers at University of Galway in celebration of the 100th anniversary of McKenna's birth on 24 May, 1922. This article introduces the first Scholarship Award winner, theatremaker Nouf Rafea.

While McKenna would not herself have used the term theatremaker (a more contemporary term which implies that an individual is able to work collaboratively, with mastery of multiple theatrical crafts), it is difficult now not to identify her as such, particularly if we hope to discover the kind of individual who might someday follow in her footsteps through the Scholarship Award for the MA in Drama and Theatre Studies.

McKenna was not only a world-renowned actress of stage and screen but also a theatre director, translator and activist, who served on the Council of State and spoke

out on causes such as the battle against apartheid in South Africa. It is difficult to do justice to the range and depth of her legacy both in Ireland and internationally. Much lies yet to be discovered about her contribution to theatre, film and the wider public sphere in the University of Galway's [Siobhán McKenna archive](#).



Siobhán McKenna at Council of State meeting, 1975.

An emerging theatremaker today might feel that Siobhán McKenna is an impossible act to follow, even within the university where she gained her very first acting experience through involvement with *An Taibhdhearc* as a student.

Indeed, the scholarship endowed in her name looks for the successful

candidate to provide strong evidence of future potential across a range of skills and types of theatrical engagement including acting, directing, translation, politically engaged arts and/or use of indigenous/native language(s) in the arts. We assumed applicants would excel in a few of these areas, not all of them, as McKenna herself had. However, our inaugural Siobhán McKenna Award winner, Nouf Rafea, immediately proved us wrong. Rafea is not yet the household name that McKenna remains, but we introduce her now and will watch her progress with great interest.



Siobhán McKenna with Lelia Doolan in *'St Joan of the Stockyards*, Dublin Gate Theatre Productions, Gaiety Theatre, Dublin, 1961.



## Introducing Nouf Rafea

**N**ouf Rafea is a multifaceted theatremaker currently undertaking the MA in Drama and Theatre Studies at University of Galway as the inaugural Siobhán McKenna Award winner in 2023–2024.

She has worn many hats as a director, theatremaker, producer, educator, writer, performer, scenographer and storyteller, and is an emerging theatre scholar. Originally from Syria, her theatrical journey began in childhood before she pursued a degree in Scenography (the study of all elements of theatre design and staging) from the Higher Institute of Theatrical Arts in Damascus, Syria in 2015. She expanded her horizons through the Theatre in Education programme at the ArtEZ School of the Arts in Arnhem, the Netherlands in 2022. Continuing her artistic trajectory, she pursued the Music Theatre MA course at the same school before coming to Galway in August 2023 to begin her studies. During her time in the Netherlands, Rafea established “Collective Pitjes United” in 2020, amplifying themes of womanhood and oppression on stage: [www.pitjesunited.nl](http://www.pitjesunited.nl).

Rafea’s ultimate mission is to create interdisciplinary theatre work on a global scale moving between Syria, the Netherlands and now Ireland, much like McKenna’s own multi-continent impact and travels. Rafea’s intercultural theatre practices centre women’s experiences, exploring a spectrum from independence to oppression and all experiences in-between, as she takes on diverse roles in her work including performer, director, curator, scenographer and writer depending on the project. Balancing building educational theatre techniques with achieving high artistic quality, Rafea seeks to amplify unheard stories as a way to “unite, laugh, educate and lend a hand”.



Nouf Rafea in *When Silence Seeps!* A music theatre performance exploring silence. “Listen to the silence. It has so much to say.” – Rumi. Photograph: Moon Saris.

### Nouf’s story

In the following section Nouf talks candidly about her journey to where she is today.

**Cois Coiribe:** How did you come to theatre and the arts?

**Nouf Rafea:** I grew up in an artistic family, with music in our genes. When I was four, I started learning to play the violin. I loved music but also loved theatre, weaving stories, drawing, acting and dancing. Art flowed through my veins in a rebellious way, confirming what my father said when I was born: “This girl will be a rebel.” I resisted the path my family envisioned for me, steering away from the purely musical trajectory they had in mind. Though I adored creating music, it was the immersive world of theatre that truly spoke to me – a medium through which I could authentically express myself. My rebellious spirit found expression in unconventional ways; I remember defiantly sketching on the walls of my room, a silent protest that eventually led me to pursue studies in Scenography. Yet, even then, I

hungered for more. I craved genuine connections with others, a desire to collaborate and create art that resonated deeply with people, addressing societal issues and shattering stereotypes. For me, theatre embodies what Augusto Boal famously described as “a rehearsal for the revolution”.

Regardless of whether the actions unfold within fictional realms, what truly matters is their ability to incite real change. Theatre, to me, is not merely entertainment but a powerful tool for social transformation – a platform where action takes precedence over passivity, where voices are amplified and heard.

**CC:** What is your artistic process?

**NR:** I belong to everywhere and nowhere at the same time. I belong to Syria, the Netherlands, and Galway at the same time.

Every unheard story is my story, one that I must share, engaging my audience across the vast universe to unite beyond all boundaries set for ►



*WijZijnAlleen!* A Pitjes United performance directed by Nouf Rafea about long-distance best friends sharing their obstacles, abuses and loneliness through phone calls. Photograph: Wael Qadriyeh

us, bridging the gap between us as human beings, making it smaller and more reconcilable.

My artistic process always begins with a true story, an unheard real story. That usually determines the theme I'm going to work on. After that, I start to search for puzzle pieces from diverse sources, including literature, history, personal experiences, music, visual art and other theatre works. Collaboration is also a crucial aspect of my process; I thrive on exchanging ideas and perspectives with fellow artists, as it enriches the creative journey. Once I have a solid foundation, I begin to experiment, allowing intuition to guide me as I shape the work through rehearsals, workshops and revisions.

Although my creative process seems well-structured, it is not organised at all. The diverse voices in my head – I call them monkeys – are always at a party, making my life a hellish heaven. That is the bittersweet feeling in the process that I love. Most of the time, my creative process is too chaotic and unstable, like life itself. Believe it or not, the minds of creative people are always in dialogue with different inner voices, and others' perspectives, responding consciously or

unconsciously to actions around them. It takes a long time of practice to understand how the creative process works. In the end, I concluded that all I need is to practise embracing the messiness in the process, loving my "selves", and listening to the multi-voices in my mind without controlling them to achieve a polyphonic creative process. The chaotic, unstable life and the inner active voices – my monkeys – are the core of my creativity. Firstly as a human being, and then as a theatremaker and artist. I consciously chose to give free space to my beautiful monkeys, to let them be together in an incredible composition to create an authentic theatre work.

**CC:** How has winning this award influenced you during this year as you've learned about McKenna's life?

**NR:** Winning this award has been a weighty responsibility that I carry on my shoulders, as the name of Siobhán McKenna must resonate through our time and into the next generations, much like other strong women in history who fought tirelessly for equality and justice. Just envision her courage during an era when women's voices were often weak, their rights denied, and

their lives harsh. Yet, despite these challenges, McKenna fearlessly instigated change, leaving an indelible mark as a female actor, director and activist, asserting her presence in the world of theatre and film.

For me as the inaugural recipient of this scholarship, it serves as affirmation, reminding me that my voice must resound loudly through my work as a theatremaker. We, as women of this era, must carry forward the legacy of those powerful women throughout history, immortalising their journey and struggle, and continuing to pave the way for future generations of women. Through this cumulative effort, we inch closer to a just society.

McKenna's life inspired me to embody the ethos "let your work speak for itself". It prompted me to ponder deeply on my aspirations as a theatremaker. Is it for fame? No, as that is merely a byproduct that will naturally follow if the work is done well and consistently. Is it about wealth? Theatre is for those who prioritise simplicity and aren't driven by the pursuit of riches in this capitalist and materialistic era. What I truly seek are art itself, rights and dignity.



Nouf Rafea's *Harmonious Polyphony: What is Pain?*, O'Donoghue Theatre, University of Galway, April 2024. Photograph: David Qualter.

While not all activists are theatremakers, every theatremaker must necessarily be an activist, responding to injustices around them, advocating for human rights, and amplifying the voices of the marginalised for a better life.

When effecting change, we need individuals like Siobhán McKenna, who boldly ask *Why?* and engage in conversations that can lead to meaningful transformations. Together, we have the power to bring about changes for the next generation.

The perpetual question we must grapple with is: Can a performance or a theatremaker truly change the world? Perhaps not in its entirety, but if every theatremaker believes that their voice cannot enact change, then surely no change can occur. We must all believe that each small step taken has the potential to make a difference. From my perspective, I steadfastly believe that my work can contribute to making the world a better place. In

the essence of theatre, where rules are non-existent, we have the power to create our own, and thus, change the world.

While we are all unique, we are not all born with the same capacity. Some among us are braver, less afraid, bearing the weight of the world's issues on their shoulders. They draw their energy and strength from their anger and rebellion against injustice, poverty and wars. I am grateful for possess this capacity, and I will always advocate for justice through my work, proudly wearing the name of McKenna like a medal on my chest.

**CC:** Language and the Irish language were very important to McKenna as a native Irish speaker. What is the role of multilingualism in your artistic and personal life?

**NR:** Multilingualism plays a significant role in both my artistic and personal life. I speak three languages: Arabic (my mother tongue), English and Dutch, and I

am currently learning Spanish. Who knows, maybe Irish will be next. In my childhood, I often dreamed of speaking more than six languages. I am captivated by the idea of expressing myself in different ways through various languages, as it offers insights into how people think through their native tongues.

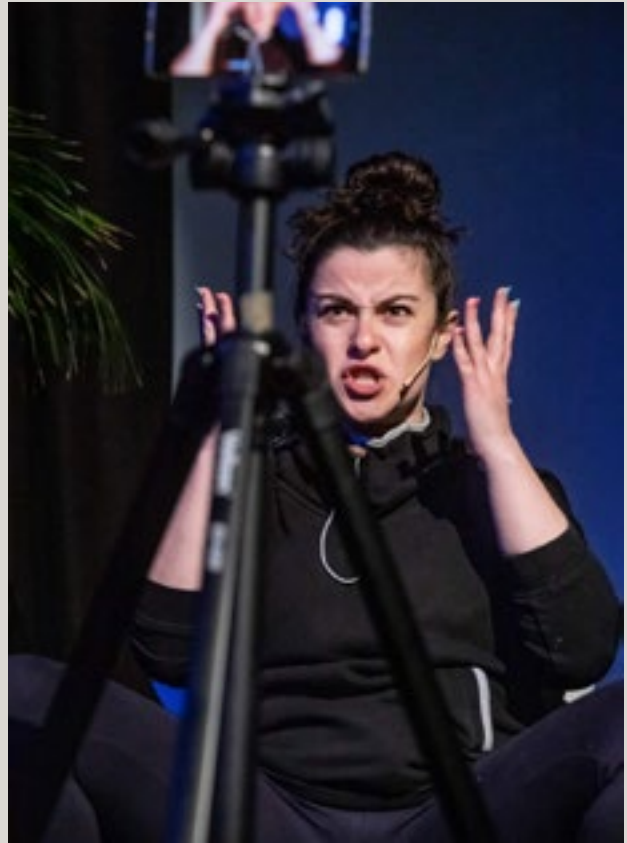
I speak English and Dutch well, but I do make mistakes. I accept them and use them as theatrical elements in my work as a theatremaker. Moreover, I infuse a sense of poetry from my mother tongue, Arabic, into my expressions in other languages.

As a theatremaker, I strive to shift the concept of theatre from a national to an international form by collaborating with artists from diverse cultural backgrounds and incorporating their native tongues into my plays and performances. Embracing multilingualism allows me to connect with a broader spectrum of audiences and delve into the intricate layers of language and identity within my work. ►





Nouf Rafea (centre) in *Bloody Marie* with Pitjes United, a performance exploring menstrual stigma. Photograph: SpecialPixel.



Nouf Rafea in *Prisoner H*, an absurd monologue based on the real story of a prisoner struggling in a loop between the desire for freedom and the fear of it. Photograph: RiboetVerhalenkunst.

**CC:** What do you see as the next steps or your biggest hopes for the next phases in your career and art?

**NR:** My primary goal is to secure funds for Collective Pitjes United, which I established in 2020 in Amsterdam. While we've received funds for individual projects, formalising the company is essential for sustained support. Pitjes United is a women's collective of interdisciplinary theatre dedicated to bringing authentic stories of women to the stage. Our mission is global, aiming to amplify oppressed women's voices worldwide for an equitable future and bring themes of oppression and womanhood onto the stage.

**We must all believe that each small step taken has the potential to make a difference. From my perspective, I steadfastly believe that my work can contribute to making the world a better place.**

Another aspect I am pursuing is founding an organisation that supports women in starting their own ventures, not only in the arts but also in the other careers that they want; the goal is giving them the tools they need to make their plan, ask for funds, and take the first step. By providing them with the necessary tools to establish their own businesses, I aim to empower them, encourage them, and work alongside them to achieve their goals.

I believe that fostering a healthy generation begins with empowering women. By educating and supporting women, helping them to feel confident and empowered, we lay the foundation for a brighter future. It is through women that we can cultivate a generation that thrives, as they play a pivotal role in shaping families, communities and societies as a whole.

**The chaotic, unstable life and the inner active voices – my monkeys – are the core of my creativity. Firstly as a human being, and then as a theatremaker and artist. I consciously chose to give free space to my beautiful monkeys, to let them be together in an incredible composition to create an authentic theatre work.**

View [here](#) University of Galway's launch of the new scholarship in honour of the renowned actress of stage and screen Siobhán McKenna.

Learn more about the [Siobhán McKenna Award](#) and the [MA in Drama and Theatre Studies](#) at University of Galway.

You can also schedule a visit to the publicly available Siobhán McKenna Archive [here](#).





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# Treasuring Irish–US Links in the Climate of America First

## Same candidates but a different battle

Larry Donnelly,  
Lecturer above the bar, School of Law,  
University of Galway

Larry Donnelly, an American attorney, University of Galway lecturer and writer, has a foot in both the Irish and US camps, so to speak. Here he offers his views on the complex electoral process that is the US Presidential election, and the ‘unknowns’ that could derail either candidate. Donnelly argues that despite their critical differences, most Americans agree on one point – America first. For Ireland, given our critical and treasured connections with the US, this means being aware of, and not naïve about, what is occurring across the Atlantic.

**Doubts of varying sorts as to each man’s fitness to serve a four-year term in the White House are common.**

For some time now, repeated polls have indicated that overwhelming majorities of the American people would prefer if neither Joe Biden nor Donald Trump be the 2024 presidential nominees of the Democratic and Republican parties, respectively. They are considered too old, too male, too pale and too stale by a broad, ideologically diverse range of the citizenry. Doubts of varying sorts as to each man’s fitness to serve a four-year term in the White House are common.

Yet in this context, Biden, the actual incumbent, and Trump, the de facto incumbent in the eyes of many in his party, cruised to victory with little by way of opposition. That Biden was able to do so is an indictment of ‘the system’ – for lack of a better way of describing it. It is simply not true that there were no other eminently capable putative standard bearers.

California Governor Gavin Newsom and Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, for instance, would have been formidable. Team Biden nonetheless managed to box off all credible challengers with the aid of the Democratic National Committee, insiders who’ve benefitted from their association with Biden over decades, and big money donors.



Plenty of observers, this one included, believed that in the GOP (Grand Old Party), Trump-loving right-wingers would thank the New York billionaire for cutting taxes on the wealthy and relegating *Roe v Wade* to the history books, but in the face of swirling clouds of legal trouble and additional unfortunate political realities, opt for a newer model.

Perhaps someone like Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, whose policies are undeniably ‘Trumpist’ but who doesn’t carry the same amount of baggage, would be anointed a fresher messenger for the different brand of conservatism so favoured by the grassroots and also embraced by cohorts of improbable Republican voters, such as Latinos and African American males. Those of us who miscalculated grossly underestimated the cult of personality that has sprung up around Trump and the unwavering loyalty he commands from adoring adherents, which is the secret envy of politicians of all stripes everywhere.

And so here we are, staring down the barrel of a rematch. It has been widely projected that this will be an uninspiring, downright ugly fight

in which a substantial swathe of the citizenry will ultimately tick the box for the man they deem the least bad option.

It seems destined to be a very tight contest. The aggregated data continues to show that Trump, who holds slim advantages in all of the battleground states, maintains a slight edge. That said, Biden has been gaining incrementally. The following are three matters – not to mention any number of unknowable surprises that could emerge closer to Election Day – 5 November – that could tip the balance. ▶

**It has been widely projected that this will be an uninspiring, downright ugly fight in which a substantial swathe of the citizenry will ultimately tick the box for the man they deem the least bad option.**





## Issues that could tip the balance

First, there are the protests on college and university campuses throughout the United States motivated by the anger of students at both the failure of their institutions' leaders to sufficiently condemn the objectively disproportionate response of Israel to the horrific attacks carried out by Hamas on 7 October 2023, and the fact that these institutions' endowments benefit financially from investments tied to Israel. The students are also furious at the Biden administration's pro-Israeli stance.

The US has always been Israel's staunchest ally. A Pew Research poll reveals that roughly 40% of Americans approve of Israel's conduct of the war to date. A questionnaire put to the Irish electorate would produce a drastically divergent result. At any rate, the protests hint that many young people see the Middle East very differently to their elders. President Biden desperately needs voters aged 18 to 35 to turn out and support him to win. Any diminution in

their backing, which could take the form of declining to cast a ballot or opting for a third-party candidate, could be fatal to his chances.

Second is the spoiler role that these third-party candidates might play. They, too, could wound the current Commander in Chief fatally. The best known is Robert F Kennedy Jr, the scion of Democratic Party royalty and an environmental lawyer who has espoused conspiracy theories about vaccines and other topics.

There has been speculation that he will hurt Trump and Biden equally. The opinion surveys, though, fairly consistently, demonstrate that, by peeling away some Democrats who revere his surname and aren't fully tuned in, as well as another faction that is disenchanted by their party's leftward lurch, Kennedy poses a bigger threat to the sitting president. The African American academic Cornell West and Jill Stein of the Greens are also mounting long-shot bids. None of them will get a

sizeable vote, but there is the possibility that they could collectively tilt a key state or two in Trump's direction.

Lastly, there is the great uncertainty of the potential impact a conviction would have on Donald Trump's standing among the public. Nothing has stuck to him thus far. The prosecution's case in New York is legally tenuous. Polling in the wake of the Iowa caucus and New Hampshire primary earlier this year, however, suggested that a jury verdict against him would make a cadre of Republicans rethink their allegiance to Trump.

Even the drift of a small number could cost him dearly in a tight battle. Major, damaging developments in the pending matters in Washington DC, Georgia and Florida appear highly unlikely at this juncture. Still, watch that space.

## Post-election concerns

Predictions, primarily of a negative variety, are being offered about happenings in January 2025 after the 47th POTUS (President of the United States) is sworn in. In particular, onlookers around the globe fear what lies in store for America itself and for places further afield if Donald Trump gets four more years in the Oval Office, freed from all political constraints and surrounded by sycophants, not experts.

Regardless, if the people decide this is too risky, the truth is that Joe Biden as 47th President would be bequeathed a thankless task. Recent visitors to the US comment to me that the cost of living and price of consumer items have gone through the roof, that the disenfranchised and devastated increasingly seek refuge in substance abuse as the odour of marijuana permeating the air manifests, that the gulf dividing haves and have-nots is palpable and that the prospect of third-level education without the assumption of mammoth debt is beyond the reach of all save the super-rich.

**Predictions, primarily of a negative variety, are being offered about happenings in January 2025 after the 47th POTUS (President of the United States) is sworn in.**

## 'America first' is key


Accordingly, it is not surprising that Americans aren't as concerned about events transpiring beyond their borders. They want attention, and consequent action, focused on all that ails their own country. The electorate quite clearly wants the politicians they elect to put America first. They want American corporations to pay tax at home, locate their headquarters in the US and employ Americans. They want the US to avoid foreign entanglements, military or otherwise, unless they are a national threat or clear and present danger to America's security. Democrats and Republicans alike are going to be responsive to this now dominant public mood.

In this context and given the interconnectedness at every conceivable level between Ireland – and the region this university is anchored in, specifically – and the US, which millions of us treasure, we need to be cognisant of, not naïve about, what is occurring across the Atlantic.

There is insufficient justification, in my estimation, for pessimism or gloom with respect to the future. But there is ample cause for us stakeholders to redouble our efforts to preserve all that has been so mutually beneficial – culturally, economically, educationally and otherwise – as America continues to recalibrate its relationship with the rest of the world.

**There is insufficient justification, in my estimation, for pessimism or gloom with respect to the future. But there is ample cause for us stakeholders to redouble our efforts to preserve all that has been so mutually beneficial [...] as America continues to recalibrate its relationship with the rest of the world.**

**Larry Donnelly** is a Boston-born and -educated attorney, a Lecturer and Director of Clinical Legal Education in the School of Law and a regular media contributor on politics, current affairs and law in Ireland and the US.

 @LarryPDonnelly

# Island Inspiration: Irish Communities Lead the Way in Restoring People's Sense of Agency in the Energy Transition

**Professor Frances Fahy,**  
Professor of Geography,  
University of Galway

**Dr Benjamin Schmid,**  
Post Doctoral Researcher,  
Geography, University  
of Galway

**Dr Michael Lydon,**  
Communications and  
Impact Officer, Geography,  
University of Galway

Many people engage in some form of energy citizenship, sometimes unknown to themselves. Communities on the Aran Islands are enthusiastically embracing the concept of energy citizenship through a civil society organisation that brings together the residents of the three islands with the aim of becoming self-sufficient in clean, locally owned energy from sun and wind, as well as helping to build the local economy of the islands. Their vision can pave the way for local economies globally.

In March 2024, University of Galway researchers Professor Frances Fahy, Dr Benjamin Schmid and Dr Michael Lydon attended the launch of a joint policy brief in Brussels. The launch was held in LaVallée, a former industrial site built at the end of the 19th century which now houses a community of artists, creative entrepreneurs and forward thinkers who work to enable civic-led action in addressing socio-cultural, economic and environmental concerns.

It was in many ways an ideal location to launch 'Energy Citizenship in the Making: Pathways to support citizen engagement in the European energy transition', a joint policy brief produced by four Horizon 2020 projects working on energy citizenship: [DIALOGUES](#), [ENCLUDE](#), [EC<sup>2</sup>](#) and [EnergyPROSPECTS](#).



Surrounded by the ghosts of Brussels' industrial past, academics, industry leaders and others discussed how citizens and communities can support the European Energy Transition. The theme of the launch was that citizenship engagement is not just an individual responsibility, but also requires the support of the system it is intended to improve. This includes rethinking the rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders in the energy transition. Our researchers were present as part of EnergyPROSPECTS, a University of Galway-led pan-European project that aimed to develop an innovative conceptual framework to better understand energy citizenship in Europe. They discussed how some Irish communities are leading the way in restoring people's sense of agency in the energy transition. One community central to this discussion is the [Aran Islands Energy Co-operative](#) (*Comharchumann Fuinnimh Oileáin Árann Teoranta, CFOÁT*).

#### **The EnergyPROSPECTS project**

Let us look first at EnergyPROSPECTS, and University of Galway's leading role in highlighting the importance of energy citizenship. The EnergyPROSPECTS project consortium included nine research partners (universities, research institutes, enterprises and NGOs) from Ireland, Belgium, Hungary, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, France, Latvia, Germany and Spain. The project ran for three years, from May 2021 to April 2024. Project lead Prof. Fahy notes: "I am extremely proud to work in our world-class university, which has embraced Sustainability as one of its core values. University of Galway is making great strides in tackling society's evolving sustainable development challenges and we are working to develop our graduates as future sustainability leaders." ►

## So, what is energy citizenship and why does it matter?

While the term ‘energy citizenship’ does not yet appear to be used widely in public discourse, in the policy area it is often referred to in connection with *energy prosumerism* (the concept of being both a producer and consumer of energy) and *energy communities*. EnergyPROSPECTS broadened this to include further forms of individual and collective engagement with the energy system. This can include using energy-saving appliances, choosing renewable energy solutions, and even taking part in political processes.

In many ways, energy citizenship can be seen as a missing piece of the energy transition puzzle. Despite the European Energy Union’s vision of

putting citizens at the core of the transition, much remains to be done to ensure that the pathway toward carbon neutrality is inclusive and provides opportunities and benefits for all. That is why energy citizenship matters, as it shows individuals and communities are placing themselves at the core of energy transition (consciously or unconsciously).

In summary, many people engage in some form of energy citizenship, even if they are not aware of it. It is a means by which people can be active participants in energy systems. This is crucial as it reframes citizens from passive recipients of the energy transition to active initiators.

**Energy citizenship matters, as it shows individuals and communities are placing themselves at the core of energy transition.**

## Energy citizenship and Ireland

**There has been an expansion of energy citizenship from the private dimension, where it is about empowerment in one’s own energy practices, to a public dimension, where citizenship takes the form of sharing in self-government.**

EnergyPROSPECTS examined a range of issues in energy citizenship, creating a database of 596 cases of energy citizenship from across Europe. The database is presented as an [interactive map](#) that shows the scope of energy citizenship in Europe. As part of this process, University of Galway researchers selected 20 cases from Ireland. These include examples of *individual energy citizenship*, such as Lorna Gold (author, lecturer and climate activist) and Paul Kenny (former CEO of the Tipperary Energy Agency), and *collective energy citizenship*, such as the Dublin Cycling Campaign and Ringsend Irishtown Sustainable Energy Community (RISEC). Five cases from Ireland were selected for in depth analysis:

- Aran Islands Energy Cooperative (*Comharchumann Fuinnimh Oileáin Árann Teoranta*, CFOÁT)
- Citizens’ Assembly on ‘How the state can make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change’
- EirGrid Public Consultation: Shaping Our Electricity Future
- [Energy Community Tipperary Cooperative \(ECTC\)](#)
- [Galway Energy Co-operative](#)

Dr Schmid notes that in recent years, energy citizenship in Ireland has evolved: “[there has been] an expansion of energy citizenship from the private dimension, where it is about empowerment in one’s own energy practices, to a public dimension, where citizenship takes the form of sharing in self-government”. This expansion is evident in all the Irish cases we analysed in depth. CFOÁT is a clear example of this empowerment and of an Irish community leading the way in restoring people’s sense of agency in the energy transition.





## The Aran Islands Energy Cooperative

CFOÁT is a civil society organisation that brings together the residents of the three Aran Islands, *Inis Mór*, *Inis Meáin* and *Inis Óírr*, with a view to becoming self-sufficient in clean, locally owned energy and helping to build the local economy of the islands. CFOÁT was created in 2012 out of an initiative of existing local development organisations. At the beginning, it relied on funding for community retrofit measures and construction of photovoltaic systems for households from Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) programmes and EU projects. Founded in 2002, SEAI is a state-funded agency that provides policy advice and programme implementation; it also established the **Sustainable Energy Communities** model, which is defined as 'partnerships between public, private and community sectors whose goal is centred on renewable energy or energy efficiency.'

For CFOÁT, engaging with such initiatives is a significant benefit in terms of energy citizenship. Yet, it is also a means to an end for various

overarching community goals, such as creating jobs, stabilising the population on the islands, and even preserving the language and culture. Dara Ó Maoildhia, Chairman of CFOÁT, **notes** "in the beginning, we had a real struggle to have enough money simply to keep going, to pay the accountant and other annual costs". But, today, with the support of the islands' communities, Údarás na Gaeltachta and SEAI, the Cooperative is inspiring others through training programmes for other small communities interested in the energy transition. As Ó Maoildhia notes: "Our co-op here has a vision which entails a sort of a revolution in local economies [...] rural local economies, until now have been dependent on jobs being brought in from outside and created in order to keep those communities alive ... what we're saying now is with energy available around us in the environment, through the wind or the sun ... local communities have the opportunity to have their own source of energy and use that prosperity ... to create jobs locally." In doing so, they are inspiring others.

**The Cooperative is inspiring others through training programmes for other small communities interested in the energy transition.**

# Leading the Effort to Tackle Toxic Rhetoric Against Migrants

Tom Felle,  
Associate Professor in Journalism  
and Media, University of Galway

Tom Felle, Associate Professor in Journalism and Media at the University of Galway, has spent three years leading the development of an UN-funded global media literacy programme to respond to the growing threats posed by disinformation targeting refugees and migrants. Here, he writes that the **Global Media Migration Academy** chimes well with the University's core value of openness and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

THE light of the University of Galway's clocktower has stood as a beacon of hope for every student who has passed through its doors for nearly 180 years. It symbolises the University's openness and welcoming nature, signifying a safe place for all to be accepted, to study, and to learn.

Some of the University's finest graduates came to Ireland fleeing war and persecution, and they are now among its greatest ambassadors, showcasing the power of education as a means of social mobility and empowerment through learning. Their transformative stories of resilience and success underscore Galway's proud status as a University of Sanctuary, providing a haven and a platform for all to pursue learning and growth, irrespective of their background.

## Ireland of the welcomes?

There was a time, not so long ago, when the same was true of Ireland. Shaped by our own history of famine and emigration, we were generous in our welcome to those seeking a new life. But the *Céad Míle Fáilte* that the country had been famous for has been greatly challenged in recent months by the increasing nastiness of protests against housing refugees in communities across the country.

What's happening in Ireland is not unique; it is happening around the world. Misinformation and disinformation targeting minorities, including migrants, are rampant. Just look at the toxic nature of debate in the US and the UK, where migration has been exploited by the fringes. Extremists, far-right groups, and populists have weaponised the issue, fuelling hatred for political ends, stoking fears, sowing dissent, and spreading disinformation.

Here, racist, xenophobic, fascist and extremist narratives, and hashtags like '#Irelandisfull' populate social media. These tropes follow a well-worn pattern: the spread of disinformation about migrants and refugees often taps into deep-seated anxieties, offering misleading and simplistic explanations for complex issues like housing shortages and strained public services.



The challenge lies in debunking these myths while addressing the genuine concerns that give rise to such susceptibility.

These narratives resonate with some because they appeal to underlying fears, however implausible they may seem. The challenge lies in debunking these myths while addressing the genuine concerns that give rise to such susceptibility. ▶



Left  
Tom Felle

## Addressing the challenge of misleading narratives

Migration, a multifaceted phenomenon with significant socio-economic, political, and cultural implications, often dominates international discussions. It is a subject that evokes strong emotional reactions and is often influenced by political, cultural, social, and economic perspectives.

The portrayal of migration in public debate and in the media tends to be fraught with oversimplifications and biases, leading to skewed public perceptions. The media can play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and policy by providing accurate and comprehensive coverage of migration. However, without proper education and understanding, media practitioners may inadvertently propagate misleading narratives that could perpetuate prejudice and xenophobia. This issue was starkly highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, where media coverage of migration often fuelled anxiety, mistrust, and misinformation.

**The portrayal of migration in public debate and in the media tends to be fraught with oversimplifications and biases, leading to skewed public perceptions. The media can play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and policy by providing accurate and comprehensive coverage of migration.**

Recognising the challenges in media representation of migration, several NGOs and international organisations have introduced initiatives aimed at improving the quality of migration reporting. The UN's 'Verified' initiative emphasises the dissemination of authentic, verified data, while UNESCO works towards developing global standards for education in journalism, focusing on disinformation and 'fake news'.

In 2021 the University of Galway became the lead academic partner in a global consortium to tackle disinformation targeting migrants, called the Global Migration Media Academy (GMMA). The alliance included founding partners from regions including Central and North Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Europe, with the aim of developing media literacy resources to directly challenge harmful stereotypes and tropes about migrants.

The project was co-funded by the UN's International Organisation for Migration, and Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs. The initiative aimed to reshape how migration stories are told and understood worldwide. It included the development of a series of educational resources, and training, to better equip the media and the public to understand the complex area of migration, as well as digital literacy training on how to be vigilant of disinformation.

Since its inception, the GMMA has made significant strides in transforming how migration stories are crafted and disseminated. Galway hosted the first Global Migration Summer School in 2022, involving more than 50 journalists and journalism students, policy makers, diplomats and UN officials from a range of countries.

A **documentary** filmed in the University of Galway's television studios was broadcast internationally, reaching a broad audience and sparking constructive dialogue on migration policies. Feedback from alumni and stakeholders has been overwhelmingly positive, with many noting how GMMA has transformed their approach to journalism and advocacy.

**Recognising the challenges in media representation of migration, several NGOs and international organisations have introduced initiatives aimed at improving the quality of migration reporting.**





### Meeting the Sustainable Development Goals

The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a global blueprint adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, designed to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all by 2030. These 17 interlinked goals address the global challenges the world faces, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice.

The University of Galway, a designated Sustainable Development Goals Champion for 2023-2024, has been recognised globally for its leadership in sustainability, integrating these goals across teaching, community engagement, and research initiatives.

Effectively managing migration and addressing the misinformation surrounding it is crucial for the progress of several SDGs, underscoring the need for initiatives like the GMMA to promote informed and nuanced discourse on migration's role in sustainable development.

### The urgent need to promote the truth about migration

The urgency of this work has become all too apparent in the last year. As recent protests in Ireland have shown, the global movement of people is intensely politicised, and it will continue to dominate debate as global conflicts persist, and the impact of climate change worsens.

The University of Galway's partnership in the GMMA serves as a platform to foster a more accurate, diverse, and empathetic portrayal of migration stories. It stands as a beacon of the university's strategic value of openness and is making a significant global impact.

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# A Look at the Centre Working to Help Europe's Businesses Scale Up

Prof Esther Tippmann  
and Prof Jonathan Levie,  
Co-Founders and Co-Directors, the  
Centre for Entrepreneurial Growth and  
Scaling (CEGS), University of Galway

As the only UK and Ireland based partner of the European Scale-up Institute, the Centre for Entrepreneurial Growth & Scaling (CEGS) at University of Galway is tackling Europe's business scale-up gap through research, outreach and coaching services. Its success is illustrated in the recent invitation from the Enterprise Europe Network to train their scale-up advisors.

What are the defining factors of a successful scale-up today, and how can we move the needle in accelerating scaling across Ireland and Europe? CEGS Co-Directors Professors Esther Tippmann and Jonathan Levie share their thoughts in this new edition of *Cois Coiribe*.

## Europe's Scale-Up Gap

Start-up rates have been increasing faster recently in Europe than in the US and Asia.<sup>1</sup> However, Europe remains far behind in the scale-up race. For example, Europe has only 15% of the world's unicorns, privately owned businesses valued at more than one billion dollars, compared to 54% located in the US and 24% in Asia.<sup>2</sup>

Policy and programme makers at national and European levels have recognised this scaling gap. As engines for job creation, scaling businesses are integral to economic prosperity. It is estimated that up to one million new jobs could be created and up to €2,000 billion added to the gross domestic product of the European Union over the next 20 years, if the proportion of scale-ups were to match that of the United States.<sup>3</sup> In Ireland, we have seen a push to **increase the proportion of start-ups achieving scale and leadership in global markets**, with Enterprise Ireland aiming toward a 10% increase in the number of companies achieving sales of €10m, €20m and €50m. ▶



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## What makes for a successful scaling business?

To tackle this scaling gap, European and national agencies continue to expand their supports from start-up to scaling businesses. With the emphasis placed on start-ups for decades, this has not been an easy transition for Europe. Start-ups require support to experiment and identify a valid business model. In contrast, scaling businesses have identified a valid business model and pursue exponential growth to capture an opportunity, by delivering their offering to a rapidly increasing number of users or customers. Start-up supports work for early-stage entrepreneurship. However, scaling businesses need fit-for-purpose supports focused on their challenges. This requires capacity building within local agencies that work with these businesses on the ground. Add to this a fast-developing climate crisis, and scaling organisations must now match their acceleration with environmental and social impact.

**120 scale-up advisors from across Europe were trained online in 2022, and 43 scale-up advisors trained in person in 2023, at the Brussels headquarters for the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency.**

## The Centre for Entrepreneurial Growth and Scaling (CEGS) at University of Galway

**The Centre for Entrepreneurial Growth and Scaling (CEGS)** tackles the challenge of supporting scaling businesses. As a centre of research and outreach, CEGS has been at the forefront of scaling research, and translates these insights into practice through outreach programmes to accelerate the scaling process. In 2022, we were invited by the Enterprise Europe Network to deliver training to their scale-up advisors based on the research track record and international reputation of the Centre.

One of the largest of its kind in the world, **Enterprise Europe Network** brings together advisors from more than 60 countries worldwide, from member organisations such as chambers of commerce, innovation support organisations and regional development organisations. Scale-up advisors of the Enterprise Europe Network offer advice to scaling businesses and businesses with scaling potential on a daily basis.

We coached the scale-up advisors on exercises that they can use with their client companies. These evidence-based exercises are developed based on research insights from CEGS, and tested with scaling businesses. 120 scale-up advisors trained from across Europe were trained online in 2022, and 43 scale-up advisors in person in 2023, at the Brussels headquarters for the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA). The exercises help these businesses to diagnose potential scaling issues before they become roadblocks. They also help scale-up advisors in agencies to identify businesses that are ready to scale to prioritise their supports. The exercises covered strategic planning, checks for business model readiness, product-market fit and scalability readiness, as well as practices for managing global

scaling. The advisors have brought back their learnings to their colleagues and clients across Europe.

We followed up with these advisors one year later to see how they were getting on. While some found the exercises succeeded in getting their clients to stop and think about what they wanted to do with their business, or whether they were ready for the next stage of its development, others found the coaching approach the most valuable, relieving them of the presumption that they need to find the solutions to their clients' problems, rather than helping the clients to find the right solution for themselves.

With scaling businesses having such an impact on the future of the national and European economy as well as the transition toward a more sustainable world, we are proud that CEGS is playing its part in boosting capacity in the supports available for scaling businesses now and in the future.

<sup>1</sup> Data from [www.gemconsortium.org](http://www.gemconsortium.org).

<sup>2</sup> Data based on CB Insights Venture Report Q3 2023.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission 2016. **Europe's next leaders: the Start-up and Scale-up Initiative.**







# Determined Action Is Needed to Protect Human Rights in Conflict Zones

Dr Andrew Forde,  
Irish Centre for Human  
Rights, University of Galway

With breaches of humanitarian law in Ukraine, Gaza and Sudan now documented in real-time, the public are placing inter-governmental human rights organisations under intense scrutiny. Here, Dr Andrew Forde explores the agency and authority of such organisations in protecting human rights in areas of conflict.

In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed that “[a]ll human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. These rights are often described as being universal, in other words, applicable to everyone, everywhere, without distinction. Yet, every day we see armed conflicts contradicting this principle despite it being codified in international law, including in regional instruments such as the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

At present, Ukraine, Gaza and Sudan are among the most prominent conflicts due to the widespread and egregious breaches of international human rights and humanitarian law being documented and disseminated in real-time. Unlike conflicts of yesteryear where the horror of war only became apparent after the fact, in 2024 no-one can credibly plead ignorance. The problem isn’t one of awareness, it is apathy.

## Many conflicts seem invisible to the public consciousness

There are more than 100 conflicts ongoing worldwide. Their existence – exacerbated by inequality, climate change and populist nationalism – is the root cause of much of the world’s displacement. By mid-2023, 110 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution and conflict, almost half of whom were children. Displacement not only separates families and ruins lives, it generates enormous additional risks including the risk of trafficking.

In Europe alone there are at least nine countries experiencing an active or legacy conflict on their territory, despite Europe boasting one of the most advanced international human rights systems under the framework of the Council of Europe. Examples include Transnistria in Moldova, Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, as well as Northern Cyprus and, to a lesser extent, Kosovo.

Closer to home, even after more than 25 years since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, issues of accountability for state crimes remains a live issue. Conflicts cast a very long and dark shadow on societies.

The problem isn't one of awareness, it is apathy.

So far from the public consciousness are many of the current conflicts that it went almost entirely unnoticed in 2023 when more than 100,000 people were forcibly – and probably permanently – exiled from Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan following a 10-month blockade that resulted in critical shortages of food, medicine and fuel. Bad enough that this can happen in plain sight, but the fact that a European conflict could be “settled” exclusively by force when a peace agreement was on the horizon, sets an extremely worrying precedent. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, it seems that the rule of force prevailed over the rule of law, with limited international reaction. ►

Left  
Dr Andrew Forde

## Can intergovernmental organisations guarantee protection?

The inadequacy of the political and institutional engagement with Nagorno-Karabakh is symptomatic of a much more fundamental challenge: how can inter-governmental human rights organisations like the Council of Europe, which were borne from the embers of World War II, play a meaningful role in maximising the protection of human rights in areas of conflict?

**In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, it seems that the rule of force prevailed over the rule of law with limited international reaction.**

To answer that question, it is important to remember that European governments are legally bound to guarantee, not only in theory but also in practice, the rights and freedoms protected by the European Convention on Human Rights to *all* individuals within their borders, and under their authority and control. Yet, as Mary Robinson has noted “[i]t is a frequently observed paradox of international human rights law that it often lacks effectiveness in areas where it is needed most.”

In many of the conflict regions mentioned above, human rights monitoring does not happen or is inadequate, and individual access to the European Court of Human Rights is impossible or ineffective. This leaves some 10 million+ individuals, their fate and their rights determined by the lottery of birth, bereft of the protection of one of the world’s most sophisticated human rights systems. The Council of Europe is one organisation in a patchwork of international organisations, including the UN, the EU and the Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE). None are perfect, but together they present an added-value proposition. If the key international organisations are not actively engaging with situations of conflict, and instead standing-by for elusive political solutions, they only undermine their own legitimacy. Conflicts might not be solved by the Council of Europe – which cannot substitute for the will of individual states – but its advocacy can ensure the human rights of individuals remain prominent. More can and must be done.

**In many of the regions mentioned above, human rights monitoring does not happen or is seriously curtailed.**

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## Peace requires action

In May 2024, we mark 75 years since the establishment of the Council of Europe, an organisation that has had an enormously positive impact on the laws and policies of forty-six member states. The future of the Council of Europe will be dominated by conflict (in particular ensuring accountability) but it also will have to focus on new challenges posed by climate change and artificial intelligence. It does so as the discourse of rights and equality faces full-frontal attack, not from the extremes, but increasingly from the mainstream across Europe. As the Council of Europe marks its 75th anniversary it must vigorously defend its values and pursue its mandate for all people in Europe. It must work tirelessly to support ECHR rights-holders, practically and effectively, regardless of where they are, and ensure the door for cooperation on human rights standards is always open, even in times of conflict.

**Dr Andrew Forde** is a senior civil servant, Adjunct Lecturer at the Irish Centre for Human Rights and Commissioner on the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

Dr Forde's new book [European Human Rights Grey Zones – The Council of Europe and Areas of Conflict](#) (Cambridge University Press) has been shortlisted for Law Book of the Year at the Irish Law awards 2024, and will launch on 20 May at the Royal Irish Academy. [Register here.](#)

# Global Connections, Local Engagement: Galway to Miami and Back Again

Known respectively as the gateway to Latin America and the European Union, Miami and Ireland have historically thrived on global partnerships and the exchange of industry insights across borders. Here, *Cois Coiribe* follows the trajectory of a burgeoning partnership between University of Galway's J.E. Cairnes School of Business & Economics and Miami's FIU College of Business, following an interwoven thread of successful projects and student exchanges.

In an era of globalisation, driven by accelerated digitalisation, the importance of human capital should not be underestimated. This is exemplified in the strategic partnership between Florida International University and University of Galway in 2022. As mobility between the two universities has flourished, local engagement in both regions has proven key to an effective partnership.

Dr Josephine Igoe and Professor Sumit Kundu – Country Representatives for Ireland and the US, respectively, on the European International Business Academy (EIBA) board – first met at a conference, where an informal discussion on staff and student mobility across borders was taking

place. Professor Sumit Kundu of Florida International University (FIU), was looking for a partner university in Europe to enhance student and staff mobility, education and learning. The similarities between Ireland and Miami seemed to make sense, and after laying some groundwork, the strategic partnership formed between University of Galway's J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics and the FIU College of Business.

**In an era of globalisation, driven by accelerated digitalisation, the importance of human capital should not be underestimated.**







Students outside FIU Business School, May 2024.

**Miami is often described as the gateway to Latin America, and Ireland as the gateway to the European Union.**

#### **Changing Landscapes in Miami and Ireland**

Miami is often described as the gateway to Latin America, and Ireland as the gateway to the European Union. According to the 2023 US Trade Census, Miami is first for in the world for international cargo and international passenger travel. The city has diversified from tourism to high-technology firms and financial services at a fast pace, particularly since the pandemic, gaining a new reputation as "Wall Street South." Miami also has a strong presence in Life Sciences and logistics and since Covid, has become a talent magnet for talent from California and New York.

Ireland is long renowned for its success in attracting high-technology, multinational foreign direct investment (FDI), especially from the US. More than half of the multinationals located in Ireland are US companies, together employing over 200,000 people directly, over 150,000 indirectly, and investing about €27 billion each year in the Irish economy. Miami has experienced an increased Irish business presence in the past few years. Many longstanding Irish companies are based in Miami, with Fenegero and Waterwipes recently following suit.

**Having diplomats on the ground to build networks and create and support partnerships is evidenced in the highly successful University of Galway-FIU initiative. We have very ambitious plans for the time ahead.**

**Irish Consulate General to Miami, Sarah Kavanagh.**





Ariana Schildmier and Vishnavi Reddy Kolanu from FIU College of Business.



Anna Tyther and Dr Josephine Igoe at FIU, 2022.

**The Irish Consulate Office Opens in a Landmark Moment for Ireland and Miami**

The strengthening of bilateral investment and trade between Ireland and Miami occurred alongside the opening of an Irish Consulate Office on Miami’s Biscayne Boulevard in October 2022. Sarah Kavanagh, Irish Consulate General to Miami, referred to the Galway-FIU link when commenting on the new consulate office, “In opening a new Consulate General in Miami, Ireland is making a very tangible commitment to strengthening and deepening an important bilateral relationship. Having diplomats on the ground to build networks and create and support partnerships is evidenced in the highly successful University of Galway-FIU initiative. We have very ambitious plans for the time ahead.”

**Global Initiatives between Galway and FIU**

Since the partnership commenced in 2022, progress has been swift, with a number of initiatives in the past 18 months, encompassing student and staff mobility, online collaborative learning initiatives, and research.

In Autumn 2022, Dr Igoe spent a sabbatical at the FIU Department of International Business. During this time FIU hosted their first undergraduate University of Galway student, Anna Tyther, while Professor David Wernick from FIU spent a sabbatical in University of Galway in Spring 2023. FIU students attending the Masters in International Business Program (MIB) visited University of Galway in Spring 2023, engaging locally with business academics and attending seminars and company visits with the local MedTech sector.

The exchanges continued into 2024, with Galway students on the MSc International Management attending FIU on a study trip in 2023 and 2024. Students engaged with local academics, industry experts and government advisors, gaining insights into Miami as an innovation hub and major logistics centre.

In the words of Isabelle Norris, Class Rep for the MSc International Management 2024, “As an Irish student experiencing the US for the first time, coming to Miami is not your typical US experience... Miami is unique, with 70% of its population speaking Spanish and 60% of university students being Hispanic... It is clear why Miami is known as the gateway for Latin America.”

**Collaboration Across the Atlantic**

A key part of the partnership is FIU’s Undergraduate Research Associate Program. This programme has seen two FIU undergraduates attend Galway in August 2022 and hundreds of students on the Bachelor of Commerce programme participate in a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) project. The COIL project enhances international learning through engagement with students of different cultures, with different experiences across different time zones. Dr Wendy Guess, an FIU COIL ambassador, visited to University of Galway in April 2023 to deliver a seminar on COIL initiatives.



Delegation of International Business faculty from USA visited University of Galway's J.E. Cairnes School of Business & Economics this year, from 26 May to 1 June, a joint collaboration between CIBERs at Florida International University and Loyola Marymount University.

Further enhancing the partnership and global linkages, J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics will host 17 US Professors in May 2024 from institutions such as University of Washington, University of North Carolina and FIU. This group will engage locally with the School and with US and Irish multinationals and attend talks hosted by the IDA and Enterprise Ireland. As mediators of culture, trade and knowledge, gateway regions like Miami and Galway thrive on collaboration. This series of initiatives marks the start of a dynamic partnership, the fruits of which we can expect to see for years to come.

**Further enhancing the partnership and global linkages, J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics will host 17 US Professors in May 2024 from institutions such as University of Washington, University of North Carolina and FIU.**



Marking the Inaugural St Patrick's Day celebrations in Miami at the Danielson Gallery, Biltmore Hotel on 12 March, 2022. Those pictured include Consul General to Miami, Sarah Kavanagh; Professor of International Business at Florida International University, Prof Sumit Kundu; Minister of State and Chief Whip, Hildegarde Naughton; BComm Global Student on Study Abroad at Florida International University, Anna Tyther; and Oisín O'Connor.



# From a Galway Lecture Hall to a Malawi Grocery Stall

Prisca Lawrence Chipao,  
Co-Founder of Empower, Malawi,  
and Alumna, University of Galway

Alumna of the Irish Centre for Human Rights at the University of Galway Prisca Lawrence Chipao is co-founder of Empower, Malawi, an initiative that aims to empower Malawian women starting out in business. As in many patriarchal societies, women in Malawi face many barriers. Chipao tells the story of Melifa Kulemera, who survived an abusive marriage to become financially independent with the help of Empower. The story illustrates the transformative power of targeted support initiatives and is also a fantastic example of how University of Galway is contributing concrete positive effects for individuals in distressed circumstances far across the planet.

## Learning at the Irish Centre for Human Rights

The Irish Centre for Human Rights (ICHR) at University of Galway is a leading academic human rights institution, dedicated to the study of human rights, peace and conflict, international criminal law and humanitarian law, international refugee and migration law, gender and human rights and climate justice. For me, studying at the Centre has proven an invaluable experience. My study there significantly deepened my understanding and interest in the roles and responsibilities of states and international communities in safeguarding people's social, economic, and developmental rights. This enhanced understanding has greatly improved my advocacy skills, allowing me to effectively champion for these rights. Importantly, the Centre also provided a vital opportunity to network with people and organisations working in this area, creating knowledge-sharing opportunities beyond my course of study.

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Mzimayi wa Lero participants showcase their domestic small scale business products

## Life in a patriarchal society

The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasise sustainable development that not only addresses immediate challenges, but also ensures *long-lasting impact* for future generations. These goals have brought attention to a range of critical development and inclusion issues, with a focus on marginalised groups such as women.

In Malawi, as in many other patriarchal societies, women face numerous challenges that hinder their participation in economic and social progress. Situated in Southern Africa, the country lags in the human development index, ranking at 172 out of 193, while the Gender inequality index shows a wide development gap between men and women, ranking at 148 out of 166 countries in 2022.

Growing up in Malawi, I lived this reality, and my experience inspired me to advocate for Malawi's women to become more empowered socially and economically – an essential step to effective participation in the sustainable development of the country.

**The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasise sustainable development that not only addresses immediate challenges, but also ensures long-lasting impact for future generations. These goals have brought attention to [...] marginalised groups, including women.**

## Empower, Malawi – seeking to empower women

In 2019, I founded the organisation Empower, Malawi. Empower emphasises inclusive development and aims to address the barriers that prevent women in Malawi from accessing opportunities. Empower has reached over 200 women, providing them with business trainings, psycho-social support and business loans. The overall strategy is founded on SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) and SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth).



### Melifa's story

Melifa Kulemera, from a remote area within the capital city Lilongwe, is a beneficiary of the Empower programme.

Her story is one of a woman surviving an abusive spouse and facing community ridicule and a failed justice system. Without any education, her efforts to get employment were unsuccessful as the country faces high unemployment rates coupled with a bias towards those with some education.

Melifa is the sole provider for her three children, as her spouse refused to provide for their children after she reported him to police for physical abuse. Finding herself in a difficult survival situation, Melifa sought small business opportunities to earn some income for herself and her children. Unfortunately, as a developing country, Malawi is not set up to adequately support vulnerable people like Melifa. With no government social support and no access to commercial loans due to lack of collateral, Melifa's hopes of starting a business were a waning.

When Empower heard Melifa's story, they took her in and successfully trained her in business skills through the *Mzimayi Wa Lero* (Modern Woman) training



Melifa Kulemera beside her grocery stall

programme, which runs for six weeks. On completion, Melifa was supported with a business loan which she used to start a small-scale grocery business and boost her domestic farming.

Melifa says of the support, "The [...]training made me realise that I can start a small business with whatever little I have and that with determination, commitment, discipline and the right support, I

can manage to support my family. Having financial and skills support is useful but difficult to access, especially for women from remote areas like me; the training and financial capital has helped me to have financial independence which gave me confidence to leave my abusive marriage."





Mzimayi Wa Lero celebrate graduating cohort 1 business trainings

## Sustainable development means inclusive development

Melifa's journey to financial independence illustrates the transformative power of targeted support and empowerment initiatives. The work of Empower and Melifa's story highlight the crucial intersection of women's empowerment and sustainable development. Empower is challenging traditional gender norms and advocating for more inclusive development strategies. Sustainable development can only be achieved when it trickles down to individuals and families, particularly those who are most marginalised. Their safety and success should be the main goal of all development efforts.

Empower's call for women in Malawi to be included in all development efforts is now even more grounded

**Sustainable development can only be achieved when it trickles down to individuals and families, particularly those who are most marginalised.**

in both national and international collaborations for policy lobbying, as this issue resonates in many parts of the world where gender inequality persists. Through initiatives like Empower, and the broader implementation of SDGs that prioritise gender equality and inclusion, we can work toward a future where every human, regardless of gender, race or social status, can participate equally in development.

Read more about Empower, Malawi [here](#).



# How Horses Inspired One Scientist's Big Invention

Dr Abigail Martin,  
Co-Founder and Director of ImmuONE,  
and Alumna, University of Galway

In this piece *Cois Coiribe* talks to alum Dr Abigail Martin, CEO and Co-Founder and Director of biotechnology company ImmuONE. Abigail's love of horses made her interested in how science could help to make animals' lives better, as well as curious about what we can learn about human health from animal studies. Her company manufactures her innovative product – an *in vitro* human lung – which has significantly affected how companies test their products, in particular, improving human safety and reducing animal testing. Explore Abigail's journey below.

**Cois Coiribe:** Can you take us through your journey, from biotechnology student at University of Galway with a passion for horse-riding, to co-founder of a groundbreaking biotech company?

**Abigail Martin:** Growing up in Schull, County Cork, Ireland, I had lots of exposure to horses as a teenager. During my transition year in school, I went to England, and trained with some incredible top British horse trainers in the Eventing Industry. Training for Eventing requires developing the horse physically and mentally to the point where the horse performs well. These horses would then be ridden by Olympic riders at the time. I was significantly immersed in the equestrian domain with extensive engagement with horses. When you work with horses in competition, you come across a lot of issues and challenges such as accidents and diseases, which are inherent to their nature.

Biotechnology is a particularly interesting field within sciences. This field allowed us to combine the latest technologies with biology, and it's seen in areas such as bread-

and beer- making all the way through to advanced therapies for treatment of diseases. I've always been a problem-solver as well, so in my many years of working with horses, I started to have an interest, not just in their health but also in how we as a society can make animals' lives better; that is really why biotechnology appealed to me.

In 2007, I embarked on this journey and came to University of Galway to study biotechnology. We covered an array of subjects in my degree including maths, biochemistry, pharmacology, physics and French. Looking back, I think each of these subjects contributed invaluable knowledge that play a pivotal role in my business today.

My degree had a research placement module, and with support from Dr Andrew Flaus at University of Galway, I went to the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada as a Research Assistant to an incredibly dynamic research group within the Ontario Veterinary College. My work there focused on reproductive toxicology in early



Dr Abigail Martin

pregnancies in horses. Interestingly, the hormonal and general health changes observed in horses during early pregnancy loss are similar to those experienced by humans during pregnancy loss. This further drove me to want to know more about Toxicology and human relevant outcomes from animal studies.

Fast forward a few years I'd gained an MA in Toxicology from University of Galway and a PhD from University of Hertfordshire in respiratory toxicology, had my first patent of a 3D human lung model and a market with a need for it. Sharing similar ethics and the desire to developing animal testing- alternatives that provide more human-relevant results, Prof Victoria Hutter and I founded ImmuONE in 2019.

**CC:** What did you build/make during your PhD and did you know you were building a commercially viable product?

**AM:** I knew scientists faced multiple challenges when comparing animal studies to human studies, like reporting scientific data that could then be translated from animal to human was a major issue. For

example in the lung, the rat is commonly used to assess the safety of new inhaled medicines except the rat solely breathes through their nose, has anatomically different branching airways and is biologically more sensitive than humans. Hence the need to build a lung system made of human cells to test these new medicines on. As a result of my PhD, I developed a human in vitro model of the lower airways, in short miniature human lungs made up of human cells grown in a dish. The model is made up of different cells representing those found in the deep lung of a human such as barrier cells and immune cells.

Embarking on a PhD can be intense and challenging, especially in the sciences as the failure rate for your experiments are incredibly high. I felt elated as what I created worked. I didn't realise the research's true potential until I spoke to the market and met with contract research organisations, big pharma and chemical companies and asked "What would you do with a human lung model?" and their response was "When is it available, we needed it years ago!"

As I travelled the world as part of a UK Government-funded Innovation-to- Commercialisation for University Research (ICURE) initiative, I met with companies, who shared similar feedback and reactions. Armed with this invaluable information, I reported back to ICURE, who awarded us a fund of £300,000 to begin commercialising the technology, build the business and spin out from the university. ▶

**I felt elated as what I created worked. I didn't realise the research's true potential until I spoke to the market and [...] their response was "When is it available, we needed it years ago!"**

**CC:** Taking a glimpse into the ImmuONE lab for a moment, how does this 3D human lung model operate?

**AM:** We recently moved to a state-of-the-art facility with 1500 square foot of laboratory space. Working with cells requires maintaining an optimal environment of 37°C, similar to humans. We have special sterile units and controlled workspaces to prevent contamination. Additionally, we have our manufacturing area where we construct the 3D human lung models. As I mentioned, it involves cultivating human cells in a dish. These cells come from the deep lung, specifically the alveolus, where we have barrier cells similar to the epithelial cells on your skin. What makes us truly unique is that the model includes immune cells as well.

Macrophages, which are among the first line of defence cells, play an incredibly important role in the immune response. These cells are particularly tricky to work with. As you can imagine, when you sneeze, it might be due to something as simple as dust, or it could be a response to a more significant irritant, therefore macrophages are integral to distinguishing between these situations or scenarios.

So, we've incorporated these cells into a simpler system that allows us to work with various other cell types to build models of diseased lungs or other specific conditions. These models are very small, typically no more than 1 centimetre across in diameter, and are maintained on scaffolds within small wells. We feed these wells, which we call media, ensuring they are sufficiently nourished and kept at specific temperature, which assist in these models growing strong and responsive in the lab.

The 3D human lung models can be grown in multiples, hundreds at a time and can be exposed to various chemicals requiring inhaled safety assessment. Nearly any chemical you inhale legally requires some level of testing.

**We recently moved to a state-of-the-art facility with 1500 square foot of laboratory space. Working with cells requires maintaining an optimal environment of 37°C, similar to humans. We have special sterile units and controlled workspaces to prevent contamination.**

They can be anything from cosmetic powders to household sprays, pesticides, fumes, vapes and new medicines. We test a variety of chemicals for our clients, who are all over the world, on the 3D lung models and measure the biological responses of the cells according to chemical concentration and length of exposure. We then look to see if the chemical in question has caused an adaptive or adverse response to the cells in the model. For example, the size of the cells may change or the cells may show an immune response, die or just do nothing and remain unaffected by the exposure.

**CC:** How does the lab ensure good standard testing for a range of markets across the globe, and what kind of impact have you seen from your R&D (Research & Development) activity at ImmuONE?

**AM:** So in terms of facilitating standard testing for global markets, there are different requirements across different continents; however many of them share similar desired outcomes. There are many standards which laboratories will practise, such as good lab

**A couple of the biggest impacts we've seen is companies making faster yes/no decisions on new chemicals for products and reduced use of animals for testing.**

practice (GLP). Incorporating GLP allows us to maintain standard processes in the testing of chemicals and manufacture of high- quality lung cell systems.

A couple of the biggest impacts we've seen is companies making faster yes/no decisions on new chemicals for products and reduced use of animals for testing. Commercially, for products like cosmetics and other consumer goods, companies want to display the cruelty-free or animal-free testing labels. This is down to heightened consumer awareness of the public. In essence, we assist companies in bringing their products to market faster and safely for human use.

**CC:** Consumers today are more likely to ask questions about the safety of chemical use in our medicines and products. Have you seen a significant change in industry demands since ImmuONE was founded – particularly after COVID-19?

**AM:** The short answer is yes, I think COVID-19 really highlighted how little we know about respiratory health, particularly in the deep lung and lower airways.

**CC:** Is there a specific memory that stands out to you as a pivotal moment in your career? What advice would you give to students in the sciences considering a similar entrepreneurial path?

**AM:** Maybe not so much of a memory but I've always known I want to help and make a difference somewhere! I also enjoy bringing people together and empowering them. The advice I'd offer to students is not to be defined by your exam grades. Not everyone performs incredibly well in exams. It isn't the only measure of success. Personally, I was a mid-range student, I didn't achieve a first-class degree. Initially, I let this affect me, then I thought of what I can do to improve myself. I realised I could use this as an opportunity for growth and I returned to pursue a master's in Toxicology. I found myself more focused and motivated towards my new goals.



Source: [immuone.com](https://www.immuone.com)

Connect with fellow students and avail of all the entrepreneurial supports and resources your university offers. These insights and connections will provide you with valuable insights into running a business.

Finally, it is normal to feel intimidated and uncertain about your knowledge. Remember, you will never learn anything as fast as you have to unless it's on the spot. Embrace the fact that you won't know everything at first, especially as you go on your entrepreneurial journey. Build your own network of people that are knowledgeable in the areas that you may not be. They will become your safety net, friends and advisors down the line, giving you confidence and alleviating fears along the way!

**The advice I'd offer to students is not to be defined by your exam grades. Not everyone performs incredibly well in exams. It isn't the only measure of success. ... I realised I could use this as an opportunity for growth.**

# In the News

## January



**08/01:** New research reveals that using smartphones for personal purposes while at work can lead to reduced stress, as well as lower levels of conflict between work and personal life.

**15/01:** The RAPIDE research project – Regular and Unplanned Care Adaptive Dashboard for Cross-border Emergencies – is unveiled to develop solutions to ensure the seamless delivery of regular and elective patient care in a health emergency such as a pandemic.



**15/01:** University of Galway spearheads a new research project to improve regular and elective patient care during future pandemics.



**23/01:** University of Galway, ÉireComposites and ORPC Ireland announced successful testing of the next generation marine hydrokinetic turbine foil for renewable energy via an underwater generator, for the next generation marine turbine

## February



**06/02:** Site works commence ahead of the planned development of the new Library and Learning Commons.



**11/02:** University of Galway Camogie stars are crowned 2024 Purcell Cup champions.



**12/02:** University of Galway and Deloitte Ireland announce new strategic partnership.

**22/02:** Researchers identify that young people who have suffered adversity in the home, among peers, or at school are substantially more at risk of self-harm.

## March



**05/03:** Dr Christian Ginski sheds new light on the fascinating and complex process of planet formation as part of an international team of astronomers with the European Southern Observatory.



**08/03:** The Imirce database launches – a digital repository of thousands of Irish emigrant letters and memoirs dating from the late 1600s through to the mid-20th century.



**11/03:** Professor Fidelma Dunne is honoured by the American Diabetes Association for outstanding scientific achievement in the understanding and treatment of diabetes and pregnancy and lifelong dedication to advancing both clinical practice and clinical research in the field.



**19/03:** A study by University neuroscientists shows that transplanting the immature cells in a collagen hydrogel dramatically improves both their survival and maturation in the brain which could revolutionise stem cell-based brain repair therapy for Parkinson's disease.

**April**



**07/04:** University of Galway reports successful 'first in human' clinical trial of pioneering guidance and use of high-grade imagery for planning heart bypass surgery.



**16/04:** A collection of photographs documenting the history of University of Galway is published after being collected and archived in a project sponsored by the Office of the President and Agallamh na Seanórach/Retired Staff Association.



**17/04:** Nouf Rafea is the inaugural recipient of a new scholarship in honour of the renowned actress of stage and screen Siobhán McKenna.



**29/04:** University secures the top prize for *Excellence in Sustainability* at the Education Awards, in recognition of progress in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, including the opening of the Sustainability office this year and the My Green Labs certificate for all labs in the Alice Perry Engineering Building.

**May**



**01/05:** Des Ryan appointed the new Director of Sport and Physical Wellbeing.

**02/05:** Findings from the latest Irish Health Behaviour in School-aged Children survey conducted in 2022 shed new light into the health behaviours of children and adolescents in Ireland, emphasising areas of progress and concern that require urgent attention.



**20/05:** World Bee Day on Monday May 20th is being marked by researchers at University of Galway with a quest for the public to support the monitoring of more than 500 wild and native honey bee colonies. Professor Grace McCormack holds a wild native Irish honey bee as a swarm finds a new home in a log hive on University of Galway campus.



**28/05:** University's Access Centre celebrates 25 years of creating opportunities for people to find pathways into higher education.



# Regional Business Summit

Photos by Martina Regan.



J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics launch a new MSc in Management and Sustainability. (L-R): Dr Rachel Hilliard, Programme Director; Prof Alma McCarthy, School Dean; Prof Esther Tippmann, Head of Discipline, Management; Prof Geraint Howells, Executive Dean of the College of Business, Public Policy and Law.



Panel conversation and launch of ROSETTA fellowship project. (L-R): Mary Ann Fleming (PennEngineering), David Silke (Centripetal), Ian Brannigan (Western Development Commission), Sharon Walsh (Fidelity Investments), Dr Anastasia Griva and Dr Kieran Conboy (ROSETTA).



Prof Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh, President of University of Galway.



J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics launches a new MSc in Management and Sustainability. (L-R): Dr Rachel Hilliard, Senior Lecturer & Programme Director and Prof Esther Tippmann, Head of Discipline, Management.



University of Galway



L-R: Barry Gavin (J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics), Louise O'Mahony (Banking & Payments Federation of Ireland), Cian Twomey (J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics), Cáitlín Flanagan (Deloitte) and John Harney (SkySpecs).



Sinéad O'Connell (Computer Troubleshooters) and Anne Pears (Galway Chamber).



L-R: Prof Alma McCarthy, Louise Monahan and Dr Majella Giblin.



L-R: Dr Féidhlim McGowan, Irial Finan, Dr Majella Giblin, Cllr. Eddie Hoare, Prof Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh, Prof Alma McCarthy, Prof Geraint Howells, Prof John McHale.



L-R: Irial Finan, Prof Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh, Prof Alma McCarthy and Cllr. Eddie Hoare (Mayor of Galway).



L-R: Meadhbh McNutt, Mairead Ledwith, Sandra Brennan, Axel Prada, Louise Monahan, Adrian Larkin, Emma Goode, Sarah Mullholland and Sharon Allman.



# Alumni Events

## London Alumni Reception 2024

University of Galway alumni joined us at The Irish Cultural Centre, London for St Patrick's week to hear the insightful stories, challenges, and business experiences of our alumni panel of business founders. Moderated by Sonya Iovieno, Head of Venture & Growth, HSBC Innovation Banking, the panel featured Cormac Folan, CEO & Co-founder, Alder & Green, Abigail Martin, CEO, ImmuONE and Orna Murray, Co-Founder & Operations Manager, Move2B.









### University of Galway North America Webinar

On February 7th, 2024, we held a dynamic webinar exploring the global economy, arts, and society. Our diverse panel of University of Galway graduates include Conor Lavin from TikTok, Siobhán Brett of The Portland Press Herald NY and Martha Brennan from Reach PLC, Bay Area News Group – San Francisco who discussed the convergence of creative industries and the demands of the digital age. This webinar was moderated by Tom Felle, Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence 2023/24 at ELAC, Los Angeles and Associate Professor of Journalism at the University of Galway.



### University of Galway graduate and Stripe CRO, Eileen O'Mara honoured

University of Galway graduate and Stripe CRO, Eileen O'Mara was honoured by The Ireland Funds with the Distinguished Leadership Award at the San Francisco Gala Dinner on Friday, March 8th, 2024. The event was attended by a group of Bay area University of Galway alumni hosted by alumnus Niall Wall to help celebrate Eileen's significant achievements. University of Galway alumni included in the photo are Niall Wall, Head of Global BD, Intuit, Dermot Mee, Chief Operating Officer, Singularity, Gareth Keane, Promus Ventures, Marie P Walsh, CEO, Belayr, Joan Collins, Global Lead, Cisco, Oisin Heneghan, Noreen King, CEO, Evolve Manufacturing Technologies, Alison McPhail, OpenAI, John Peter Walsh and Jenny O'Leary, OpenAI.



### The Ireland Funds 46th New York Gala at Pier 60

Over 600 guests came together to celebrate The Ireland Funds 46th New York Gala at Pier 60, Chelsea Piers on Thursday, May 2nd, 2024. The event was attended by a group of New York based University of Galway alumni and hosted by University of Galway alumna, Geraldine McGinty, Weill Cornell Medicine.



### USA Presidential Election Webinar

We were delighted to hold an online discussion on April 8th, 2024, titled "Biden vs Trump Part II: The Campaign and the Consequences," moderated by University of Galway lecturer Larry Donnelly. Larry was joined by an impressive panel, including Carole Coleman, a journalist and reporter for RTÉ News; John Feehery, a partner at EFB Advocacy; and Marion McKeone, the US correspondent for the Sunday Business Post. This discussion delved into the campaign and the possible consequences in this pivotal election year.



## 1964 Ashbourne Cup Camogie Reunion

In May 2024, the University celebrated the 60th anniversary of its historic 1964 Ashbourne Cup Camogie victory with a special reunion lunch for the former players and alumni who gathered on campus to mark this significant milestone. The event was filled with reflections on University sports in the 60's and how much our alumni enjoyed this outlet. The University of Galway Alumni gift pack, presented by Louise O'Connor and the University Camogie Club, added a special touch to the occasion honouring the legacy of these trailblazers and role models and highlighted the enduring spirit and camaraderie of the University's camogie community.





# A Legacy of Knowledge

Over many decades, alumni and friends of University of Galway have been generously supporting education and research through a donation in their will. A legacy gift is a special way for our community to support the future of the University and have a lasting personal impact.

If you would like to learn more about planned legacy giving, please contact Julie Stafford, Director of Development and Alumni Relations at [julie.stafford@universityofgalway.ie](mailto:julie.stafford@universityofgalway.ie).

A photograph showing three young adults walking down a set of stone steps. They are framed by a large, dark stone archway. The man on the left is wearing a green t-shirt and blue shorts. The woman in the middle is wearing a colorful patterned top and a black skirt. The woman on the right is wearing a red top and black trousers. The background shows a stone building and some greenery.

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# University of Galway's Alumni Awards Gala Banquet 2024

On Friday, May 10, 2024, the University of Galway hosted the 2024 Alumni Awards Gala Banquet, a special occasion that marked the outstanding achievements of the 2024 University of Galway Alumni Awardees.

The Alumni Awards serve as a tribute to the contributions and accomplishments of University of Galway's 128,000 graduates across the globe, recognising those who have made significant impacts on local, national, and international levels in various fields. It is a testament to the quality of education and the nurturing environment provided by University that our alumni continue to inspire and create positive change in their communities.

Over the past 25 years, the University of Galway Awards programme has honoured 141 distinguished alumni. Meet our 2024 Alumni Awards outstanding winners.





**Alumni Award for Law, Public Policy and Society, Sponsored by RDJ**  
 Shawan Jabarin, General Director of Al-Haq

Born in the West Bank, and a graduate of the Irish Centre of Human Rights, University of Galway - Shawan Jabarin is a tireless advocate for human rights and justice, whose dedication to upholding the principles of equality and fairness has had a profound impact on Palestinian lives.

Shawan is a member of the Human Rights Watch Middle East Advisory Board in addition to his role as General Director of Al-Haq, the non-governmental Palestinian organisation dedicated to human rights.

He has spent years advocating for human rights despite Israeli control of the Palestinian lands. He was the first Palestinian Prisoner of Conscience for Amnesty International. Shawan served on the board of directors of Défense for Children International - Palestine, the national branch of the Geneva-based organization, from 2005 to 2009. In May

2013, he was elected as vice president of the International Federation for Human Rights. For his leadership of Al-Haq and his efforts advocating for human rights, he has received numerous honours and accolades.

Shawan is no stranger to our University; he continues to speak up for individuals whose rights have been marginalised and oppressed with courage, compassion and dedication to justice. University of Galway is proud to recognise his contribution through the award for Law, Public Policy and Society.



**Alumni Award for Arts, Literature and Celtic Studies**  
 Maureen Kennelly, Director at The Arts Council

Maureen Kennelly, originating from Ballylongford in County Kerry, was Director of Poetry Ireland before being named Director of the Arts Council. Over a three-decade career in the Arts sector, Maureen has led many of Ireland's thriving arts organisations, including the Kilkenny Arts

Festival, Fishamble Theatre Company, Mermaid Arts Centre, and the Cúirt International Literary Festival.

She currently serves on Culture Ireland's Expert Advisory Committee and was previously a member of University College Cork's Governing Body. She was a three-time member of the Irish Times Irish Theatre Awards jury panel. Her artistic work has focused on building long-term links between the general public and Ireland's most intriguing artists.





**Alumni Award for Business and Commerce,  
Sponsored by Bank of Ireland**  
**James Murphy, CEO, Lifes2Good**

Founder and CEO of Lifes2Good James Murphy was born in Galway and attended St Jarlath's College in Tuam. He graduated from University of Galway with a Bachelor of Commerce and qualified as a Chartered Accountant in 1986. James then relocated to Brussels and worked with Coopers & Lybrand (now Price Waterhouse Coopers) for five years, splitting his time between Belgium and Luxembourg. Returning to Ireland in 1991, he joined BMR-Slendertone as a member of the management team, where he created a successful brand and business before starting his own company, Lifes2good, in 1997.

Under James' leadership, Lifes2good has developed from a small distribution firm in western Ireland to a global enterprise. He championed a marketing strategy that included direct sales to customers via database and online marketing, as well as sales into pharmacy chains and health stores. James made the company's first UK acquisition in 2003. He acquired the Viviscal brand in 2007, when the company had a revenue of €700,000. The company continued to expand across Europe and the United States.

Lifes2good developed globally, opening offices in Ireland, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, and Portugal. The Viviscal business generated €50 million in revenue in 2016, and in January 2017, Lifes2good successfully sold the Viviscal brand to the US conglomerate Church & Dwight for €150 million.

James Murphy and his wife Maria Murphy serve on the board of the Lifes2good Foundation. This foundation invests in organisations with the potential to make a meaningful difference in people's lives. Initially, the focus was on funding activities that empowered and educated women and children. Their present focus has switched to climate change and environmental concerns.

**Gradam Alumni don Ghaeilge**

Diarmuid de Faoite,  
Writer, Actor, Director

Tá cáil agus clú bainte amach ag Diarmuid de Faoite i ndrámáocht agus go deimhin i scríbhneoireacht sa nGaeilge. Ainmníodh le haghaidh IFTA Diarmuid dá ról sa tsraith Corp & Anam, agus ghlac sé páirt sna scannáin Foscadh, Arracht agus Finky le blianta beaga anuas.

As Inis i gContae Chláir ó dhúchas é Diarmuid agus tháinig sé chuig Ollscoil na Gaillimhe le staidéar a dhéanamh ar Luibheolaíocht, mar aon le hArd Diplóma san Uiscshaothrú, sula ndeachaigh sé i dtreo na Drámáíochta.

Diarmuid de Faoite is a dramatist from Ennis, Co Clare, and holds a Bachelor of Science in Botany and a Higher Diploma in Aquaculture from the University, as well as an MA in Dramatherapy from Roehampton University.

He previously worked as Executive for the Performing Arts in the Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge, University of Galway. Diarmuid writes and performs across all media, in English and Irish, as well as facilitating, producing and coaching, and has performed locally, nationally and internationally.

His latest feature film work includes 'Foscadh' (2021); 'Arracht' (2020); 'Finky' (2019) and Black 47 (2018). He narrated the award-winning series An Bhoireann (TG4, 2020) and was nominated for an IFTA for his role in the Corp+Anam series (TG4, 2011-2013). He is a member of IFTA (writing chapter) as well as ICAT (Creative Arts Therapists) and has received the Duala Award from Clare Arts Office/ITMA, the Arts Council Theatre Development Award and Sparánacht Ealaín na Gaeltachta.





**Alumni Award for Engineering,  
Science and Technology**  
Caitriona Walsh, Country President and  
Managing Director, Novartis Ireland

Caitriona Walsh, a graduate of Biotechnology from University of Galway, embarked on a journey that has propelled her to the forefront of scientific and technological advancement. She is a trailblazer in her field and embodies the spirit of leadership while mentoring and advocating for the next generation of aspiring scientists and technologists.

Caitriona joined Novartis in 2006, working in several medical, marketing and sales roles in Novartis Ireland, before moving to Novartis Headquarters in Switzerland, where she served as Region Europe Brand Director and Head of Business Operations and Strategic Projects.

Prior to joining Novartis Ireland as Country President in September 2022, she was a member of the Novartis

UK Leadership Team, driving the global development of new drugs and indications in Immunology, Neuroscience and Ophthalmology.

She is an excellent role model for young women and girls interested in STEM fields and has been invited to give keynote presentations at several events supporting women in leadership.



**Alumni Award for Medicine, Nursing and  
Health Sciences, Sponsored by Medtronic**  
Dr Dermot Phelan, Former Consultant in  
Intensive Care Medicine, Mater Hospital and  
Associate Professor, UCD

Dr. Dermot Phelan, a distinguished alumnus of the University of Galway, embarked on a remarkable journey characterised by ground-breaking research and transformative clinical practice. He has been a key figure in developing and recognising Intensive Care Medicine in Ireland and Europe and embodies the spirit of service of compassion that defines the healthcare profession.

He graduated in Medicine from University of Galway in 1974 and trained in Anaesthesia and Intensive Care Medicine in Australia and Ireland, returning permanently to Ireland in 1985 when he was appointed as a consultant in Anaesthesia and Intensive Care at the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, Dublin.

This was Ireland's first consultant position specifically focused on Intensive Care Medicine. Throughout his career, he has been a key figure in the development and recognition of Intensive Care Medicine in Ireland and Europe. He spearheaded the development of Intensive Care Medicine as a distinct specialty in Ireland.

He was a foundation member and first president of the Intensive Care Society of Ireland, the first chairman of the conjoint board of the Irish Board of Intensive Care Medicine and served as Dean of the Joint Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine of Ireland from 2012-2014, and served as chairperson of the Education Committee of the European Society of Intensive Care Medicine.

Dermot's achievements highlight the impact that one individual can have on the lives of others, and he serves as an inspiration for current and future generations of healthcare professionals.



**Alumni Award for Contribution to Sport**  
Heather Boyle, Former International Rower & Cyclist. Communications and Athletes Commission Lead at the Olympic Federation of Ireland

A true champion both on and off the field, Heather Boyle's remarkable achievements and dedication to the world of sports have left their mark on our community.

A graduate with a degree in English, Sociology, and Politics from University of Galway, she has balanced her work with her

sporting endeavours in rowing and cycling. She is a former international rower and competed at several World Championships, narrowly missing qualifying for the Athens Olympics in 2004; she also represented Ireland in cycling.

Heather furthered her academic pursuits with a Master's in Equality Studies from UCD, focusing on gender disparities in sports participation. Heather's commitment to promoting inclusivity in sports extends beyond academia; she has contributed to the media teams for the London 2012 and Rio 2016 Paralympic Games.

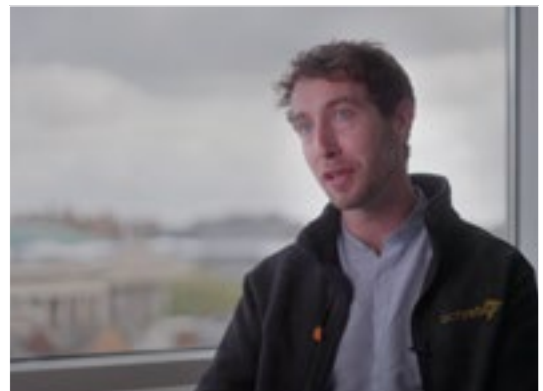
She currently serves as the Head of Communications and Athlete Commission Support at the Olympic Federation of Ireland, where she tirelessly promotes the stories of athletes and the games in preparation for this year's Paris 2024 Olympics.

**Alumni Award for Emerging Leader**  
Jack O'Meara, CEO, Ochre Bio

Jack O'Meara, recipient of Emerging Leaders award embodies the epitome of excellence and innovation in his field.

He obtained his undergraduate degree in Biomedical Engineering from University of Galway. He co-founded his company, Ochre Bio, in 2019. Jack's commitment to pushing boundaries has distinguished him as a pioneer in his field and last year he was named in the 2023 Forbes 30, Under 30 in Europe for his work. Jack is a shining example of University of Galway's values of excellence and this award cements his reputation as a rising star in his field.

Based in Oxford, England, Ochre Bio uses a combination of deep phenotyping, precision RNA medicine and testing in live human donor livers



to develop regenerative treatments for chronic liver disease. Jack's vision is to discover how to treat diseased livers while still inside the patient and avoid the need for liver transplants.



# University of Galway's Alumni Awards Gala Banquet 2024

Photos by Aengus McMahon and Martina Regan



University of Galway 2024 Alumni Award winners. Back row, L-R: James Murphy, Alumni Award for Business and Commerce; Heather Boyle, Alumni Award for Contribution to Sport; University of Galway President Professor Ciarán Ó hOgartaigh; Caitriona Walsh, Alumni Award for Engineering, Science and Technology; and Dr Dermot Phelan, Alumni Award for Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences. Front row, L-R: Jack O'Meara, Alumni Award for Emerging Leader; Maureen Kennelly, Alumni Award for Arts, Literature and Celtic Studies; Shawan Jabarin, Alumni Award for Law, Public Policy and Society; and Diarmuid de Faoite, Gradam Alumni don Ghaeilge.

Gary McNulty and Heather Boyle, Alumni Award for Contribution to Sport.



Peter McHugh, Deputy President and Registrar, University of Galway and Shawan Jabarin, Alumni Award for Law, Public Policy and Society.

Ruweida Shakhshir and Shawan Jabarin, Alumni Award for Law, Public Policy and Society.



Noreen Dempsey and Sheila Gorham



Marguerite and Dr Dermot Phelan, Alumni Award for Medicine, Nursing and Health Science



Diarmuid de Faoite, Gradam Alumni don Ghaeilge and Jimmy de Faoite.



Professor Ger and Kathleen Hurley with Drs Pat and Gerry Morgan



Maureen Kennelly with Fergus Cronin



Jack O'Meara with Ann Russell.





Professor Ger and Kathleen Hurley.



Clare Walsh, Deirdre Kerans and Aoife Dempsey.



Marcella and Declan Devane.



Ciaran and Sharon Bailey.



Bríd Seoige and Sheila Gorham.



Una and Kieran Kavanagh.



Blair and Elisa Wang.



Patrick and Theresa Lonergan.



University of Galway



Jacqueline Nestor and Paul Killoran.



Michael and Annette Kerin.



Hugh O'Reilly and Caitriona Walsh.



Ciarán Ó hEaráin , Nodlaig Brolly, Martina Ní Chuláin, Richard Butler.



Yolande Barrett and Caroline Loughnane.



Eithne Verling, John Crumlish, Liam Parkinson, Ber Lydon, Jane Daly, Fergus Cronin, Maureen Kennelly, Paul Fahy and Gwen O'Sullivan.



John Crumlish and Eithne Verling.



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**Disclaimer**

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