Irish Centre for European Law



AN EU PRESIDENCY CONFERENCE

Ireland's Enduring Place in Europe and Why It Matters

The Legal View

Friday 13 November 2026 · 2.00 – 6.00pm

Networking reception 6.00 – 7.00pm

President's Hall, The Law Society of Ireland,
Blackhall Place, Dublin 7

An event hosted in partnership with the Chief State Solicitor's Office

Oifig an Phríomh Aturnae Stáit
Chief State Solicitor's Office

PROGRAMME

1.30 – 2.00pm	**Registration**
2.00 – 2.10pm	**Opening Remarks** **The Hon. Justice Anthony M. Collins**, Court of Appeal & President of ICEL
2.10 – 2.40pm	**Opening Keynote Address — The Impact of EU Law in Ireland Today** **Rossa Fanning SC**, Attorney General of Ireland
2.45 – 3.30pm	**Panel 1 — Ireland's Place in Europe: A Former Attorney General's Perspective** Moderator **Marion Berry**, Director General of the Office of the Attorney General **Paul Gallagher SC**, The Bar of Ireland and Former Attorney General of Ireland **Senator Michael McDowell SC**, The Bar of Ireland, Independent Member of Seanad Éireann and Former Attorney General of Ireland
3.30 – 3.45pm	**Q&A — Panel 1**
3.45 – 4.00pm	**Coffee Break**
4.00 – 5.15pm	**Panel 2 — Ireland's Place at the Heart of Europe: Reflections, Insights and Lessons** Moderator **David Fennelly SC**, The Bar of Ireland and Trinity College Dublin **Karen Banks**, Former Deputy Director-General, Commission Legal Service • *Ireland's relationship with the EU Legal order: A fruitful exchange* **Christine Comiskey**, Assistant Chief State Solicitor, Constitutional and State Litigation Division • *Ireland's enduring place in Europe: The CSSO Perspective* **Regina O'Connor**, Former Senior Policy Advisor at the European Parliament, Council of the EU and European Commission • *Ireland's influence through its EU Presidency on European Treaties and Integration, past and present* **Professor Tobias Lock**, Head of the School of Law and Criminology, Maynooth University • *Ireland's place at the heart of Europe: The role of legal education*
5.15 – 5.45pm	**Q&A — Panel 2**
5.45 – 6.00pm	**Closing Keynote Address** **Maria Browne**, Chief State Solicitor
6.00pm	**Close**
6.00 – 7.00pm	**Networking Reception**

BIOGRAPHIES



Opening Remarks

The Hon. Justice Anthony M. Collins — Court of Appeal and President of the Irish Centre for European Law

The Hon. Justice Anthony M. Collins has been a judge of the Court of Appeal since December 2024. He served as Advocate General at the Court of Justice of the European Union between October 2021 and 2024. Previously, he had been a Judge at the General Court of the European Union since September 2013. He was called to the Bar in 1986 and took Silk in 2003. He is President of the Irish Centre for European Law and an Adjunct Professor of Law at University College Cork.



Opening Keynote Address

Rossa Fanning SC — Attorney General of Ireland

Rossa Fanning SC was first appointed as Attorney General of Ireland on 17 December 2022, and was re-appointed to that position on 9 April 2024 and again on 23 January 2025. Prior to his appointment, he was a Senior Counsel at the Irish Bar with a varied caseload spanning commercial law, judicial review, defamation and privacy law. He was called to the Irish Bar in 1999 and became a Senior Counsel in 2016. He is a CEDR Accredited Mediator and was admitted to the Bar of Northern Ireland in 2019. He was awarded BCL and LLM degrees from University College Dublin and holds an LLM from the University of Michigan.



Panel 1 — Moderator

Marion Berry — Director General of the Office of the Attorney General

Marion Berry is the Director General of the Office of the Attorney General. Prior to this role she was the Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions. She was an Advisory Counsel in the Justice and EU Group of the Office of the Attorney General between 2009 and 2022, with a period on secondment as Legal Advisor to the Department of Enterprise between 2013 and 2015. She was called to the Bar in 2001, practising at the Law Library between 2002 and 2009.



Panel 1

Paul Gallagher SC — The Bar of Ireland and Former Attorney General of Ireland

Paul Gallagher SC has been practising at the Irish Bar for 47 years, having commenced practice in 1979, and was appointed a Senior Counsel in 1991 and a Bencher of the King's Inns in 2005. He is a former vice-chair of the Irish Bar Council and has lectured and tutored in law in University College Dublin and the King's Inns, and lectures and writes on a range of legal issues. Mr Gallagher SC has degrees in law (University College Dublin, King's Inns, Cambridge University), and in history and economics (University College Dublin). He practises in the areas of commercial law, European law, constitutional law and public law. He is an adjunct professor of law at University College Dublin, a Fellow of the International Academy of Trial Lawyers and a Fellow of the International Society of Barristers. Paul was Ireland's nominee to the arbitration and conciliation panels of the International Centre of Settlement of Investment Disputes (1997–2007) and served as an observer on the High-Level Advisory Group for the Future EU Justice Policy 2007–2008, representing the UK, Cyprus and Malta. Mr Gallagher SC served as a director of the Irish Centre for European Law and is a Senior Fellow of the Institute for International and European Affairs. He has served two terms as Attorney General of Ireland, between 2007–2011 and between 2020–2022.



Panel 1

Independent Senator Michael McDowell SC — The Bar of Ireland, Member of Seanad Éireann and Former Attorney General of Ireland

Michael McDowell SC was appointed Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform in the Fianna Fáil–Progressive Democrats Coalition Government formed in June 2002. He served as Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform until June 2007, and as Tánaiste from September 2006 to June 2007. He chaired the Working Group on Company Law Enforcement and Compliance, which reported in 1998, and the Financial Services Advisory Group, which reported in 1999. In July 1999 he was appointed Attorney General of Ireland and served in that post until June 2002, when on the formation of the new Government he was appointed Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform. He was educated at Gonzaga College, Dublin, from 1959 to 1968. He graduated in Economics and Politics from the National University of Ireland at University College Dublin, qualified as a barrister in 1974 and was called to the Inner Bar in 1987. He practises as a Senior Counsel in the Law Library, Dublin. He was elected as an independent member to Seanad Éireann by the graduates of the National University of Ireland in 2016 and re-elected in 2020 and again in 2025, when he topped the poll. He has served on the Justice Committee, the Committee on European Affairs, and the Committee on Procedure and Privilege. He is Deputy Chairman of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission and Chair of its Finance Committee.



Panel 2 — Moderator

David Fennelly SC — The Bar of Ireland and Trinity College Dublin

David Fennelly is a practising barrister specialising in public law who regularly acts in litigation before the Irish and European courts. He is also an assistant professor in the Law School and Fellow of Trinity College Dublin, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Irish Centre for European Law.



Panel 2

Karen Banks — Former Deputy Director-General, Commission Legal Service

Prior to her retirement in August 2021, Karen Banks was Deputy Director General of the Legal Service of the European Commission. In that capacity, she was responsible for the coordination of the legal aspects of infringement files, as well as of the positions to be adopted by the Commission in sensitive court cases. Over the course of her career, Karen worked in the diverse areas of competition law, social law, intellectual property, agricultural and fisheries law, and the external relations aspects of EU law. From April 2011 to November 2015, she was head of the Agriculture and Fisheries team of the Legal Service. Although most of Karen's career in the Commission was in the Legal Service, she also spent three years in the cabinet of Commissioner Flynn, who was responsible for Social Affairs. Karen took her first law degree in Dublin in 1978 (University College Dublin) and a Master's degree in 1982 at London University (the London School of Economics). She worked briefly as a solicitor in general practice before joining the Commission. Karen is currently a member of the Board of the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority, the Irish member of the Governing Council of UNIDROIT, and a Vice-President of the Irish Centre for European Law.



Panel 2

Christine Comiskey — Assistant Chief State Solicitor, Constitutional and State Litigation Division

Christine Comiskey is an Assistant Chief State Solicitor and leads the CSSO's Constitutional and State Litigation Division. The Division defends and conducts major legal cases on behalf of the State, including constitutional challenges, commercial disputes, EU litigation, negligence and personal injury claims, human rights cases, and representation before tribunals and public inquiries. The CSSO's EU Law Section, which represents Ireland before the CJEU, also sits within the Division. Christine joined the Office in 2002 having previously worked in private practice in Dublin and as a pensions and investment legal expert with Actuarial and Pension Consultants in Dublin and London.



Panel 2

Regina O’Connor — Former Senior Policy Advisor at the European Parliament, Council of the EU and European Commission

Regina O’Connor trained and practised as a Solicitor with A&L Goodbody, which followed periods in the legal fields of commercial, criminal and human rights law in Sydney, San Francisco and Atlanta, Georgia. She subsequently spent a decade in Brussels, holding senior political and legal advisory roles across the European institutions. Her experience includes working with the European Parliament legal affairs, environment, climate change and constitutional committees; the Council’s Intergovernmental Conference on Enlargement; serving as Irish National Delegate during Ireland’s 2004 EU Presidency; and working with the European Commission’s Middle East Peace Process Desk within DG External Relations. During Ireland’s second Lisbon Treaty referendum campaign, Regina was Special Adviser to Pat Cox, Director of Ireland for Europe. She is also the author of The Reasons Why: Ireland at the Heart of Europe (2009), examining Ireland’s place and role within the European Union. Returning to Ireland in 2013, Regina was appointed Global Head of Government Affairs and Regulatory Policy at XL Group plc (NYSE). She currently serves as an Independent Non-Executive Director on the boards of Maynooth University and Paysend EU DAC. Her previous board experience includes directorships within XL Group plc and serving as Chair of Herstory. Regina is a graduate of UCC and UCD Law Departments and the College of Europe Masters in European Politics and Public Administration.



Panel 2

Professor Tobias Lock — Head of the School of Law and Criminology, Maynooth University

Professor Tobias Lock is the Head of the School of Law and Criminology at Maynooth University and director of a Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence (REVEL — Realising European Values and European Law). From 2020 to 2023 he held a Jean Monnet Chair in EU Law and Fundamental Rights. Originally from Germany, where he obtained most of his legal qualifications, Professor Lock joined Maynooth from the University of Edinburgh, where he was a senior lecturer in EU law and co-director of the Europa Institute. He is a member of the board of the Irish Centre for European Law and served as an EU law adviser to the Scottish Parliament’s Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee from 2021 to 2026. His research currently focuses on EU fundamental rights law (on which he is preparing a new book); EU accession to the ECHR; and the fallout from Brexit, in particular its effects on the devolved parts of the UK.



Closing Keynote Address

Maria Browne — Chief State Solicitor

Maria Browne is the Chief State Solicitor. She was educated at University College Cork and the Incorporated Law Society of Ireland and qualified as a solicitor in 1987. Maria joined the CSSO in 1993 from general practice, where she specialised in commercial property. She previously led the Office’s Asylum & Legal Services and State Property Divisions before being appointed Chief State Solicitor in 2017.