Irish Centre for European Law

ICEL Members Committee

Rule of Law Conference

"A Union of Values? The EU's Rule of Law Toolkit and the Retreat from Democracy"

4 November 2026 (4-5.30pm)

Networking Reception (5.30-6.30pm)

Chartered Accountants House, 47-49 Pearse Street, Dublin 2

16:00-16:05	**Registration**
16:05-16:08	**Welcome: Philip Crowe,** ICEL Members' Committee Chair
16:08-16:15	**Opening Remarks and Introduction: Krizia Testa BL,** barrister and lecturer in EU Law, practising across defamation, media, EU, public and human rights law.
16:15-17:05	**Panel Discussion:** ***The EU's Rule of Law Toolkit and the Retreat from Democracy*** *Moderated by* ***Krizia Testa BL*** **(i)** ***Professor Laurent Pech,*** Full Professor of Law, Dean of Law and Head of the Sutherland School of Law. **(ii)** ***Bernadette Quigley SC*** a practising barrister since 2003 who was elevated to Senior Counsel in 2020 and practices across EU law, regularly appearing before the Court of Justice including in cases on taxation, EU telecoms and the rule of law. **(iii)** ***Dr Benedetta Lobina,*** a postdoctoral researcher at the Central European University Democracy Institute, a lecturer at the Sutherland School of Law, and an adjunct Assistant Professor in Law at Trinity College Dublin. **(iv)** ***Faye Breen,*** the Deputy Director of the Office of the Attorney General and Ireland's Representative to the Venice Commission.
17:05-17:15	**Chair Questions and Discussion; Audience Q&A**
17:15-17:30	**Closing Keynote Address** **Mr Justice Gerard Hogan**, Judge of the Supreme Court of Ireland

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Biographies

Moderator and Panel Speakers

Moderator: Krizia Testa BL

Krizia Testa practices in human rights, defamation, media, EU and public law, with particular interest in press freedom and the rule of law. Previously, she served as Legal and Policy Adviser to Malta's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York during Malta's term on the Security Council, where she worked on EU affairs and accountability for human rights abuses. She lectures and tutors in EU law at Griffith College Dublin and the Sutherland School of Law, University College Dublin. She served as Democracy Rapporteur for Our Rule of Law Foundation, co-authoring its 2025 Rule of Law Report, which was selected as the national winner of the European Parliament's European Charlemagne Prize. She is a Specialist Editor of the Utrecht Journal of International and European Law, a peer reviewer for the King's Inns Law Review, and a member of the Members' Committee of the ICEL.

Professor Laurent Pech

Professor Pech is Full Professor of Law, Dean of Law and Head of the Sutherland School of Law. He is also a Visiting Professor of Law at Bordeaux University, a Senior Research Fellow at the CEU Democracy Institute in Budapest, and the co-director of The Good Lobby Profs which he co-founded in 2021. From 2018 to 2022, Laurent was a member of a H2020 funded four-year multidisciplinary research project on "Reconciling Europe with its Citizens through Democracy and the Rule of Law" (RECONNECT). He is currently a member of the editorial board of the Hague Journal on the Rule of Law, a member of the advisory board of RECLAIM (Human Rights NGO based in Brussels) and a member of the international advisory boards of GEM-DIAMON (EU Horizon funded research project) and RESILIO (Resilience observatory on the rule of law in Europe funded by Stiftung Mercator). Laurent has been a visiting professor at many institutions, including his alma mater: Aix-Marseille University and most recently, the University of Bologna.

Bernadette Quigley SC

Bernadette Quigley qualified as a barrister in 2003 and was elevated to Senior Counsel in 2020. Formerly of the New York and Brussels offices of US law firm, Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton, she practices across EU law, regularly appearing before the Court of Justice including in cases on taxation, EU telecoms and the rule of law. Most recently she represented Ireland in two significant infringement actions taken against Hungary. Ms Quigley also practices in administrative law, commercial/chancery, and general common law matters before the Irish courts.

Dr Benedetta Lobina

Dr Benedetta Lobina is a postdoctoral researcher at the Central European University Democracy Institute, researching rule of law backsliding in the EU. She is also an adjunct assistant professor

at Trinity College Dublin, a fellow of the Trinity Centre for Constitutional Governance (TriCON), and part time lecturer at the UCD Sutherland School of Law. Her doctoral thesis explored different varieties of rule of law violations across several EU Member States, building a taxonomy of rule of law crises and proposing an enforcement roadmap to best address these issues at EU level. Her broader research includes co-authored studies on topics such as judicial independence and freedom of expression (including on behalf of the European Parliament), and peer reviewed journal articles and online publications on a broad range of rule of law related topics, such as illiberal democracy; the impact of backsliding in Hungary and Poland on the EU's response to Russia's war of aggression; and the state of the rule of law in specific countries (Italy, Malta).

Faye Breen

Faye Breen is the Deputy Director General of the Office of the Attorney General and Ireland's representative to the European Commission for Democracy through Law, more commonly known as the Venice Commission. Prior to this, Faye was the head of the Tax, Infrastructure and Immigration Advisory Counsel Group with responsibility for various areas of law, including Tax, Energy, Procurement, Utilities, Immigration and International Protection law. Faye practised at the Law Library for 5 years. She holds a Bachelor in Civil Law (European Studies) from University College Dublin and an MSc in Business (Leadership and Management Practice) from University College Dublin.

Keynote Address

Mr Justice Gerard Hogan, Judge of the Supreme Court of Ireland since October 2021. A native of Tipperary, Mr Justice Hogan was educated at University College Dublin, the University of Pennsylvania, The Honorary Society of King's Inns, and Trinity College. He was called to the Bar of Ireland in 1984 and to the Inner Bar in 1997. Mr Justice Hogan previously served as a judge of the High Court from 2010 to 2014, as a judge of the Court of Appeal from 2014 to 2018, and as Advocate General of the Court of Justice of the European Union from 2019 to 2021.