

Chairperson's Report IIEA AGM
Delivered by Ruairí Quinn, 19 October 2022

Good evening. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you back to North Great George's Street. After two AGMs on Zoom, it is wonderful to be back. For much of our 30-year history it was impossible to imagine how the Institute could fulfil its mission without access to our premises. And yet we did.

Not only did we survive the pandemic, in fact, **today the Institute is thriving**. Last year, we were the highest-ranking Irish think tank in the Global Think Tank index. **So, it is with a great pride in our recent achievements that I am announcing today, I will shortly step down from the position of Chairperson.**

It has been an honour to lead the Institute for 5 years during **a period of profound transformation**. In 1991 Brendan Halligan, Niall Greene, Tony Brown, and myself identified the need for an independent think tank in Ireland, focused on European affairs. Throughout my career as a public representative, I was proud to support the Institute.

When Brendan asked me to become Chairperson in 2016, I was honoured to accept. At the start of my term, I had three priorities: to secure the Institute's financial situation, to enhance our research and to increase the Institute's profile. **I am pleased to report that significant progress has been made on all three.**

First, financial matters. Beginning with the Brexit Hub, we reinvigorated the Institute's relationship with the private sector. We saw an opportunity to bring insight to the private sector at a time of unique challenges. It became a valuable source revenue for the Institute. Since 2018 we have been in receipt of an annual 'Europe for Citizens' Operating Grant which has brought us further financial security. The membership has grown.

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Bringing in new members and increasing sponsored projects has diversified sources of funding.

Secondly, our research work. As the EU's priorities have changed, our Research team has developed an outstanding series of events and publications. Our Working Groups provide expert analysis.

Thirdly, the Institute's profile. Our audience has grown significantly. Many of our event series are now fully open to the public. Moving our events online has dramatically increased access. Last year 19,000 people from over 40 countries, attended Institute events. Over the past five years the media coverage of Institute events and research has expanded dramatically. Whereas once our events were known only to those who attended, now they regularly feature in the national and international press.

Finally, I have worked hard to **enhance gender equality on the Board**. When I became Chairperson, there were 3 women on the IIEA Board. Today, I am proud to say there are 9 women and 9 men guiding our work. We have also enhanced governance structures, including introducing term limits for our Board.

All this has allowed the Institute to come through these unprecedented times stronger, more agile, and better placed to navigate the changing times we live in. Now I would like to speak about the Institute's future.

I have always believed, as did my friend Brendan Halligan, that Ireland's interests, and those of its people, were best served being at the heart of Europe. The Institute occupies

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a vital place in Irish public life, bringing clarity to public debate on the international and European issues that impact Ireland.

I believe three things matter for the Institute's future. Firstly, independence. The Institute's independence from its funders, whether public or private, is one of its greatest strengths and must be maintained. Secondly, ambition. We must seek to be intellectually ambitious in the scope of our work, and the themes we pursue. Thirdly, expansion. The Institute is now poised to become a truly European-wide think tank, active in Brussels and beyond.

I could not give this Chair's report without thanking the team. The achievements here are their achievements. We have had a fine succession of Directors General, supported by outstanding staff. I would also like to thank the Chairs and members of Institute Working Groups for their voluntary service. Finally, a most sincere thank you to our Board members for the loyalty they have shown the Institute.

As I wrap up this report, I would like to leave you with some thoughts on the future. Big questions face us: How far east will the Union stretch in 10 years time? 100 years after the birth of our State, is a United Ireland on the horizon? War and climate change have collided creating a real debate on an EU Energy Union. How will that impact Ireland? Will the emerging European Political Community be favourable to smaller countries like Ireland? With war waging once again in Europe, what impact will the expanded membership of NATO have on our country? Finally, will a more just and fair world be possible, as new threats face the European social contract?

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As I take my leave of the IIEA, I trust that these questions will be the subject of much discussion and debate within these walls and among you all.

Thank you.