



# Supporting Democracy in Challenging Times 2022

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## Forewords

### Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung



The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung is delighted to partner with European Movement Ireland to focus on the priorities and areas for potential cooperation, the mutual challenges and practical solutions for Europe. With our joint activities over the past year, the importance of European and International dialogue based on shared values and the support of democracy was highlighted.

I am very thankful to the authors and contributors of this publication for their informative analysis and valued opinion on gender equality in European leadership, the implications for European security after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the state of Europe's economy in troubled times.

As a German Political Foundation we are firmly committed to promoting liberal democracy, a social market economy, peace and freedom, transatlantic relations and European values. The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has a worldwide institutional presence through its foreign offices as well as a broad network of local partners and experts.

With our activities in Ireland we aim to strengthen the friendship and close relationship between our two countries. Ireland and Germany share many common values and goals.

We look forward to continuing our close cooperation with European Movement Ireland to help facilitate dialogue between Ireland, Germany and Europe.

Matthias Barner

Director  
Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, United Kingdom & Ireland

## European Movement Ireland



European Movement Ireland's mission has remained the same since 1954 - to develop the connection between Ireland and Europe, and to achieve greater public understanding of and engagement with the European Union and with our European partners.

We do this by providing objective information and by stimulating debate. Our aim is to reach a wide range of audiences throughout Ireland and to inform our European colleagues, through international networks about the role Ireland plays in the EU, and the role that the EU plays in Ireland.

We believe that Ireland is best served by a population who understand the EU and the broader community of European states and engage constructively in its future development.

As Ireland marks 50 years of EU membership in 2023, the challenge in the years ahead will be to actively contribute to the ongoing evolution of the EU - to reform and defend it - and maintain the high levels of public support.

Our partnership with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung allows us to frame and explore issues relevant to Ireland from a broad European perspective. It enables us to reach new audiences and explore issues that inform our members and promote public engagement.

Noelle O'Connell

CEO

European Movement Ireland

## Introduction

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and European Movement Ireland are working together to facilitate discussion, dialogue and fresh thinking current challenges. Supporting Democracy is a shared objective of both organisations and our partnership in 2022 examined the challenges and solutions associated with Supporting Democracy in Europe from an Irish perspective.

Our first event in March 2022 coincided with International Women's Day and focused on Women in Leadership. Equality and Empowerment. Frances Fitzgerald MEP, Vice President of the EPP Group, Annette Widmann-Mauz, MdB, Federal Chairwoman of the CDU Women's Union and Eva Maydell MEP, President of European Movement International analysed the role of women in multilateralism and geopolitics and how gender equality can advance the functioning of democratic norms in Europe. Much of the discussion took place in the context of the war in Ukraine, while the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic were also discussed.

The second event in June 2022 focused on the war in Ukraine and the arising security situation in Europe. Then Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence, Simon Coveney TD, discussed these issues alongside the German Ambassador to Ireland, HE Cord Meier-Klodt. Analysis centred on the EU's and Member States' responses to the war, Ukraine's future in Europe and arising geopolitical developments. Irish and German perspectives also characterised the discussion.

Our final event in November 2022 examined the impact of economic challenges on European Democracy. President of the Eurogroup, Pascal Donohoe led a discussion on Europe's economy in troubled times alongside Dr. Holger Schmieding, Chief Economist at Berenberg. Topics included the challenges facing the Eurogroup, increasing inflation and declining growth alongside the resilient economic performance of the Euro area. Future challenges and opportunities, including the revised economic governance framework were also discussed.

Throughout the three events, the rich discussions were supplemented by audience engagement, including submitted questions and social media activity.

This report presents the analysis and fresh thinking that arose in more detail including the outcomes of these discussions.

To date the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and European Movement Ireland partnership has brought a unique perspective to discussions about Ireland's place in Europe as we mark 50 years of Ireland's membership.





## Supporting Democracy: Women in Leadership, Equality and Empowerment in Europe

*21 March 2022:* In the first iteration of this three-part event series for 2022, the importance of gender equality to supporting democracy in Europe was examined.

The event was introduced by Katie O'Connor, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung UK and Ireland and moderated by Noelle O Connell, CEO, European Movement Ireland. Following International Women's Day, the event analysed the role of women in multilateralism and geopolitics, and through Irish, German and EU perspectives, discussed how gender equality can advance the functioning of democratic norms in Europe.

Frances Fitzgerald MEP, Vice-President of the EPP Group in the European Parliament and Former Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) of Ireland began her opening remarks by highlighting that gender equality and democracy are inextricably linked, that there are areas which have improved, but also other areas where more focus is needed. Referring to the situation in Ukraine where women and children are fleeing their country, Ms Fitzgerald stated that there is a very real discussion relating to military intervention. Similarly, in places such as Ethiopia, Yemen, and Belarus, we see circumstances where it is worst to be a woman, while there is also a lot of unfinished business to do even in places where it is the best place to be a woman. Therefore, we need to see women working at the top of international institutions. Ms Fitzgerald also stressed that the core of gender equality needs to hit home, she noted the economic benefits of gender equality, in addition to the economic costs of not making progress. Democracy is under severe threat all over the world, and Ms Fitzgerald ended by stating that both Ireland and EU have an absolute responsibility to continue advocating for fundamental rights.

The second speaker, Annette Widmann-Mauz MdB, Federal Chairwoman of the CDU's Women's Union, Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Bundestag, and Former Minister of State to the Federal Chancellor noted that it is important to remember the long and rocky journey towards women's rights. Right now, Ukrainian women only have one choice, to stay within their country full of pride and resistance, or to leave their homes along with their parents and children in the hope of safety. Ms Widmann-Mauz also noted that Russia's actions are a threat to the free world. However, she stated that women are a driving force for peaceful solutions, while including female perspectives in participation, shifts dynamics, broadens the issues discussed and strengthens such processes. However, Ms Widmann-Mauz stated that we have not yet reached an adequate or equal representation - either within political parties, parliaments, and ministries. To bring a real change, create favourable institutional frameworks using best practice models under gender parity are required. She also referred to the way the pandemic and cyberviolence have affected women's experiences of hate speech and intimidation, stating that we must strengthen networks on a European level to protect women with the proper rights.

The final speaker, Eva Maydell MEP, President of European Movement International began by stating that no woman is equal until every woman is equal - noting women's subjection to sexual violence and the future of women in the aftermath of war. Despite many setbacks over the last number of decades, international organisations have fostered empowerment and opportunities for women. However, she noted that the value of women in multilateralism brings a particular perspective, different ways of thinking, and alternative methods of communication. Ms Maydell also focused on five to six key areas where she believed more could be done, including investment in programs which support electoral reform and good governance, providing targets for women in politics and business, empowering women through training and access to financing, an international prioritisation of ending violence against women, addressing pay inequality through accountability, and the fostering of digital tools to help transform the workplace with investment in skills and training.

Following the discussion, questions were posed about the long-term consequences on women's participation stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic. Frances Fitzgerald spoke of the recognition of the impact that Covid-19 has had, adding that the recovery will not be worth fighting for if the building back process is unequal. General sentiment has been that Covid-19 has detrimentally impacted equality. Annette Widmann-Mauz noted that most of the familiar obligations during the Covid pandemic fell on women, while they were also the first to leave their work places due to the types of their employment.

Another question referred to gender-based violence and asked whether our speakers thought that more can be done in this area. Frances Fitzgerald noted that given the scale of the problem, more can always and must be done. This includes working more with men and sees a change in Ireland where this has become a whole of society issue. Annette Widmann-Mauz added that we must count these instances and make it transparent to how this affects our society. She also stated that this requires a partnership which works together with men.

Another question referred to training and asked whether there was a pan-European training body which can offer age-appropriate content. Frances Fitzgerald noted that there is a mass of data, but that no one model may not transfer easily to other countries. Therefore, national education systems have a significant role to play here. Annette Widmann-Mauz added that training must be in the context of certain countries, noting that our self-consciousness must be strengthened and that we must integrate our programs.





## Supporting Democracy and Security: The War in Ukraine

*22 June 2022:* In the second event in this three-part event series for 2022 organised by European Movement Ireland and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the importance of supporting democracy in Ukraine and enhancing European security was discussed.

The event was introduced by Katie O'Connor, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung UK and Ireland and moderated by Noelle O Connell, CEO, European Movement Ireland. Focusing on Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, the event examined implications for the future of European security and other policy areas. This discussion also explored the EU's response to the war, Ukraine's future in Europe, as well as arising geopolitical developments.

The first speaker, Simon Coveney TD, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence, began his opening remarks by condemning Russia's invasion which is in rejection to the UN Charter, highlighting that there are far-reaching consequences that this brutal invasion of Ukraine will bring to Europe and worldwide. In relation to the European Union's response, Minister Coveney noted that the Treaty on European Union (TEU) permits Member States to contribute to peace, security and the development of international law, and that the response to this crisis has been a resolve to strengthen this multilateral system. Further, stating that Russia's attempt to win territory by force must fail, Minister Coveney expressed that Ireland fully supported a maximal approach to EU sanctions against Russia, in addition to providing financial assistance to Ukraine. The war must come with massive costs, even if that means Europeans have to also sacrifice. Minister Coveney also referred to the work Ireland has taken up at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on this issue. Within this forum, Ireland is leading efforts to hold Russia to account for its actions, while simultaneously supporting Ukraine.

Minister Coveney also noted that the security landscape in Europe has changed significantly. Citing cyber threats as one example, he said that debate was needed in terms on how we respond to security and defence issues in Ireland. In relation to Ukraine's pending membership of the EU, Minister Coveney gave Ireland's full support to this process, saying that it is now clear that Ukraine has chosen a future path within the EU.

The second speaker, H.E Cord Meier-Klodt, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Ireland, began his opening remarks by stating his agreement with every point put forward by Minister Coveney. Ambassador Meier-Klodt noted the remarkable unity shown by the EU in its reaction to the war. This includes the six packages of sanctions which have been issued against Russia, a package more powerful than anything else which has been envisioned before. This deep solidarity with Ukraine also shows itself in the EU's offer of membership. Balancing these thoughts however, Ambassador Meier-Klodt noted that we are in a marathon, not a sprint, when it comes to facing the challenges ahead. He said that the greatest level of unity possible should be the EU's top priority during this period, and that all partners must redouble efforts to secure coherence and reliability in our commitments.

Following this discussion, questions were posed about what expectations our speakers had in relation to progress on Ukraine's membership of the EU. Minister Coveney stated that Ireland has held a pro-enlargement stance for many years, as EU membership has provided for a positive transformation of Irish society. Ambassador Meier-Klodt also agreed that it was important for the EU to give a positive signal to Ukraine, as this is a country currently fighting for its survival.

Another question referred to the ability of the Russian economy to build up such control over European energy and food sectors. In response, Minister Coveney noted that, although not a superpower economically, Russia has huge amounts of natural resources, a lot of which Europe became too reliant upon. However, a decision has now been made to clearly move away from this, but it will take time. Ambassador Meier-Klodt said that no single politician in Germany would agree that we have not become too independent of Russian energy. Pointing to one positive which has come from this crisis, he recognised that the push to source alternative energies has been given a boost as they have now become more commercially competitive.



## Supporting Democracy: Europe's Economy in Troubled Times

*28 November 2022:* This was the final event in the Supporting Democracy series with the Konrad- Adenauer- Stiftung in 2022.

Paschal Donohoe TD, Ireland's Minister for Finance and President of the Eurogroup, began by highlighting some of the challenges the Eurogroup has faced in the past three years. He discussed the impact of Covid-19 and outlined the supports and safety nets implemented by Member States and the European Union. He noted that the Russian invasion of Ukraine has had a greater impact on the euro area, leading to both an increase in inflation and a decrease in growth.

However, he stressed that the euro area continues to perform well, highlighting a record low level of unemployment across the 19 Member States. He emphasised the need to protect Europeans from economic hardship, but also the need to avoid introducing policies which add to demand pressures, and which undermine the single market.

Minister Donohoe also highlighted Europe's significant investment needs, in order to support the digital transition and tackle climate change while also reducing the EU's dependence on Russian energy supplies. He stressed the importance of European solidarity, and the benefits of policies such as RePowerEU and NextGenerationEU.

Minister Donohoe concluded by highlighting the resilience of the Eurogroup to crises. He acknowledged that the euro area has a challenging future ahead, but that these challenges can be overcome through targeted supports and European solidarity.

Noelle O'Connell thanked Minister Donohoe for his remarks, and then invited Dr. Holger Schmieding to speak.

Dr. Holger Schmieding, Chief Economist, Berenberg said that he agreed with Minister Donohoe that the outlook for the Eurozone is challenging. He stated that Europe is facing a winter recession and highlighted low levels of consumer and business confidence in the markets. However, he highlighted that no later than next spring, the eurozone will see a significant decline in inflation, and that he expects significant European economic rebound.

He spoke about the state of play of the German economy, noting that effects of the recession will be felt to a greater extent in Germany than other eurozone countries, due to its outward looking economy and dependence on Russian gas supplies. He also highlighted a potential shift in production from Germany to the US and Saudi Arabia in gas intensive areas in order to reduce its dependency on gas. While it may seem that the US will benefit from this move, Europe will benefit from changes in exchange rates, as the euro will rebound overtime, whereas the dollar will remain stagnant.

He also noted that Germany is waking up to the effects of geopolitics and is becoming more aware of its approach to China and the concerns of its Eastern European neighbours. On the European level, he identified several forces which have unified Member States, such as the failure of Brexit, the misguided economic policies of former UK PM Liz Truss, and the aggressive foreign policy of Russia.

He also discussed the role of the NextGenerationEU, and thanked Minister Donohoe for his role in shaping it. Some tweaks will be needed with regards to economic governance, such as more tailor made approaches to fiscal issues in Member States and an enhancement of the role of the European Fiscal Board. He accepted that there are challenges, but that the EU and eurozone are coping well with these crises. He stated the euro area is by in large on the right track and urged the EU to continue supporting the economic recovery in Ukraine.

Noelle O Connell thanked Dr. Schmieding for his remarks, and then began the panel discussion.

Noelle O Connell reflected on the rising levels of inflation in the euro area, and asked Minister Donohoe what needs to be done to overcome these challenges. Minister Donohoe noted that the inflation rate is heavily influenced by the energy market and highlighted the need for an improvement in the price of energy and the need for affordability. He said that while policy interventions can address these obstacles, the ability to reduce inflation is highly dependent on the situation in Ukraine. On this, Dr. Schmieding also stressed the need for energy efficiency interventions and continued strong opposition to Putin. He said that Europe is facing a 'Putin inflation, not a home-grown inflation.'

Noelle O Connell asked Minister Donohoe about the future of economic support for Ukraine. He highlighted a high level of commitment to meeting the budgetary needs of Ukraine, and that there will be two phases of support, made up of on short term and long-term interventions. He expects that by the second week of December, the EU will be in a position to provide a support package worth billions of Euros to Ukraine.

Noelle O Connell then asked Dr. Schmieding about what the public perception of EU membership for Ukraine is like in Germany. He expects high levels of support, but not as high as that as in Ireland, as demonstrated in EM Ireland's 'Ireland and the EU' 2022 Red C Poll. He stressed that the priority should be for Ukraine to join the single market, and which could attract greater levels of inward investment and would help with the cost of rebuilding after the war.



Asked by Noelle O Connell about enlargement of the eurozone, Minister Donohoe celebrated the fact that Croatia will be joining the eurozone from Jan 2023 and praised the efforts of the Croatian government to prepare for this transition. He also welcomed the commitment of Bulgaria to adopt the euro but acknowledged the challenges that Bulgaria still faces in the process of joining the euro area.

Noelle O Connell then asked Dr. Schmieding about the state of play of the Franco-German relationship, given recent strains between President Macron and Chancellor Scholz. He stressed that strains in the Franco-German relationship are not uncommon, and that they will continue to work together to find joint positions and solutions. Minister Donohoe added that he is certain that France and Germany will reach continue to reach agreement and find common ground. He also noted that despite the domestic challenges within each state, their continued efforts to find common ground at the EU level show that they will always find a way of making their unique relationship work.

Noelle O Connell raised the issue of the future of economic governance in the euro area. Minister Donohoe responded that in the short term, the priority should be the budget policy rather than just the budget rules, and to deepen coordination within the euro area. He also discussed the next steps relating to the European Commission's communication which sets out orientations for a reformed EU economic governance framework. Dr. Schmieding highlighted the importance and the durability of the European fiscal rules but noted that there should be greater flexibility within economic governance, and called for European 'solidarity against some conditionality.'

Asked why Ireland seems to be hesitant in developing its offshore wind energy sector, Minister Donohoe responded that Ireland is trying to overcome this hesitancy, and that development of this sector provides an excellent opportunity for the Irish economy and its energy sector.

On a question about the legacy of Angela Merkel, Dr. Schmieding said that while he did not necessarily agree with them, her policies on Russia and on energy were based on consensus and were reflective of the opinions held by most Germans. He acknowledged that Merkel steered Europe through several significant crises and that Europe's resilience could be credited to Merkel. Minister Donohoe noted that her contribution to Europe was vast and noted her efforts to find common ground with smaller member states.

Minister Donohoe emphasised the importance of reflecting on the challenges that arise from these crises, and on the opportunities that arise between these economic shocks. He concluded by stating that even during these hard times, there is still a case for an optimism.

Noelle O Connell brought the proceedings to a close and thanked the speakers for their contributions, as well as the audience for attending. She also passed on her support to Minister Donohoe in the upcoming election for the presidency of the Eurogroup. She thanked the Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung for their continued support and noted that EM Ireland looks forward to future collaborations.