



European Parliament
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FMA VISIT TO IRELAND

21-23 October 2026

Profile of Speakers

FMA SECRETERIAT

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THURSDAY 22 OCTOBER

Irish Parliament

Hon. Verona MURPHY

Mr Barry WARD

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Ms Deirdre FARRELL

Mr Michael LONERGAN

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Ms Emer COSTELLO

Ms Frances FITZGERALD

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FRIDAY 23 OCTOBER

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Mr Mark DURKAN
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Ms Liz O'DONNELL

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President Pat COX
Mr Stephen COLLINS
Ms Catherine DAY
Ms Frances FITZGERALD
Mr Mark MELLETT

THURSDAY 22 OCTOBER

Visit to the Irish Parliament

10:00 - 14:30

Hon. Verona MURPHY

Speaker of the Irish Parliament



Verona Murphy was the President of the Irish Road Haulage Association from 2015 to 2019. She was elected as Teachta Dála (Member of the Irish Parliament) for the Wexford Constituency in 2020.

Ms Murphy was elected Ceann Comhairle (Speaker) of the Dáil Éireann (Irish Parliament) in December 2024.

In this capacity, Ms Murphy Chairs the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission, the Business Committee, the Committee on Parliamentary Privileges and Oversight and the Committee on Standing Orders and Dáil Reform. Serves as member of the Council of State and the Presidential Commission.

Mr Barry WARD

Chair of the Committee on European Union Affairs

Barry Ward is a Fine Gael politician. He was first elected to Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council in 2009. In this capacity, he addressed local issues including parks, recycling, public transport and cycling infrastructure, climate action, coastal issues and supporting local businesses.

He was elected to the Seanad (Irish Senate) in 2020 where he served as Spokesperson on justice and on the Industrial and Commercial Panel. In the Seanad, Mr Ward has championed criminal justice reform, education, foreign affairs, the environment and promoting the Irish language.

Mr Ward was elected to the Dáil Éireann (Irish Parliament) in November 2024. He is a member of the Oireachtas committees on Justice, An Ghaeilge, and Members' Interests, is an Irish Co-Chair of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC) and the Chair of the Committee on European Union Affairs. A sailor, Mr Ward has been vocal in his support for the Irish Coast Guard and the RNLI, and speaks frequently about water safety and the need for the improvement of water quality in Dublin Bay.



THURSDAY 22 OCTOBER

Visit to the British Embassy

16:15 - 17:45

Ms Kara OWEN

British Ambassador to Ireland



Kara Owen was appointed British Ambassador to Ireland in October 2025. She has previously held many roles in the British Government. Ms Owen served as British High Commissioner to Singapore from 2019 to 2024 and as Director for the Americas at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office from 2016 to 2019.

Ms Owen served as the Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy in Paris (2011 to 2016), Head of the Strategy, Communication and Training Department, Consular Directorate of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (2011), Head of Diversity and Equality at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (2009 to 2011), Deputy Head of Mission in Hanoi (2005 to 2009), and Private Secretary to the Foreign Secretary (2003 to 2005).

THURSDAY 22 OCTOBER

Dinner Debate

19:30 - 21:30

Ms Emer COSTELLO

Former Member of the European Parliament



Emer Costello served in the Dublin City Council as a member for the North Inner City area from 2003 to 2009. She was elected Lord Mayor of Dublin by a unanimous vote of the city council on 15 June 2009 and remained in office until 26 June 2010. During her political career, Ms Costello has observed international elections in Cambodia, South Africa and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Ms Costello served as a Member of the European Parliament for the Dublin constituency from 2012 to 2014. She was a member of the S&D Group and the Irish Labour Party. As an MEP, Ms Costello Chaired the Delegation for relations with the Palestinian Legislative Council. She was also a member of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the Conference of Delegation Chairs.

Ms Frances FITZGERALD

Former Member of the European Parliament

A parliamentarian for over 20 years, Ms Frances Fitzgerald served as *Tánaiste* (Deputy Prime Minister) of Ireland from 2016 to 2017, one of only four women ever to hold this position. She has held several senior ministerial roles, including Minister for Business, Enterprise & Innovation (2017), Minister for Justice & Equality (2014–17) – where she championed the Marriage Equality Referendum and the Sexual Offences Act 2017 – and she was Ireland’s first Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (2011–14), leading on the Children’s Referendum in 2012.



Ms Fitzgerald was elected to the European Parliament in 2019, where she was a member of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON), the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM), the Committee on Development (DEVE) and the Committee to investigate the use of Pegasus surveillance spyware (PEGA). In July 2019, she was elected EPP Coordinator of the FEMM Committee and in March 2021, she was elected Vice-Chair of the EPP Group. She also co-led the first EU Directive on Violence Against Women. Ms Fitzgerald is currently the first-ever ambassador for Ruhama, is serving a two-year term on the Gender Equality Advisory Council to the G7, and was appointed Senior Advisor to Teneo. She is an Officer *de la Legion d'honneur*.

FRIDAY 23 OCTOBER

**Nobel Peace Prize-Winner John Hume and his Legacy:
The Good Friday Agreement**

9:40 - 11:00

Mr Bertie Ahern

Former Prime Minister of Ireland



Mr Bertie Ahern served as a *Teachta Dála* (member) of the *Dáil Éireann* (Irish Parliament) for almost 35 years, representing the constituencies of Dublin-Finglas from 1977 to 1981 and Dublin Central from 1981 to 2011. He was Minister for Labour from March 1987 to November 1991 and was Minister for Finance from November 1991 to December 1994.

Mr Bertie Ahern was first elected *Taoiseach* (Irish Prime Minister) in June 1997, and was re-elected in June 2002 and May 2007, three consecutive times. He retired in May 2008. The defining moment of Bertie Ahern's political career was the successful negotiation of the Good Friday Agreement with British Prime Minister Tony Blair and the governments of Great Britain, Ireland and Northern Ireland in April 1998. In recognition of his contribution to the peace process, he was awarded the Thomas J. Dodd Prize in International Justice and Human Rights.

Mr Mark DURKAN

Board Member of the John & Pat Hume Foundation
Former Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland

Mr Mark Durkan joined the Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP) in 1981. In 1984, he became John Hume's Westminster Assistant and, between 1990 and 1995, he served as the Chair of the SDLP. He played an important role in the negotiations leading up to the Good Friday Agreement. In 1998, following the Agreement, he was elected to the Northern Ireland Assembly and served as Minister for Finance and Personnel.



Mr Durkan served as leader of the SDLP between 2001 and 2010, and as Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland between 2001 and 2002. In 2005, he succeeded John Hume as Foyle representative in Westminster, a seat he held until 2017. He currently serves as Board Member of the John & Pat Hume Foundation, established in 2020 to support and inspire Leadership for Peaceful Change.

FRIDAY 23 OCTOBER

**Nobel Peace Prize-Winner John Hume and his Legacy:
The Good Friday Agreement**

9:40 - 11:00

Ms Susan MCKAY

Ireland's Press Ombudsperson



Susan McKay is a writer and journalist from Derry. In 1981, after graduating from Trinity College Dublin, she moved to Belfast and co-founded the Belfast Rape Crisis Centre, discovering that, behind the violence of the conflict, there was a horrific level of sexual violence against women and children. In 1984 she moved to Sligo to run a centre for young unemployed people. Ms McKay worked in several community development projects before training as a journalist.

Ms McKay started her journalistic career in 1989 as the social affairs correspondent and, later, Northern editor for the *Sunday Tribune*. She received several awards, including *Print Journalist of the Year* (2000 and 2001), *Feature Writer of the Year* (2002), and *Irish Tatler Woman of the Year* (2010). She authored several books, including *Sophia's Story* (1998), *Northern Protestants – An Unsettled People* (2000), *Without Fear – A History of the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre* (2005) and *Bear in Mind These Dead* (2007). Between 2009 and 2012, Ms McKay acted as the CEO of the National Women's Council of Ireland. She currently writes for the *Guardian/Observer*, *New York Times*, *Irish Times* and *London Review of Books*.

Ms Liz O'DONNELL

Former Minister of State at the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs



Ms Liz O'Donnell was Minister of State at the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs at the time of the Good Friday Agreement. She started her career as a lawyer, was Vice-Chair of the Women's Political Association, and worked on Mary Robinson's Presidential Campaign. She was first elected to Dublin City Council in 1991 for the Rathmines Ward. She was later elected to the *Dáil Éireann* (Irish Parliament) in 1992 and represented Dublin South for the Progressive Democrats until 2007.

She was Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs from 1997 to 2002 and served as a representative of the Irish Government during the multi-party talks at Stormont, which culminated in the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Ms O'Donnell retired from politics in 2007, but remains active in public life. She served as Director of Policy, Government Affairs and Communications for MSD Ireland until 2021 and as Chair of the Road Safety Authority from 2014 to 2024. She is a long-time Director of Chernobyl Children International and continues to contribute to media, broadcasting and public affairs discussions.

FRIDAY 23 OCTOBER

Panel on Competitiveness and Security

11:00 - 12:30

President Pat COX

Former President of the European Parliament



Mr Pat Cox is a former President of the European Parliament, of the European Liberal Democrat and Reformist group, of European Movement International and of the European Parliament Former Members Association. Between 2015 and 2026 he was the President of the Jean Monnet Foundation for Europe in Lausanne, Switzerland. He has worked as an academic, a television broadcaster and has served in both *Dáil Éireann* (the Irish Parliament), and the European Parliament.

President Cox is engaged in an extensive range of European affairs from pan-EU transport policy to democratic capacity building in Ukraine. President Cox was also a member of the European Investment Bank's Appointment Advisory Committee. He has focused increasingly in recent years on issues of sustainability and combatting climate change, chairing several business and civil society boards in this regard. He has been trustee of several registered charities in the ageing, cultural, research and international relations fields. President Cox holds a number of honorary doctorates and is the recipient of many international honours. He is a *Commandeur de la Légion d'honneur* and *Commandeur de l'ordre des Palmes académiques* of France, is a recipient of the Charlemagne Prize of Aachen and of Ukraine's order of Merit, First Class.

Mr Stephen Collins

Journalist, Former Editor of the Irish Times

Mr Stephen Collins is a columnist with, and former political editor of, *The Irish Times*. He previously worked at the newspapers *The Irish Press*, *The Sunday Press*, and *The Sunday Tribune*. Between 1983 and 1984, Stephen Collins sat on the New Ireland Forum, established by Garret FitzGerald, then *Taoiseach* (Irish Prime Minister), under the influence of John Hume.



The Forum held consultations on how lasting peace and stability could be achieved in a new Ireland through democratic processes and published a report on 2 May 1984. Mr Stephen Collins has published books on the Cosgrave political dynasty and, more recently, on the foundation of the Progressive Democrats political party, titled *Breaking the Mould*.

FRIDAY 23 OCTOBER

Panel on Competitiveness and Security

11:00 - 12:30

Ms Catherine DAY

Former Secretary-General of the European Commission



Ms Catherine Day earned a master's in international Trade and Economic Integration from University College Dublin in 1974. Between 1982 and 1996 she served in the Cabinets of Commissioners Richard Burke, Peter Sutherland, and Leon Brittan. From 1996 to 2000, she worked on the future enlargement of the EU and helped design the accession process for Central and Eastern European countries.

Ms Catherine Day held several senior positions at the European Commission, including Deputy Director General in the DG for External Relations (2000-2002), Director General in DG Environment (2002-2005), and Secretary General (2005-2015). She has been Chair of the Governing Body of University College Cork (2015-2023), Chair of the Irish Citizen's Assembly on Gender Equality (2019-2021), and an Advisor to the Irish Government on improving the international protection system for asylum seekers (2019-2020). Currently, she serves as a Board Member of European Movement Ireland and the Institute of European Affairs in Dublin, as Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Chester Beatty, and as Advisory Board Member of the Centre for European Reform in London.

Ms Frances FITZGERALD

Former Member of the European Parliament

A parliamentarian for over 20 years, Ms Frances Fitzgerald served as *Tánaiste* (Deputy Prime Minister) of Ireland from 2016 to 2017, one of only four women ever to hold this position. She has held several senior ministerial roles, including Minister for Business, Enterprise & Innovation (2017), Minister for Justice & Equality (2014-17) — where she championed the Marriage Equality Referendum and the Sexual Offences Act 2017 — and she was Ireland's first Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (2011-14), leading on the Children's Referendum in 2012.



Ms Fitzgerald was elected to the European Parliament in 2019, where she was a member of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON), the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM), the Committee on Development (DEVE) and the Committee to investigate the use of Pegasus surveillance spyware (PEGA). In July 2019, she was elected EPP Coordinator of the FEMM Committee and in March 2021, she was elected Vice-Chair of the EPP Group. She also co-led the first EU Directive on Violence Against Women. Ms Fitzgerald is currently the first-ever ambassador for Ruhama, is serving a two-year term on the Gender Equality Advisory Council to the G7, and was appointed Senior Advisor to Teneo. She is an Officer *de la Legion d'honneur*.

FRIDAY 23 OCTOBER

Panel on Competitiveness and Security

11:00 - 12:30

Mr Mark MELLETT

Former Chief of Staff of the Irish Defence Forces

Vice Admiral Mark Mellett is a Former Chief of Staff of the Irish Defence Forces (2015-2021). He holds a PhD in Policy and Law, and a Master of Commerce in Government and Public Policy. He was the Irish Government's principal military adviser, a member of the National Security Committee and a delegate to the EU Military Committee. Mark Mellett is a specialist Naval Diving Officer, has commanded three warships and served in Afghanistan and Lebanon.



He also led Ireland's Covid-19 military response. A recipient of two Distinguished Service Medals, Mr Mark Mellett was appointed Commander in the National Order of the *Légion d'Honneur* by the President of France. He currently chairs the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) and Sage Advocacy. He serves as Council Chair and Board Member at the Irish Management Institute (IMI) where he is Lifetime Fellow. He is also an Adjunct Professor at University College Cork. Founder of Green Compass, he advises governments, industry, and NGOs on sustainability, climate action, renewable energy, and security.