



EUROPEAN STUDENT CONVENTION 49
COINBHINSIÚN NA MAC LÉINN EORPACH 49
GAILLIMH 24-28 FEABHRA 2025

WESU EUROPEAN STUDENTS' UNION

USO
Union of Students in Ireland
Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn

HEA | AN TÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS
HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY

Fáilte Ó Chris & Bryan

A chara,

On behalf of USI/AMLÉ, let us bid you a Céad míle fáilte (a hundred thousand welcomes) to Ireland, and specifically to the beautiful city of Galway.

We are immensely proud to host the 49th European Student Convention in Galway City - it's our fourth ESC and the second time it's been in Galway.



Galway, or 'Gaillimh' in the Irish language is known as the City of the Tribes - due to its 14 prominent merchant families, or "tribes," who played a significant role in the city's political, economic, and cultural development in medieval times. Today, we tend to think of Galway in terms of its two main student tribes - Students at University of Galway and students studying at Atlantic Technological University's Galway campus - we'll have an opportunity to sample both of them at this event.

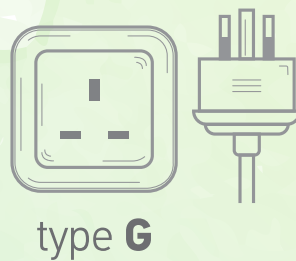
Galway is not a big city, but it's central to the culture of the island - the unique mix of entertainment, food and the mesmerising beauty of the river Corrib, along with the enormous student population, gives this place a sense of an ancient city which has never lost its youth. We hope you enjoy the opportunity to look around the place, enjoy its vibrancy and its opportunities, and that the programme of talks and events we have planned feeds your desire to visit again.

Beir bua,
Chris Clifford & Bryan O'Mahony

Ireland Facts

Electricity

3 pin UK (Type G) plugs are used in Ireland
Electricity is at 230v 50Hz.



Currency

The currency is Euros. Contactless and Chip & Pin are widely used. Visa and Mastercard are common - American Express is often not accepted.

Distances & Speeds

Long distances are in km and we use metric here. We use km/h.

Quantities

Both ml and pints are used, but beer is sold in pints (568.26ml) as is proper.

Time

When someone in Ireland says 'Half four' they mean 4:30.



Fáilte Ó ESU

Dear student activists,

We are warmly welcoming you to the 49th European Students' Convention, co-hosted in the beautiful city of Galway, Ireland, together with the Irish National Union of Students (USI). Galway is not only renowned for its medieval history spanning more than 800 years but is also bearing the nickname "City of the Tribes" and was European Capital of Culture in 2020.

As we gather in this vibrant and historic city, known for its rich cultural heritage and strong academic traditions, we turn our focus to a topic that lies at the heart of every student's experience: Quality in Education. Just as Galway has long been a meeting place for diverse ideas and communities, this convention provides a space for student representatives from across Europe to come together, exchange perspectives, and discuss how we can collectively shape and improve the standards of education in our institutions.

Over the course of three days, we will delve into key trends and developments regarding the quality of higher education across Europe. Our discussions will cover a wide range of topics, including microcredentials, the functioning of ECTS, the European Standards and Guidelines on Quality Assurance (ESGs), academic integrity in the age of AI, rethinking assessment methods and understanding quality assurance procedures, among many others. Beyond learning together, your insights and contributions will play a vital role in shaping ESU's advocacy efforts, directly influencing the ongoing revisions of the ECTS Users' Guide and the European Standards and Guidelines on Quality Assurance.

We are looking forward to sharing knowledge, perspectives and beautiful memories with all of you.

See you soon in Ireland!

ESU's Presidency Team



Get to know Galway

Galway City in February isn't your typical polished tourist trap—it's raw, real, and full of character. As the city (and whole country) awaits the return of foreign travellers hoping to engage in St Patrick's Day festivals, it will just be waking up from winter when you arrive.

Even in winter, the city pulses with energy that we think you will love. Start by wandering through the Latin Quarter, a maze of narrow lanes with quirky shops, authentic pubs, and live music that spills out onto the streets. The Spanish Arch, a weathered remnant of medieval walls, stands as a gritty reminder of Galway's layered past.

At the Galway City Museum, you'll get a straightforward look at local history through no-frills exhibits that tell the true story of the area. Nearby, close to the University of Galway, Galway Cathedral offers a bold, modern contrast to the city's ancient sites, showcasing how old and new coexist here.

The river running through the city and into the bay is the Corrib - one of the fastest flowing river mouths in Europe. It's mesmerising in its speed and power, and it's best seen from a distance.

For a breath of fresh air, take a walk along the Salthill Promenade. The winter chill and rugged views over Galway Bay remind you that nature here is untamed. Salthill is home to the Oslo Bar - the location for the agreement between the student movements of the UK and Ireland which established NUS-USI, the cross-community student organisation in Northern Ireland.

Eyre Square, leading on to Shop Street and down to Quay Street are the scene for street performances and live music, drawing hundreds of thousands of tourists every year.

Importantly, remember where you are - this is the far western seaboard of Europe, and the weather we receive from the Atlantic is not what you'd call arid. It will rain. You will need a waterproof coat, and we don't expect temperatures to rise above 10°C. We know you've technically experienced colder weather - but believe us when we say there is a special type of cold and wet in Galway.

Here's the long range weather forecast for the week:

Week 2 (Monday 24 February to Sunday 02 March)

There remains a signal for Low Pressure to be fairly dominant in Forecast Week 2, bringing rather unsettled and changeable weather as we move into the beginning of March. Mean air temperatures are likely to trend a few degrees above the seasonal average. Current indications are for wetter than normal conditions across Ireland during the week.



Get in & Get Around Galway

Getting here

Dublin Airport

For most travellers, flying to Dublin Airport is the best option to get to Ireland. Regular buses operated by the semi-state provider ([Bus Éireann](#)) and private providers [CityLink](#) offer scheduled services hourly or even more frequently. We recommend booking in advance to guarantee service, as these are popular.

Dublin

If you're in Dublin already, we still recommend bus travel as the default method to get to Galway, but trains are also available from Dublin Heuston station on the semi-state provider Iarnród Éireann (Irish Rail). Note that there's no catering of any sort on Irish Rail services to Galway. It's about 2.5hrs to Galway.

[Bus Éireann](#) operates from the national central bus station Bus Áras, and [CityLink](#) operates from various parts of the city, via the airport. It's about 2-2.5hrs to Galway.

Shannon Airport

You may find cheaper flights to Shannon Airport. An hourly bus service from [Bus Éireann](#) to Galway is available. It can take 1-1.5hrs.

Northern Ireland

Get to Dublin first. Transport to Galway from NI is complex.

Getting Around

A walkable city

Galway is a walkable city - from the accommodation to University of Galway is a pleasant stroll taking in the mighty River Corrib (the 2nd fastest flowing river in Europe). The city centre is close-packed but easily traversed.

Getting to ATU

ATU is a little bit outside the city centre - it's certainly walkable (3.8km) but there are public transport options - the 409 bus from Eyre Square takes about 15 minutes if the traffic's good. **USI will arrange transport to ATU on Wednesday morning.**

About the traffic

Galway traffic is rarely good. The city is too old and too compact for the volume of traffic flowing through the city, and there is traffic volume from early in the morning to late at night. Make allowances for traffic and prefer walking if at all possible.

Taxis in Galway

Taxis are centrally regulated in Ireland, and any app will simply summon a regulated taxi. Whilst **Bolt**, **Uber** and **FreeNow** work and allow you to pay automatically, FreeNow has more coverage in Galway. You should note that a call-out fee of €3 now applies to any taxi you call, but hailing a cab (with its roof light on) has no call out charge. Expect to pay €1 extra per additional passenger. You can pay by Visa Debit or Mastercard. You often can't pay by American Express.



Where we're staying in Galway

Our Accommodation

Kinlay House Hostel

Kinlay House Hostel has been, for many reasons, the home of USI in Galway almost every time we travel to the city. It hosts our members for Pink Training, Comhairle Náisiúnta (National Council) and our other residential events when we travel west.

It is in the prime location for Galway City, right at the corner of Eyre Square, skipping distance from a major shopping centre for anything you might need during your stay. It's a short distance from the University of Galway Campus.

This is Hostel accommodation, and all rooms will be shared. Some delegates have indicated special needs and they will be contacted individually.

QR codes for Transport Companies

Irish Rail



<https://irishrail.ie>

Bus Éireann



<https://buseireann.ie>

CityLink



<https://www.citylink.ie>

Medical Emergencies

Galway is serviced by University Hospital Galway, which has an Accident and Emergency department open 24 hours. Please note that any visit to the A&E will incur a €100 fee, which is waived in the case of a person from outside Ireland holding an EHIC. [More info on that is here.](#)

Paying for things

Ireland is a Eurozone country. Sterling is not accepted in Galway.

ATMs are common, but Chip and Pin is commonly use across Ireland, and the vast majority of shops accept card or contactless payment. Visa and Mastercard are common here - American Express is rarely accepted in many stores.

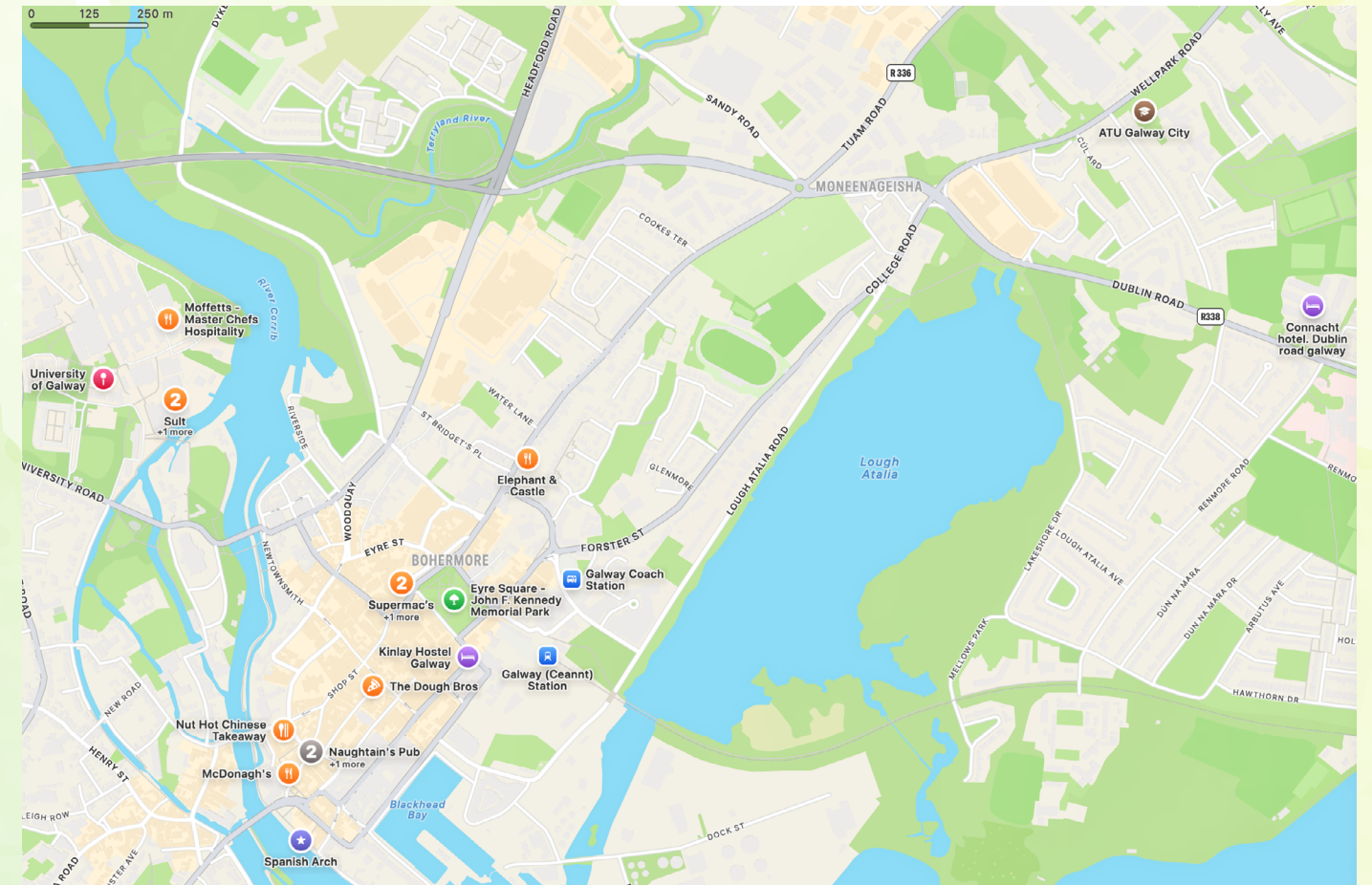
If you are withdrawing cash, we recommend using bank ATMs - Bank of Ireland, AIB, PTSB are all available in Galway. We don't recommend using Euronet (Yellow and Blue) machines (often in pubs or shops) because they may charge fees, particularly for users from outside the Eurozone.



Galway City Centre Map

It's an easily navigable city. On this map we've highlighted:

- **ATU Galway City** (Wednesday)
- **Connacht Hotel** (Dinner on Wednesday)
- **Galway Coach Station** (Citylink Coaches from Dublin and Airport)
- **Galway Ceannt Station** (Bus Éireann buses and Irish Rail Trains)
- **Kinlay Hostel** (Our accommodation)
- **National University of Ireland Galway** (University of Galway)
- **Áras na Mac Léinn** (Student Centre) (Catering & Bar)
- **Spanish Arch** (City Landmark)



Get the guide

We've made this map interactive. It works on Android and Apple phones and tablets. Either scan the QR or click to go.



University of Galway

About the institution

UOG (or OnaG, short for Ollscoil na Gaillimhe to its friends) is the University in the centre of Galway City.

The University of Galway, officially known as the **National University of Ireland Galway (NUI Galway)**, is a renowned public university located in Galway, Ireland. Established in 1845, it has become one of Ireland's oldest and most prestigious higher education institutions. It is a member of the National University of Ireland and offers a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programs across diverse disciplines, including arts, science, engineering, business, law, medicine, and social sciences.

The university is known for its strong emphasis on research, particularly in the areas of environmental sciences, biomedical engineering, and data analytics. Its research output has been recognized globally, with the university collaborating with institutions and industries worldwide.

NUI Galway is also home to a vibrant student community, with students from all over the world. It contributes to a very real sense of Galway as a student city.



OLLSCOIL NA
GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY
OF GALWAY

Why we're going there

A huge part of our movement's history

More USI Presidents than any other SU have come from this University. It's a university in the process of change, having recently been renamed 'University of Galway' - but plenty of

Where we'll be based

We'll open the convention in the Moyola Building, and most other sessions will be in the Moore Institute, which is closer to the Student Centre (Áras na Mac Léinn).

Interactive Map

Interactive maps of the campus are available: <https://www.universityofgalway.ie/buildings/maps/>



Atlantic Technological University

About the institution

Atlantic Technological University (ATU) is a multi-campus institution in Ireland, formed in 2022 through the merger of several institutes of technology, including Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) where we'll be based for Wednesday.



Ollscoil
Teicneolaíochta
an Atlantaigh

Atlantic
Technological
University

With campuses across Galway, Mayo, Sligo, and Letterkenny, ATU offers a broad range of undergraduate and postgraduate programs in fields such as engineering, business, science, health, and arts.

The university emphasizes innovation, applied research, and strong links with industry, preparing students for successful careers.

ATU also fosters a collaborative learning environment, with a focus on regional development and providing accessible higher education opportunities for diverse student populations. Like University of Galway, ATU contributes greatly to the sense of Galway as a student city, just as it does in Donegal and Sligo.

Why we're going there

A major institution in the midst of significant change

The Atlantic Technological University was founded on 1 April 2022, now forming one of the largest institutions on the island. The President of the college will discuss the merger process and their plans for development in the future. Meanwhile, the students' unions at each of the colleges merged to make the new University haven't yet merged their operations and each remain autonomously as members of USI.

Where we'll be based

We'll be based in a building known as 'The Church' (for obvious reasons) on campus for all of our Wednesday sessions. We'll have lunch there too.



Eating and Drinking

Where we'll be eating

Breakfasts

Breakfasts will be served in your accommodation each morning.

Lunch

Tuesday: SULT (Áras na Mac Léinn) 12.00pm
Wednesday: ATU Galway 1.00pm
Thursday: SULT (Áras na Mac Léinn) 12.00pm

Dinner

Tuesday: Moffett's Restaurant, University of Galway 8pm
Wednesday: Connacht Hotel, Near ATU Galway, 6pm
Thursday: SULT (Áras na Mac Léinn) 8pm

Alternatives

Galway has a great gastronomic culture, and there are some budget and novelty options which you may wish to explore during your time in Galway. They're all in the guide.

Fish and Chips at McDonagh's

Fish and Chips may be considered a British standard dish, but we reckon McDonagh's can give any fish bar in the UK a run for its money. It's at the bottom of Quay Street. The iconic dish is Cod (or haddock) and Chips with Mushy Peas. Perfect for a cold wet Galway day!

Pizza at Dough Bros

The Pizzas in Dough Bros are not particularly cheap, but they aren't tiny, they taste excellent and the restaurant has become an important Galway landmark. It's in the mobile guide!

Wings at Elephant and Castle

Imagine a portion of buffalo chicken (or cauliflower) wings bigger than a human head. There may be other things on their menu, but it doesn't matter to the majority of their customers!

Burger at Supermac's

One of the few companies to beat McDonald's in a branding dispute, Supermac's is a Galway institution with branches all over Ireland. It's famous for the burgers and dressed fries. There is nothing fancy about Supermac's, but the Eyre Square branch is the focus for craic after a night's entertainment.

Pastries and Coffee at SULT or Smokey's

The catering offered by the Students' Union at University of Galway is excellent, and we love them. On campus and need a boost? They'll sort you out.



Higher Education Authority

The HEA leads the strategic development of the Irish higher education and research system with the objective of creating a coherent system of diverse institutions with distinct missions, which is responsive to the social, cultural and economic development of Ireland and its people and supports the achievement of national objectives.



The President of USI sits as a member of the Authority.

The HEA has a statutory responsibility, at central government level, for the effective governance and regulation of higher education institutions and the higher education system.

The HEA works to ensure that –

- it has due regard to institutional autonomy and academic freedom;
- institutional strategies are aligned with national strategic objectives, agreed objectives (detailed in compacts with institutions) are delivered through effective performance-management at institutional and system-levels.
- Objectives span the enhancement of teaching and learning, the promotion of equity of access to higher education, the enhancement of institutions' responsiveness to the needs of wider society, research capacity-building, and the internationalisation of Irish higher education. The HEA leads in developing the evidence-base which underpins strategic planning and strategy implementation at institutional, regional and national level.

USI is very grateful to the Higher Education Authority for its support in the delivery of the European Student Convention.

Healthy Campus

The HEA Higher Education Healthy Campus Charter offers guidelines to third-level institutions to build on existing wellbeing actions and assists with the integration of health and wellbeing across the whole campus including teaching and learning, student supports and services, staff development, policies.

It also assists in identifying opportunities in the college environment, whether social or academic, that can help foster an ethos of care, compassion and inclusion on campuses. The Framework was developed in partnership with the higher education institutions, the HSE and Healthy Ireland.

A whole campus approach includes:

- Leadership, Strategy and Governance
- Campus Environments (Facilities and Services)
- Campus Culture and Communications
- Personal and Professional Development



Quality and Qualifications Ireland

The QQI is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training in Ireland.



Dearbhú Cáilíochta
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
Quality and
Qualifications Ireland

The Authority validates programmes, makes awards and is responsible for the promotion, maintenance, development and review of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

The QQI also informs the public about the quality of education and training programmes and qualifications, and advises the Government on national policy regarding quality assurance and enhancement in education and training.

The USI Vice President for Academic Affairs sits as a member of the Authority.

thea - Technological Higher Education Association



The Technological Higher Education Association is the voice of the technological higher education sector, advocating on behalf of and supporting its members in achieving their aims and objectives.

The Technological Higher Education Association was formed by all of the institutes of technology formerly represented by Institutes of Technology Ireland joining with Dublin Institute of Technology to form a cohesive and single advocacy body that supports the sector as it moves toward a planned reform of the higher education system and including critically the creation of a series of Technological Universities.

Launched formally in April 2017, this dynamic family of institutions delivers a unique offering which allows students to progress from Level 6 to Level 10 of the National Framework of Qualifications.

N-TUTORR

N-TUTORR is a collaboration between the technological university sector through technology and staff/student collaboration, in alignment with sustainable development goals.



It is managed by thea and has diverse objectives:

- Digital Transformation
- Universal Design for Learning
- Education for Sustainability
- Academic Integrity
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Employability



Timetable

Monday 24 February

3:00pm	CHECK IN
9:00pm	Drinks in the City (Meet in the Kinlay Lobby)

Tuesday 25 February

8.00 - 9.00am	Breakfast (Hostel)
9.00am	Walk to University of Galway
9:30am	Opening Session – President ESU/President USI MY243
10:00am	Address from President Professor Peter McHugh, University of Galway MY243
10:30am	Comfort Break
10:45am	MicroCreds – Emma Francis IUA MY243
12:00pm	LUNCH
1:30pm	Ceili- getting to know each other
2:30pm	ESU introduction Moore Institute Seminar Room THB – G010
4:00pm	Comfort Break
4:10pm – 6:00pm	Designing Micro credentials Moore Institute Seminar Room THB – G010
6:00pm – 7:00pm	ENDS
7:30pm – 9:30pm	Opening Dinner Moffett’s



Timetable

Wednesday 26 February

8.00am - 9.00am	Breakfast Hostel
10:30am – 11:30am	Plenary with Dr Orla Flynn, President of Atlantic Technological University Understanding the Technological University (TU) Merger
11:30am – 1:00pm	N-TUTOR Student Empowerment, including AI
1:00pm – 2:00pm	LUNCH
2:00pm – 3:30pm	Rethinking Assessment (QQI) Workshop
3:45pm – 4:00pm	Comfort Break
4:00pm – 4:50pm	Design Valid Assessment
5:00pm – 6:00pm	QA – What is it and why it is important?
6:30pm	DINNER Connacht Hotel

Timetable

Thursday 27 February

8.00 - 9.00am	Breakfast (Hostel)
10:00am – 11:00am	Healthy Campus (THB – G010) NStEP (THB – G011) National Student Engagement Programme Training programme for class representatives to give them the adequate skills to be student leaders, also host several other programmes. The aim of this session will show how it was set up etc.
11:00am – 12:00pm	Recognition of Prior Learning (THB-G010) Access, success and inclusivity in Higher Education (THB-G011) Ciara Staunton – Project Lead, National RPL Project
12:00 – 1:00pm	LUNCH
1:00pm – 2:00pm	Group Working
2:00pm – 3:00pm	Bystander Intervention Training Moore Institute Seminar Room (THB – G010)
3:00pm – 4:00pm	Designing a microcredential – presentation of results Moore Institute Seminar Room (THB – G010)
4:00pm – 5:00pm	Trust Ed (QQI) Seminar Room (THB – G011) TrustEd and international learner protection. This has a set criteria for colleges to achieve in looking after international when they come to Ireland. If colleges don't meet this, international offices in Ireland know not to recommend it ChatBot - Cara (SC004 Charles A.Mc Munn theatre) Cara is an innovative artificial intelligence-powered virtual assistant which has been developed by the University of Galway in partnership with Galvia, a pioneering AI company based in Galway. Cara efficiently addresses online queries from students while at the same time gathers essential data to identify and support at-risk individuals in the student community.
5:00 – 6:00 pm	ESU closing remarks
6:00pm – 8:00pm	Rest & Relaxation
8:00pm – 12:00am	Intercultural Night

Inclusivity & Conduct

LGBTQIA+ Meeting

At every ESU event the meeting of those who consider themselves part of the LGBTQIA+ community will take place to provide a safe space. The session is also open to people questioning their sexuality and/or gender identity. To protect those who are not openly out, please contact Luka Lešić (Equality Coordinator of ESU) via luka.lesic@esu-online.org or via +385994020741 - if you have questions about the session before deciding on whether you want to attend, you can also reach out to Luca. Typically the session is used to discuss current issues regarding gender/sexuality related aspects - both with regard to higher education and beyond.

Safe spaces

The ESC strives to ensure a discrimination-free environment and maintains a zero-tolerance policy against hate speech. By implementing a Code of Conduct (CoC) and fostering a sense of collective responsibility, we strive to create a safe and inclusive space for all participants, based on the principles of equality and mutual respect.

If any ESC attendee feels unsafe, unfairly treated, threatened, assaulted, discriminated against or marginalised, they can contact the Trusted Persons Team (TPT) at any time (s. below). The TPT provides a confidential and discreet platform where incidents can be reported anonymously or non-anonymously via the contact and reporting form provided. All reported matters are treated respectfully, promptly and seriously.

Contact information for the designated TPT will be communicated at the start of the event and will remain accessible throughout the event. For added convenience, an online form is also available for digital communication or anonymous reporting, if necessary, on the ESU website, [found here](#)

ESU Code of Conduct

The ESU Code of Conduct is in force for this event and [may be found here](#).

Event Chats

[Info channel](#)

[Conversational chat](#)

Trusted Person Team



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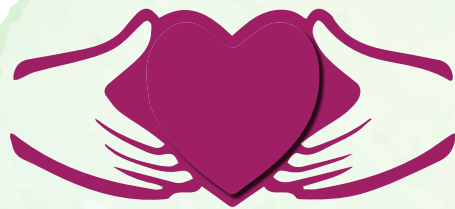
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Go raibh míle maith agaibh

We would like to express heartfelt thanks to very many people, without whom this event would not have been possible. Each of their contributions has been essential in its own way, so in no particular order, we would wish to thank:

Faye Ní Dhomhnaill and her colleagues at CMLOG,
Noelle MacNamara at University of Galway SU Commercial Services
Dr Orla Flynn, ATU President
Professor Peter McHugh, University of Galway President
Ross Woods, Caroline Mahon and colleagues at the Higher Education Authority
Laura Flynn and colleagues at the QQI
Dr Joseph Ryan and Sean O'Reilly at THEA
Emma Francis and colleagues at the IUA
Louise Crowley and Celine Griffin at UCC
Niamh Kennedy and Rachael Sarsfield Ryan at NStEP
John Hannon at University of Galway
Kieran O'Malley at Connacht Hospitality Group



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Union of Students in Ireland
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