

**Video message from Minister of State Katja Keul for the opening of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference of the Centre for Irish-German Studies at the University of Limerick, 22 – 23 September 2022**

Duration: five minutes

No. of characters: 3200

Minister of State for European Affairs Thomas Byrne,  
Professor Kerstin Mey (President of the University of Limerick),  
Professor Gisela Holfter (Director, CIGS),  
Professor Joachim Fischer,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Heinrich Böll was one of the best-known German visitors to Ireland. In his “Irish Journal” of 1957, he writes about the relaxed and cheerful atmosphere in Limerick.

Böll was profoundly impressed by Ireland and its culture.

The rural Ireland he described is long gone. But I am reliably informed that the craic goes on in Limerick.

That certainly bodes well for the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference of the Centre for Irish-German Studies.

The Centre is the only one of its kind in Ireland. With its PhD projects, conferences, guest lectures and seminars, it forms an integral part of the German-Irish research scene.

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It provides information about German-speaking countries.

It opens doors to Germany. And it helps Germans and Irish people to get to know each other better.

Not only is the Centre a shining example of German studies in Ireland. It also does a great deal to foster closer ties between our societies.

That is important – especially now.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is a watershed in the history of our continent.

At this time, European cohesion is existential.

Ireland and Germany work together to strengthen the European idea. Federal President Steinmeier made that clear during his state visit to Ireland last October.

Exchange between civil societies is crucial for European cohesion.

The Goethe-Institut, town twinning, international schools and inter-university collaboration play an important part in this.

You play a very important part in this.

On behalf of the Federal Foreign Office, I would like to thank you for all you do.

I know that you work closely with our Embassy in Dublin. You regularly organise joint events, such as the poetry project Dännerstag.

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The programme of your 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference shows the wide range of your interest: from language and music to photography.

I would like to thank all of you for your tireless commitment:

- the members of the Centre,
- the lecturers and all those involved,

and of course, two people in particular:

- Professor Joachim Fischer, co-founder and Deputy Director of the Centre,
- and the current Director, Professor Gisela Holfter.

Professor Holfter, last year you were awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany for your services to German-Irish academic relations. That alone shows the extraordinary importance of your work here at the Centre and beyond.

Congratulations to you all on 25 years of promoting research, of teaching and of international academic collaboration!

I wish you interesting discussions and a successful anniversary event over the next two days!