

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

HONORARY CONFERRING

Monday, 5 December 2022

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY **PROFESSOR IMELDA MAHER** on 5 December 2022, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa* on **PROFESSOR GRÁINNE DE BÚRCA**

Vice President, Colleagues, Graduates, a Chairde

Is mór an onóir é dom, gur iarr an Ollscoil orm an aitheasc seo a thabhairt don Ollamh de Búrca agus an céim oinigh seo á bhronnadh uirthi

We are truly honoured to welcome Professor Gráinne de Búrca to UCD today. Professor de Búrca is the Florence Ellinwood Allen Professor of Law at New York University Law School where she is also the Faculty Director of the Hauser Global Law School and Director of the Jean Monnet Center for International and Regional Economic Law & Justice.

A law graduate of UCD, the University of Michigan and Kings Inns, Professor de Búrca started her career as a researcher at the Law Reform Commission in Dublin before moving to Oxford University and then onto the prestigious European University Institute in Florence. After Florence, she became a tenured professor at one of our partners, Fordham Law School in New York City. She was the first Irish person to hold a tenured chair at Harvard Law School before taking up her current role at NYU. She has also taught as a visiting Professor in University Law Schools at Columbia, Yale, Toronto and Melbourne as well as being a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy in London.

Professor de Búrca's career is characterised by two related phenomena, transition and erudition. Lawyers here will know that law is territorially bounded with each country having its own laws. Prof de Búrca has achieved a scholarly reputation that transcends these customary jurisdictional constraints. Each time she has relocated she has changed the focus of her scholarship – the trajectory of her work reflecting different circumstances and jurisdictions such that she has developed a formidable reputation across three related domains: European Union Law, Human Rights Law, and Constitutional Law. When she was in Oxford, she started to teach and write on European Union Law, culminating in the authoritative book published by Oxford University Press: Craig and de Búrca, *EU Law: Text, Cases and Materials*, now in its 7th edition. At an impressive 1344 pages it is a familiar text to generations of law students across Europe and beyond. When she moved to the United States, Professor de Búrca began to focus more on human rights and international law, culminating in her recent monograph, *Reframing Human Rights Law in a Turbulent Era* published by Oxford University Press in 2021. This book builds on her cross-disciplinary work on law and experimental governance brilliantly arguing that the interactive dynamic of international human rights at multiple levels can engender progressive change. The monograph bridges the inevitable gaps between theory and practice in the human rights field, which is a real challenge for academic writing, providing case studies on the mobilisation of international human rights law in relation to gender equality in Pakistan, disability rights in Argentina and children and reproductive rights in Ireland. As Prof Sarah Knuckey from Columbia University noted in her review of the work, this is a powerful and much needed contribution to human rights theory and practice offering an original and compelling account of why common human rights advocacy strategies are effective in advancing rights and justice.

As the European Union faces continuing challenges especially in relation to the rule of law and human rights, we are fortunate indeed that next year, Professor de Búrca returns to the European University Institute to take up the Chair in Comparative Constitutional Law where I hope she will advance her theoretically rigorous and practically grounded arguments as to the importance of domestic and international institutions as dynamic, participatory and iterative systems that can support and augment law and rights. As Professor de Búrca argues: politics – whatever those politics are – without human rights is not enough.

Professor de Búrca has proven herself an intellectual leader combining collegiality with scholarly rigour. She has edited or co-edited eleven books, including *The Evolution of EU Law* (which most unusually for an edited collection is currently in its 3rd edition). She is co-editor-in-chief of the influential *International Journal of Constitutional Law* (I•CON) and serves on the editorial board of the *American Journal of International Law*, and on the advisory board of the journal most closely associated with UCD, the *Irish Jurist*. She has edited numerous journal symposia including *Queer Theory and International Law* (AJIL Unbound, 2022), *The GDPR and International Law* (AJIL Unbound, 2020) and *The Appropriation of Human Rights by the New Global Right* (*International Journal of Constitutional Law*, 2023 forthcoming). This is in addition to her more than 80 articles and book chapters in prestigious journals and edited collections.

In addition to her extraordinary and richly deserved scholarly reputation, Professor de Búrca is also renowned for her generosity towards more junior academics and PhD students with those most precious commodities – time and attention. She has mentored 100s of them at this stage especially women. And I think it is fair to say, that

she has always had a special welcome for any Irish student or scholar she has met along the way.

On behalf of my colleagues, our students and the university, I am delighted to welcome you back to UCD today Gráinne. I hope that your family back in New York: Philip, Seán and Ross can share in that delight, even though they cannot be with us. And we particularly remember your mother Bernie, who widowed with four children when you, the youngest, was 12 years old sowed the seeds of intellectual curiosity and collegiality that we are honouring now.

Mar fhocal scoir, táim cinnte go mbeadh do thuismitheoirí Bernie agus Seán, thar a bheith brodúil asat inniu- ní hamháin inniu ach bheadh siad bródúl as a bhfuil bainte amach agat id' ghairm eisceachtíúil.

Professor de Búrca you have been an inspiration for generations of law students, yours is a distinctive voice: rigorous, original, exacting in legal analysis, while engaging with and advancing debates on governance and law. Your fine scholarship has advanced the boundaries of our knowledge and understanding of law and UCD is very proud to honour you, one of our most distinguished alumni.

Praehonorabilis Pro Praeses, totaque Universitas,

Praesento vobis hanc meam filium, quam scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneam esse quae admittatur, honoris causa, ad Gradum Doctoratus in utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico; idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo, totique Academiae.