



Ambasáid na hÉireann
Embassy of Ireland

Embassy Winter Newsletter

December 2021



Message from the Ambassador

A Chairde,

Christmas is a very special time of the year for many Irish people. It is a time when we come together to celebrate family and friendship. As we approach the second anniversary of the pandemic, this Christmas will again see many of us staying apart. Being apart does not mean that we don't miss seeing our friends and neighbours, and the fantastic Irish community across Slovakia.

A quote from Article 2 of Bunreacht na hÉireann, the Irish Constitution, is printed in every Irish passport. It says, “The Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage”. This underlines the continuing importance of the Irish diaspora to Ireland today. While small in number, the Irish community in Slovakia is an integral part of our great global diaspora.

“To Be Irish At Christmas” is a programme aimed at bringing together the global Irish diaspora during what has been another challenging year. You can find out more about this below at the link below.

<https://tobeirish.ie/>

The Embassy team look forward to the time when circumstances will allow us to meet again in person. But until then, please stay safe; take care of yourselves and of one another.

We hope you enjoy our latest newsletter and find it informative and useful. As ever, we would very much welcome your suggestions and ideas on how we might improve it.

Our newsletters are now also available on our website [here](#)

Nollaig Shona Daoibh, Veselé Vianoce, Happy Christmas,



Dermot McGauran

Ambassador

A message from your Consul

Hello Friends

For those of you who made it to the Hallowe'en event, it was great to be able to meet you in person. The organisers, Celina, Edna and Aidan did a fantastic job and Shane was very kind to offer the Goblin. The venue and costumes were amazing. I am happy I was not the one tasked with picking the winner. It was so wonderful to see the children enjoying the entertainment and having fun together. Almost like normal times again.

I know the Irish Community planned to have a further celebration for Christmas. We at the Embassy would have been very happy to support your initiatives. Unfortunately, due to the current restrictions, that will not be possible. While it is disappointing, we do hope that there will be other occasions where we can all meet in 2022.

For those of you who will be travelling to Ireland for the holidays, please remember that regardless of your vaccination status, you will need either a negative PCR test less than 72 hours old or a negative antigen test less than 48 hours old.

Wishing you all a Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year whether you are planning to celebrate here in Slovakia, Ireland or elsewhere in the world.

Janet



Embassy outreach

As announced in our previous newsletter, we have launched our **Global Joycean Book Giveaway**. Editions of James Joyce's work were donated to the Irish Studies Department at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica. Unfortunately, the pandemic situation prevented us from visiting other establishments. We are very much looking forward to continuing this project next year as 2022 will mark the centenary of the first publication of "Ulysses".

After two years, we welcomed back talented Irish artist, Mrs. Margaret Anne Suggs. She returned to participate at the BIB - **Biennale of Illustration**





Bratislava, a regular international exhibition of original book illustrations for children and young people. While here, Margaret Anne held workshops for local elementary schools. The first of these was Hallowe'en themed. It was a great success, with the pupils embracing the Hallowe'en spirit and coming dressed up as witches, skeletons, ballerinas, zombies or cheerleaders. The children had a wonderful time drawing ghosts, spiders, bats and fellow witches.

cup of tea inspired by the illustrator's latest book of the same name. The pupils very much enjoyed listening to Margaret Anne reading from her book. They then drew cups and ate cakes. Who would have thought that mugs could be so inspiring?

An **Irish room** will soon be part of the St. Vincent de Paul homeless shelter in Bratislava. The Embassy donated posters of Ireland to bring some colour and beauty to the shelter. An entire room will be decorated with these posters. Those staying at the shelter can look forward to appreciating the newly decorated surroundings in their "Irish room". ☺ We are pleased that our country's castles, cities, nature and culture will in some small way enhance their difficult lives. The shelter is always in need of support and donations, mainly of hygienic products and for publicity on the important and admirable work, they are doing there. Please spread the word.



The Embassy was delighted to be a partner of the **Hallowe'en party** organised by the Irish community in Goblin's Pub on 23 October. Big thanks goes to Celina Barber Nagy, Edna Williams and Aidan Burns for their commitment and enthusiasm in making this happen as well as to Shane Hughes for opening his Goblins dungeon to the community. The event was a great success. Children and their parents displayed wonderful imagination and creative skills in preparing those costumes. The Ambassador had the difficult task of choosing the winner. In truth, everyone was

a winner that day. We are very much looking forward to more community events like this once conditions allow.

Another Hallowe'en themed event, this time online, took place thanks to the combined efforts of the four Irish Embassies in the region (Austria, Czechia, Hungary and Slovakia). Our diplomatic network presented some of the **spookiest Irish Folklore stories** linked to the ancient Celtic Samhain festival. It was a fitting way to celebrate Hallowe'en.



After a record-breaking **Greening** for St Patrick's Day in March, we are proud to display some of these images from across Slovakia at the Embassy. We call on you, our eyes and ears across the country, to let us know if you can think of any building, monument or other object that merits "greening". There is only one condition, namely that the landmark in question should already have evening lights installed. Otherwise, it is too expensive, as there is no budget allocated for this campaign. Thank you. Go raibh maith agaibh.



Ambassador's activities

Just four months since he arrived here, Ambassador Dermot McGauran continues to travel the length and breadth of Slovakia. An Ambassador must wear many hats. Dermot has already been a lecturer, an entertainer of small children, judge of Hallowe'en costumes, and a reader of poetry as well as working with those who seek to improve the lives of the local Roma communities. A keen linguist, he has been begun learning the Slovak language. In his spare time, Dermot has been enjoying Slovak rich culture and delicious cuisine.

Banská Bystrica in central Slovakia has been an Irish educational hub for some time. Thanks to their enthusiasm and close cooperation with Ireland's Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Matej Bel university run an **Irish studies** programme. It is therefore no surprise that the Ambassador's first educational visit took place there.



The Ambassador met with **Mrs Ingrid Brocková**, State secretary at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs responsible for economic diplomacy. Enhancing trade and the economic ties between Ireland and Slovakia were high on the agenda. The two also discussed the enormous contribution made by the Slovak community in Ireland and the Irish community here in fostering the very warm relationship between our two countries.

In October, Ambassador McGauran visited the **elementary school** on Javorová alej in Chorvátsky Grob where our own Slovak Shamrock Shane Crean teaches English. The Ambassador talked to the pupils about Ireland, St. Patrick's Day and Hallowe'en traditions as well as the Irish language. The pupils gave wonderful performances of Irish dancing as well as of hurling. The children were especially interested in learning more about the Irish origins of Hallowe'en and how these were brought by Irish



emigrants to the US in 19th century. They were, however, rather concerned about the welfare of fish in Chicago's river when the local Irish community dyes it green 😊



The Ambassador had a very warm and constructive meeting with the State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Mr. **Martin Klus**. The two discussed the EU agenda and the many areas where Ireland and Slovakia can cooperate. State Secretary Klus is a proud son of Banská Bystrica and was pleased to hear of the Embassy's close relationship with his hometown.

This year's Hallowe'en also marked a major development in air connectivity between Ireland and Slovakia. The **first flight from Košice to Dublin** took off from the capital of Eastern Slovakia on 31 October 2021 at 14:05. Ambassador McGauran was there to witness it. This new route, which will operate twice weekly, is enormously welcome. It is great news for the 30 plus Irish students studying veterinary medicine in Košice, as well as for those in our community living in the east. We are sure that the new route will provide a welcome boost for tourism, business and people-to-people links.



inclusion for Roma and other important issues.

The Ambassador has also visited the National Council of the Slovak Republic. He paid an introductory call on the chair of the European Affairs Committee, Mrs **Vladimíra Marcinková**. They discussed bilateral relations between Ireland and Slovakia cooperation between our parliamentarians, the Protocol and Northern Ireland, social



Irishman **John Minahane's** masterful English-language translation of the **Bloody Sonnets** was again in the spotlight. On the 100th anniversary of Pavol Országh Hviezdoslav's death, both John and the Ambassador attended an event marking

the occasion. Ambassador McGauran read the 18th sonnet in John's celebrated English translation of this seminal work of Slovak poetry.

Following in the footsteps of his two predecessors, Ambassador McGauran is supporting this year's edition of the **Roma Spirit awards**. The competition presents the best practices and activities aimed at promoting social inclusion, supporting, and developing an open-minded community and mutual space for intercultural dialogue. The Ambassador served on the

international jury that evaluated 18 nominees in six categories and chose winners among personalities, municipalities, companies, NGOs, media and achievements in culture.



Each year, 25 November marks **International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women** and the beginning of the so-called 'Orange the world' campaign. This lasts just over two weeks until *The International Day of Human Right* on 10 December. The Embassy of Ireland is a proud supporter of the cause. The team took part in a series of photo shoots marking this important day.



Call on the community regarding Irish literature

Do you follow the latest developments in **contemporary Irish literature**? Do you know what new books and short stories are popular among your friends and family? Would you like the Slovak public to get to know them too? So would we.

That is why we are joining a successful project run by several Embassies and Cultural institutes in Bratislava called the **Night of literature**. It takes place mainly in the capital but also reaches other towns across the country on a night in September. Slovak actors and actors read short extracts from the latest additions of modern European literature in unusual places. Which contemporary Irish books would you like to see introduced to Slovak bibliophiles and where would you like them to be read next September?

In order to participate, we are looking for a recently translated book, one currently being translated or where a translation is planned or, indeed, for a book which is not yet being considered for the Slovak market. It should be something powerful and new that would draw the listeners to the book and motivate them to buy it!

If you have proposals or ideas to share, please contact our Policy Officer Zuzana at bratislava@dfa.ie. We could attract both new Slovak readers and local publishing houses alike simply by translating an extract and promoting it at the event.



Consular update

We would very much like to get to know all of the Irish community here in Slovakia. We want all of you to be safe, well informed and involved in our community and Embassy activities. We will also gladly publicise your events and community-wide projects. If you know of someone new, please do not hesitate to put him or her in touch with Janet and Soňa, our Consular Team at bratislava@dfa.ie.

For those you are travelling abroad this Christmas, Covid-19 mandatory requirements and Covid Certificate criteria can differ depending on the country you are travelling to. Bear in mind that regulations can change at short notice, so please remember to check the criteria for your destination and your return journey. Further information available at [DFA Travel Advice-General COVID-19 Travel Advisory](#) and at [korona.gov.sk](#)

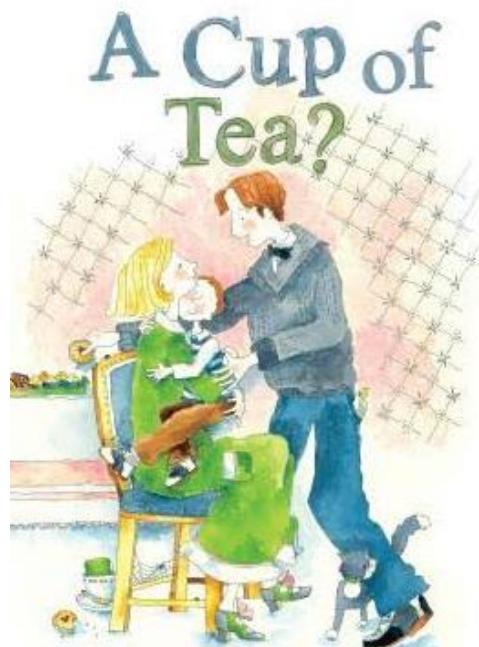


Kids' corner

Dear children, we hope you had a chance to visit the Biennale of illustration exhibition at Bratislava castle. It happens only once every two years and brings together the most beautiful children's book illustrations from across the world. Several talented artists also represented Ireland. One of them, Mrs Margaret Anne Suggs, also visited one of the local schools and read to the pupils from her book. As Slovak children enjoyed it very much, we believe you will too as it describes a typical Irish tradition – tea drinking.

A Cup of Tea by Eric La Branche and Margaret Anne Suggs

When Mommy got home from work today,
She was "oh, so tired", too weary play.
I had hoped she would go on a bug hunt with me,
But she just wanted to relax "with a nice cup of tea".



Eric La Branche & Margaret Anne Suggs

Perhaps she could play after she rested a spell,
But just then I heard the front door bell.
It was Aunt Margaret, full of kisses and hugs.
I'd rather have Mommy help me search for some bugs.

While I searched alone for spiders and flies,
Aunt Margaret and Mommy drank tea and ate pies.
I invited them both to explore with me.
Their answer? "Give us a minute to finish our tea".

If you want to know how the story unfolds, you can visit our Embassy or the BIB exhibition and read it for yourselves!

