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***Making the Case for Irish Unity in the EU*, an independent report commissioned by The Left in the European Parliament, launched in Brussels**

The academic research paper, *Making the Case for Irish Unity in the EU*, co-authored by Professor Colin Harvey and Mr Mark Bassett Barrister-at-Law, was today launched at the European Parliament in Brussels.

The independent report, commissioned by The Left in the European Parliament, explores the legal mechanisms, as outlined in the Good Friday Agreement and recognised under international law, for the island of Ireland to be reunited within the EU, and further outlines the steps that the EU can take in order to provide for such an eventuality.

Professor Colin Harvey said:

“The choice for constitutional change on the island of Ireland is legally enshrined in the Good Friday Agreement. These conversations about what that change might look like are already taking place, and Brexit has intensified the interest in this debate.

“The amount of research that is being done is really quite remarkable, and it is very welcome to see so many people engaged in this discussion about future referendums on uniting the island of Ireland.

“Ultimately, there is an obvious route back into the European Union for the people of Northern Ireland - the European Council made that clear in 2017. But we have to ask ourselves whether the European Union is doing enough to prepare for constitutional change in Ireland? Our sense is, at the moment, that it could be doing so much more.

“Our research explores the legal mechanisms of the Good Friday Agreement and international law, and seeks to provide a platform for the European institutions to engage in this debate.

“Right now the EU is the odd person out at a time when so many other people are actively discussing planning and preparation for constitutional change, and I feel that the EU needs to step up.

“In the end, the ultimate choice remains with the people of the island of Ireland.”

Mark Bassett Barrister-At-Law said:

“We hope that our report will be read by audiences across the continent, and that they will consider the merits of Irish Unity from the perspective of the European institutions.

“We believe that there are referendums on constitutional change coming on the horizon, and there is likely to be a binary choice for the electorates north and south.

“One option will be the current status quo, which is Northern Ireland remaining in the United Kingdom with Britain, outside of the European Union and within a protocol arrangement.

“But the alternative would be a reunified Ireland as a full EU member state. That would have consequences for the European institutions for the member state governments, and it is time for them to look at the merits of that.

“We examine the protocol, we examine the treaties, and we examine Irish and UK constitutional law, and we have been unable to find any good reason why it could be said that the EU cannot adopt a policy position with regards to Irish unification.

“There was one with regard to German unification, there is one in relation to Cyprus, so we are hoping that this report is the first step in starting a conversation and examination of the merits of the EU taking a position on Irish Unity for those audiences.

“One of the things we want to ensure when a referendum is held regarding the issue of Irish Unity is that people are going into it with full information; unlike what happened at the Brexit referendum.

“A criticism of the Brexit referendum was that there was a definite reluctance on European national governments to comment upon the actual consequences of UK withdrawal from the European Union.

“We therefore believe that the EU has a role in explaining clearly and dispassionately what the consequences are for a reunified Ireland as a member state of the European Union.”

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