

irish focus

AN IRISH ASSOCIATION

IHBC PRESIDENT PLACES MORE FOCUS ON THE BUSINESS ASPECT OF THE ORGANIZATION

"We are the hub for the Irish in Hungary and for Hungarians who are in any way involved with Ireland or the Irish." That is how the Irish Hungarian Business Circle (IHBC) defines itself on its website.



As the President of the IHBC, Matty Ryan points out to Diplomacy&Trade in reaction to an earlier characterization of the organization as a 'quasi chamber', "I prefer to describe the IHBC as an association. Loosely defined, an association is a group of individuals who enter into a voluntary agreement to achieve a defined objective – and that is what we are. We are a member-based, politically independent association. This means we have membership fees, the leadership is elected, and we have statutes." The IHBC focuses on promoting our membership along with representing their interests, rights and economic issues.

Focus on business events

Matty Ryan was elected IHBC President in 2016 (and then re-elected in 2018 for an additional term). "I started focusing on creating business events within the IHBC, gradually increasing their number to four events in the past year. In the future, I would like to continue to have four business events every year," he says. The most recent of these was the "Science of Perfect Marketing". This event was hosted by the CEU Department of Economics and Business and proudly supported by the IHBC, organized by Mark Downey. It took place on April 10 at the Central European University with Dave McCaughan, the co-founder of Ai.agency. He spoke about how Machine Learning (AI)

technologies can help discover, explore, prioritise and measure the elements of your company story from across the whole of the Internet.

By hosting events like this, Matty Ryan changed the nature of traditional IHBC business events. "The former speaker-audience lecture format was loosened to turn it into more of a networking opportunity, offering more value to our membership and other attendees. One of our favorite past business events this year was the Whiskey Tasting and VIP Networking Event with Judit Varga, Secretary of State for EU Relations, and Pannonia Bio. It was held at the Pernod Ricard offices and spearheaded by our current Vice-President, Duncan Graham. Pannonia Bio is the main corporate sponsor of the IHBC and we are hugely grateful for their support. We also had very successful events with the Italian Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise Ireland over the past year."

Members

Accounting, marketing and corporate services are perhaps the areas the most represented in the Irish business community here in Hungary (as well as in the membership of the IHBC). "Almost all the Irish businesses in Hungary are members – and not just Irish businesses but also firms like Invitech and UPS where executives are Irish persons holding top positions in the Hungarian subsidiaries," the

President highlights. Among the members, he makes special mention of the Embassy of Ireland in Hungary and Enterprise Ireland. In 2016, during the first year Matty Ryan was President, the corporate membership numbered at seven, increasing to fourteen within the year. Today, it is at fifteen and the President's goal is to increase that membership to twenty over the next few years. This will all be discussed at

FUTURE PLANS

Business: The IHBC will continue to grow the close relationships with the Canadian and Italian Chambers of Commerce, as well as adding the British Chamber of Commerce.

"We are also excited for our business event taking place in the southern Hungarian city of Pécs in October. We are in the planning process now with the main organizer and I am hopeful he will be elected to our Board at the next AGM," Matty Ryan says.

Sponsorship: IHBC intends to raise additional sponsorship money by increasing the public relations and media exposure for its membership. "In that regards, our new colleague, Anikó Woods and her expertise in strategic marketing are of great help," he adds.

Membership: This year, three new board members will join the IHBC. Matty Ryan believes that increasing the diversity of the board helps to grow its membership – as well as being an important factor for sound and strategic decision-making.

Charity: One of the goals for 2019 is to set up an official charitable foundation because a foundation serves as a base for more support and allows the IHBC to give increased help to local communities – for instance, through people being given the chance to offer 1% of their income.

Another objective is to open the organization towards young people. The President highlights that "the veterinary university here in Budapest is full of Irish students – along with many other universities. This means hundreds of Irish students are living in the Hungarian capital. Recently, I had a chance to meet some of them and realized they had not heard about the IHBC. To help raise awareness, this year we plan to have an official 'student ambassador' – to spread the word amongst local students, budding entrepreneurs, and future business leaders," he concludes.

the IHBC's AGM to be held on May 29 at Becketts – a member-owned Irish pub & restaurant. His aspiration is to have a total membership of 100 (20 corporate, 40 small corporate, 35 individual and five associate members) from the current 69.

Good deeds

Charity work is an integral part of the operation of the Irish-Hungarian Business Circle. According to the President, they particularly focus on disadvantaged children, kindergartens and nurseries. The IHBC membership provides a broad spectrum of help to poor, disadvantaged communities and people in need. Describing their latest 'good deed', he highlights that "on the first Saturday this April, our volunteer members planted a huge garden with fruit trees in Szilaspogony – in cooperation with the local community. The main sponsor on that day was the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Hungary (CCCH) that supplied all the vegetables and fruit trees that were planted. Previously, the IHBC worked within this community to refurbish the nursery." (see video through the enclosed QR code). He adds that "during Christmas of 2017, IHBC members took a bus to Szilaspogony and furnished the local kindergarten by making repairs and building new furniture purchased from IKEA. Our volunteer members offered their time and when we finished our day, the village held a big party with food and pálinka to celebrate". The President points out that he receives a lot of help from Zsuzsa Bozó, the former owner of the Caledonia Pub in Budapest, in organizing the main charity activities. The IHBC receives and pays the invoices for all the necessary furniture, fixings and other supplies as well as assists Ms. Bozó with any additional organizational work required. 



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