

Biography

David Byrne S.C.

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Education

1. Barrister-at-Law, Senior Counsel, King's Inns Dublin
2. B.A. (Economics, Ethics and Politics), University College Dublin
3. FCI. Arb., Chartered Institute of Arbitrators of England and Ireland

David Byrne began his career as a barrister in Ireland in 1970, became Attorney General of Ireland in 1997, and was appointed the first European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection in 1999.

As European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection, Mr. Byrne's responsibilities included policy development and bringing forward legislation to the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers on these issues. He maintained a particular interest in tobacco control and was responsible for the drafting and enactment of legislation in Europe banning cross border advertising and sponsorship of tobacco products. The European Union became the first region in the world to ban the use of misleading descriptors on cigarette packets such as "mild" or "light" and this legislation placed maximum yields on tar, nicotine and carbon monoxide yields in cigarettes. Warnings on cigarette packets also became compulsory. During this time, the European Union was instrumental in designing and achieving consensus on the World Health Organisation's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the world's first global health treaty.

His other responsibilities included the pan European response to health threats such as SARS and Avian Influenza and the food crises arising from BSE and Foot and Mouth disease; development and implementation of a new EU Health Strategy and Programme; development of the strategy on bio-terrorism; the formation of agreements with the trading partners of the European Union (EU) to ensure mutual adherence to food safety regulations; regulation of GMOs in the EU; and promotion of consumer confidence in e-commerce and cross border trade.

Before commencing his public service work, Mr. Byrne practiced law as a barrister for almost 30 years, specializing in constitutional, civil and European law. He became a Senior Counsel in 1985 and was Leader of the Irish Bar from 1997 until his appointment as European Commissioner in 1999.

During his time as Attorney General he participated as one of the negotiators of the Good Friday Agreement in April 1998 and drafted and oversaw the major constitutional amendments required by that agreement, which were approved by referendum in May 1998.

Since retiring from membership of the EU Commission, Mr. Byrne acted as Special Envoy to the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) on a project to amend the International Health Regulations dealing with the monitoring, surveillance and response to global communicable diseases such as SARS and Avian influenza. These regulations were adopted by the World Health Assembly in May 2005 and are the second of the two global health treaties sponsored by the WHO.

He has also agreed to take up various advisory roles in health, including;

Chair of the Ethics Review Committee of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) WHO, Lyons.

Patron of Health First Europe (HFE), Brussels.

Chair Cardiovascular Research Institute, Trinity College, Dublin

Member Advisory Board Royal College of Physicians, London.

He is currently a non executive director of Irish Life and Permanent Plc. and Kingspan Plc.

Chair, Board of the National Concert Hall, Dublin

Professional Activities

1. Professor of Law (Adj.) University College Dublin (2005-date)
2. Special Envoy, WHO (2004-2005)
3. EU Commissioner (1999-2004)
4. Attorney General of Ireland (1997-1999)
5. Member, Council of State (1997-1999)
6. Member, Barristers' Professional Practices and Ethics Committee (1995-97)
7. Member, ICC International Court of Arbitration, Paris (1990-97)
8. Senior Counsel by call to the Inner Bar (1985)
9. Member, Governing Council of the Bar of Ireland (1974-87)
10. Admission to membership of the Bar of Ireland (1970)

Honours and Awards

1. Honorary Doctor of Laws, University College Dublin (LLD) (2004)
2. Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (FRCPI) (2001)
3. Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians (London) (FRCP) (2003)
4. Bencher of the King's Inns, Dublin (1997)
5. Award of Grosse Ehrenzeichen des Landes Salzburg (2004)
6. WHO Director-General's Award for Leadership in Global Tobacco Control (2003)
7. European Lung Foundation Award for Tobacco Control (2001)
8. European of the Year Award - Ireland (2001)