



An Roinn Gnóthaí
Eachtracha agus Trádála
Department of
Foreign Affairs and Trade

Report on the Citizens' Dialogues on the future of Europe

Prepared by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



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Photos courtesy of European Movement Ireland

Foreword

Next month marks the centenary of the armistice of World War I – a vivid reminder of the cost of a Europe not at peace with itself.

One of the many voices lost to that long war was that of Irish man Thomas Kettle.

Of the words he left behind, these remain among the most pressing: “My own counsel to Ireland is that, in order to become deeply Irish, she must become European.”

I was born in 1972, the year the Irish people voted to join the European Economic Community.

Like so many of my generation, the quality of my life and the opportunities available to us – to study, to work and to travel - were transformed by our membership of the European Union.

Today, we enjoy two identities: Irish and European.

But Europe's place in the world is changing.

We launched the Citizens' Dialogue on the future of Europe to listen to your priorities, to learn about the Europe you want.



We have heard that you want Europe to continue to invest in the policies that work – like CAP, regional funding, the single market and Erasmus+.

We have heard you say that you want to live in a Europe that lives up to its values and is ready to meet the new challenges that we face. Challenges like climate change, migration and cybersecurity. Challenges that no one country can hope to tackle alone.

We have been listening. Our hope is that you feel heard and that you may recognise something of yourself or the events you attended on these pages.

Simon Coveney, T.D.
Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade
October 2018



Photos courtesy of European Movement Ireland

Foreword



I was delighted to join the Taoiseach and Tánaiste in launching the Citizens' Dialogues on the future of Europe last November.

Since then, I have had the pleasure of travelling around the country listening to your ambitions for the future of Europe.

Our slogan has been: 'Your future; your Europe; get involved.' And you have.

You came out in pouring rain and in glorious sunshine. You shared your worries and gave us your ideas for the future.

We asked you challenging questions about how you think we can build a Union that is prosperous and competitive; safe and secure; sustainable; socially responsible; and how we can best equip ourselves to meet the future.

Not everyone has the same vision or the same priorities. Not surprisingly, the conversations sometimes delved into areas beyond the EU's competence. Some issues are managed under the Treaties at European level; others are within the remit of the Member States.

This report offers a snapshot of the rich and varied contributions we heard during the dialogues. The European Union cannot be all things to all people, but it can be better.

The over-riding message that I heard is that people want a Europe that is fair. Fair to its citizens, fair to the environment and fair in its dealings with the rest of the world.

We will use your hopes and dreams as our guide in shaping the future of the European Union. This is particularly important in the run up to the EU Heads of State and Government meeting next May which will prepare the Union's strategic agenda for the next five years.

To all of you who have joined us - thank you for getting involved.

For anyone who hasn't yet had the chance to do so, or who has more to say, I would encourage you to complete the European Commission's EU-wide public consultation on the future of Europe. You will find a link on our future of Europe website (www.dfa.ie/eu).

Finally, I want to thank the European Movement Ireland and the Wheel for collaborating with us on the Citizens' Dialogues and the Institute of International and European Affairs for providing facilitators. You have been creative partners on this rewarding journey.

**Helen McEntee, T.D.,
Minister for State for European Affairs
October 2018**

The debate on the future of Europe



In September 2016, the leaders of the European Union met in Bratislava in Slovakia to discuss our shared future in a union of 27 Member States.

They said that while the EU is not perfect, it is the best instrument we have for addressing the new challenges that we face.

In building this future, the leaders said they needed to focus on the expectations of citizens and give them a vision of Europe that they can trust and support.

To start a discussion with citizens on what they want to see happen over the next few years, the European Commission published a White Paper on the Future of Europe in March 2017. They followed this with a series of reflection papers looking at options for economic and monetary union, the social dimension of the EU, globalisation, defence and financing.

Also in March, the leaders of the 27 Member States met in Italy. Marking the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, they pledged to listen and respond to the concerns of citizens.



WHITE PAPER ON THE
FUTURE OF EUROPE

*Reflections and scenarios
for the EU27 by 2025*

Launch of the Citizens' Dialogues on the future of Europe



To engage the Irish public directly in the debate, the Government launched the Citizens' Dialogues on the future of Europe in partnership with European Movement Ireland (Noelle O'Connell, Executive Director photographed above) in November 2017.

Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee, T.D., hosted a series of regional Citizens' Dialogues in Galway, Cork, Donegal and Meath. She also joined representatives of community, voluntary and charity organisations in a sectoral dialogue in cooperation with the Wheel. The series culminated in a National Citizens' Dialogue in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham on Europe Day, 9 May 2018.

Report on the Regional and Sectoral Citizens' Dialogues

The dialogues were widely advertised and open to everyone. They were designed to raise awareness and encourage participation. But most of all, they were a listening exercise.

Those who came along were asked to join roundtables and to say the first words that come to mind when they think of the EU. To give shape and continuity to each of the events, they were then asked to discuss questions based on the five key challenges identified by leaders in Bratislava. Each table's discussions were guided by moderators and summarised by note-takers.

The questions focussed on how to make the EU:

- prosperous and competitive;
- safe and secure;
- sustainable;
- socially responsible; and
- prepared for the future.

At the end of each dialogue, there was an open mic session during which people could raise any issues they did not get to address during the dialogues. They were also invited to give written feedback and set out their vision for the future of Europe in postcards from the Citizens' Dialogues



**“We want to be European,
but we want to be Irish.”**

Participants at the Citizens' Dialogues

How can we achieve a fair and competitive market for our businesses, that creates jobs and improves living standards, while continuing to protect consumers?



Participants told us they want **investment in youth, education and skills**, especially in IT and languages. They are worried about the effect of automation on job security and want to ensure that people can upskill throughout their lives.

To foster **innovation**, they want support for young entrepreneurs, links between research and business, and to learn from our European partners. Participants also believe that more could be done to promote products made in the European Union.

On **agriculture**, we heard support for continuing subsidies which benefit the consumer, with some saying they want the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to be more favourable to small farmers.

From **fishing communities**, we heard support for increasing subsidies for small-scale fishermen so that they can invest in equipment to help them to compete against larger competitors. Some also want to see an easing of fishing quotas.

Participants said they would like more **EU investment in the regions** and **more infrastructure**. In the context of **Brexit**, they want to prioritise direct routes to the European market and they do not want to see a return of borders.

There is strong support for **corporation tax** remaining a national competence. But there is some unease about the level of dependence on foreign direct investment in Ireland.

Some believe that the EU should be more vigorous in pursuing violations of **trade and competition policy**. They also criticise EU policies as lacking dynamism and falling behind countries such as China.

Participants said they want to see the completion of the **Digital Single Market** and the development of the **Single Market in Services**. They would also like to see more Member States encouraged to join the **Eurozone**.

We heard that more should be done to highlight the **supports available to business** through the EU, but many said that application processes are overly complex and off-putting.

Some see **EU regulation** as a good thing that protects consumers and businesses, but others feel that there is too much regulation and more responsibility should be devolved back to Member States. We also heard calls for regulations to be simplified and made "people friendly".

There is some interest in an EU-wide regulation on **affordable and safe credit for borrowers** as well as the strengthening of the **banking union** and in **energy independence**.



Photo courtesy of European Movement Ireland

How can we work best with our European partners to maintain peace, security and stability?

Participants said that as a small country **security is best achieved through cooperation with others** and that citizens should be involved in these discussions.

Many see **cybersecurity** as a priority. They want to know more about how to identify and stop cyber threats. They are also worried about the age of young people using **social media**.

Terrorism is a concern, with participants calling on the EU to do more to prevent terror attacks.

Some would like to see **greater cooperation in policing**, the **strengthening of Europol** and a common **EU counterterrorism framework**.

While people value **freedom of movement**, some participants would like better screening at borders and a common EU policy on migration.

We heard calls for citizens' **concerns about migration** to be addressed and to ensure greater **integration of migrants** into their new communities, including through EU-wide programmes.

Participants felt that more should be done to **combat people trafficking and drug trafficking**.

Some said that doubts about the EU have not been adequately addressed and participants said that the **EU needs to improve how it communicates**. They also want young people taught about the benefits of membership as this would enhance stability within the Union.

Believing that **social exclusion and poverty** have contributed to doubts about Europe, some feel that the focus should be on raising living standards.

Participants said that they want an **ethical and values-based approach towards foreign policy**. They believe that this is an area where the EU is strong and want the Union to speak with one voice. They also want the **rule of law** protected in the EU.

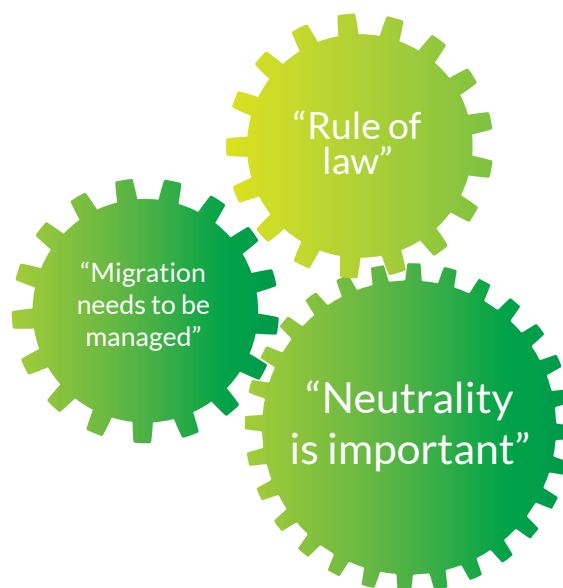


Photo courtesy of European Movement Ireland

There is support for the **EU increasing development aid and investing in Europe's neighbourhood**. Participants also want **enlargement** to be smooth and stable.

Some suggest that the EU should **lower trade barriers** and **promote free trade agreements** with developing countries. They believe that this could help developing countries to grow, which in turn could ease migration.

Ireland's **peacekeeping** record is a source of pride, with people also recognising the role that the EU has played in keeping peace. But some have misgivings about the level of public engagement around the decision to participate in the EU's **Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)**.

There is a strong attachment to Irish **neutrality**, but it is not unquestioning.

How can we plan and manage our rural and urban landscapes in a way that improves the quality of our lives, and protects the planet and our natural resources?



For some participants, nothing is more important than tackling **climate change**.

They want the EU to be a leader in finding **global solutions**, but also feel that it needs to do more to promote green policies and to enforce environmental regulations.

There is support for the EU introducing **tougher environmental laws** and some believe that trade agreements should be conditional on the EU's partners conforming to environmental standards.

We heard worries about **plastics**, with some are calling for a tax or a ban on their use. People are also interested to learn about what other Member States are doing about plastics.

Others told us that "one for all policies" do not work and that environmental targets should be **realistic and achievable**.

Across the range of views, there is strong interest in **more engagement and debate** on the climate action agenda and how it impacts on people's day to day lives.

Environmental education is seen as key, with people believing that it is needed across all generations and all sectors of society.

Participants said they would like to see more incentives to invest in **renewable energy** and support for the greater use of electric cars. They want to know more about solar, wind and tidal energy, with some open to discussing nuclear power.

There is also interest in providing **financial incentives** to firms supporting environmentally friendly practices.

People are worried about **sea pollution** and some are unhappy with the presence of super-trawlers in the waters off the coast.

There are concerns about the impact of **farming** on the environment, but people also recognise the importance of agriculture to the economy. CAP is seen as important in fostering sustainability and eco-friendly farming.

Participants told us that **concerns about local issues** can affect their attitudes towards the EU. We also heard that people have a strong sense of a **rural and urban divide**.

Local communities are interested in having more say in how their space is developed. There is also some interest in the EU having an oversight role for decisions on planning.

There are worries about the **impact of tourism** on the environment, with some suggesting that the EU could learn about sustainable tourism from New Zealand.

In Meath, we heard calls from participants to **protect their ancient historical landscape**.



Photo courtesy of European Movement Ireland

How can we ensure a Europe of equal opportunities while maintaining fair working conditions and good social protection for every generation?

Participants want equality and want to see the EU help to combat discrimination.

They want **accessible services**, **increased opportunities** for people with disabilities, **greater awareness** about mental health and they want homelessness tackled.

Some think that the **voting age** throughout the EU should be lowered to 16 and that voting should be mandatory.

While some believe that there are too many social and cultural differences across the EU to legislate for **social policy**, others are interested in a common welfare system and some harmonisation of wages and employment laws.

People told us they want **employees to know their rights**, earn wages that are in line with the cost of living and have security of tenure. They do not want people who are 'working poor' and are concerned about zero hour contracts, with some wanting to see them banned.

There are worries about **job security** and again participants told us that they want people to be able to train and up-skill during their career. There is interest in increasing the retirement age, but also in facilitating greater **work-life balance**.

Gender equality is important, with some feeling that women need to be higher on the EU's agenda and concerned that issues around childcare disproportionately affect women. Participants also want to ensure equal pay and gender parity



There is some interest in exploring a basic income.

Some see **voluntary work** as a valuable way of getting experience, but others are concerned that it may be the only way into a job in a particular sector.

We also heard that some in the **voluntary sector** would like to strengthen their links with the EU, with some saying that they do not know about supports available from the EU or how to influence decision-making.

Participants told us that the EU had helped Irish people to become more open minded. They also said that they **feel that their social rights are better protected** in the EU.

Others feel that EU laws can be inconsistently applied with Member States implementing them in different ways.

There was criticism of the **Posted Workers' Directive** which some believe has negatively affected the fairness of working conditions.



Photo courtesy of European Movement Ireland

How can Europe best support innovation and provide the education, training and skills needed to equip us for the jobs of the future and remain competitive?

Participants want to know what the **jobs of the future** will be and they want to know if Europe knows what it needs to be competitive in.

They are curious about the **balance between competition and collaboration**. They see opportunity in learning from other cultures and countries, but wonder how Member States can both compete against each other and compete collectively.

We heard that when **measuring competitiveness** we should look beyond pure economic data and into **quality of life comparators**.

Education is seen as vital, but there are concerns about the cost for low income households.

Participants want students to learn **languages** as well as **new skills** such as coding. They want to explore more research-led teaching. They think we should look at how emerging economies are fostering competition in their education systems.

There is interest in more **EU-funded universities** and some would like to see standardised course content, teaching styles and fees across Europe.

Erasmus+ is popular, with some participants calling for an increase in funding. But we also heard access to the programme could be made more equitable and affordable.

Some believe that too much emphasis is placed on **university education**. They want to see greater value placed on skills and apprenticeships and **recognition of technical qualifications across the EU**.



Participants want to ensure that there are meaningful opportunities for **life-long learning** and would like to see employers encouraged to provide training to staff of all ages.

Some think that the EU should do more to support **small to medium sized enterprises**, particularly during their first three years in business.

While some feel that Ireland has done well from **globalisation**, others disagree. We heard that globalisation has created winners and losers and that some are concerned that this could lead to disenfranchisement. There is a strong view that globalisation should not be at the expense of human rights.

We heard calls for a greater focus on **fairness and transparency in trade**, with some suggesting that a commission should be established to review trade agreements.

Others said that the EU has a "**moral imperative**" to do more for countries to its south and east and to promote education and empowerment in Africa.



Photo courtesy of European Movement Ireland

Postcards from the Citizens' Dialogues – Your vision for Europe

“A Europe for all its citizens
where we all drive for a
Europe that will be here for
generations to come”



“A people's entity – more than
the sum of its parts – a cultural
and social ideal”



“A place that's safe,
open and welcoming,
non-threatening,
sustainable and fair”



“Neutral, sustained,
ongoing citizens'
engagement on facts”



“Ireland remaining
a member”



“A more fair Europe
for the people”



National Citizens' Dialogue on the future of Europe

On 9 May, Europe Day, the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Coveney, T.D., and Minister McEntee hosted a National Citizens' Dialogue on the future of Europe.

The event drew together the many strands of the debate heard across the country. It featured wide-ranging discussions on the key issues which had been highlighted during the dialogues – youth, education, jobs, innovation, competitiveness and sustainable growth.

National Citizens' Dialogue on the Future of Europe 9 May 2018, Royal Hospital Kilmainham Programme

Time	Event		
9.00	Registration		
9.30	Video: Opening Address by An Taoiseach		
9.35	Keynote Address by Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee T.D.		
9.45	Reflections on Citizens' Engagement on the Future of Europe <i>Moderator:</i> Audrey Carville <i>Panellists</i> Helen McEntee T.D. - Minister of State for European Affairs Noelle O'Connell – European Movement Ireland Michael Healy Rae T.D. – Joint Committee on European Union Affairs Barry Andrews – Institute of International and European Affairs		
11.00	Coffee Break		
11.20	Parallel Breakout Sessions		
	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> Jobs, Competitiveness and Sustainable Growth – Great Hall <i>Moderator:</i> Audrey Carville <i>Panellists</i> Patricia King – ICTU Dr Pat Ivory – Ibec Joe Healy – Irish Farmers' Association Oonagh Duggan – Environmental Pillar </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> Youth, Education and Innovation – Chapel <i>Moderator:</i> Aoibhinn Ní Shúilleabháin <i>Panellists</i> Professor Linda Doyle – Trinity College Dublin Dr Darrin Morrissey – Science Foundation Ireland Cathal Coffey – Maynooth University Mary McCaughey – Eurofound </td> </tr> </table>	Jobs, Competitiveness and Sustainable Growth – Great Hall <i>Moderator:</i> Audrey Carville <i>Panellists</i> Patricia King – ICTU Dr Pat Ivory – Ibec Joe Healy – Irish Farmers' Association Oonagh Duggan – Environmental Pillar	Youth, Education and Innovation – Chapel <i>Moderator:</i> Aoibhinn Ní Shúilleabháin <i>Panellists</i> Professor Linda Doyle – Trinity College Dublin Dr Darrin Morrissey – Science Foundation Ireland Cathal Coffey – Maynooth University Mary McCaughey – Eurofound
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12.35	Presentation of European Movement Ireland/Red C Poll by Noelle O'Connell		
13.00	Lunch – Chapel		
14.00	The Citizen and the EU: A "Brussels" Perspective by Emily O'Reilly, European Ombudsman		
14.15	European Voices <i>A panel discussion centred on the experience of EU citizens living in Ireland and Irish citizens working in the EU institutions.</i> <i>Moderator:</i> Aoibhinn Ní Shúilleabháin <i>Panellists</i> Patricia Reilly, Tom Moylan, Evelina Šaduikytė, Wojciech Kostka, Inguna Grietiņa-Dārziņa, Marija Plāmadā		
15.30	Closing Address by the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Coveney T.D.		



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Report on the Citizens' Dialogues on the future of Europe



Photo courtesy of European Movement Ireland

Opening and keynote address

The day began with a video message from the Taoiseach. He said that the future of Europe is too important to leave to others and he thanked people for getting involved.

Minister McEntee said that rather than responding to the ideas of others, she wants Ireland make its own contribution to the future of Europe debate.

The overriding message she has heard from the Citizens' Dialogues is that people want fairness.

Reflections on citizens' engagement on the future of Europe

The panellists, Noelle O'Connell, Michael Healy Rae, T.D., and Barry Andrews gave an overview of the work that they have been doing on the future of Europe. Key messages that they have heard are:

- the EU needs to improve how it communicates;
- solidarity is important; and
- people are interested in a social Europe, one that is fair and inclusive.

“Despite its imperfections, our citizens see Europe at the heart of their future and Ireland at the heart of Europe.”

Minister of State Helen McEntee, T.D.



Breakout sessions

The session on **Jobs, Competitiveness and Sustainable Growth** heard calls for:

- more and better jobs;
- a more socially responsible Union; and
- completing the single market and the Digital Single Market.

There were also concerns about:

- the legacy of austerity;
- the impact of cuts to CAP on the agri-food industry and the environment; and
- the effect of poor environmental practices and pollution.

“A dead planet will not provide jobs or livelihoods.”

Oonagh Duggan, Environmental Pillar

A lively session on **Youth, Education and Innovation** heard that to be innovative is to be European. The panel stressed the importance of education both for personal development and social cohesion. There was a strong sense that people need to know more about how the European Union works. People would like to see students leave school with a command of two languages other than their mother tongue. This in turn would also help to build greater social cohesion.

There were further calls for diversifying Erasmus+ and applying it to more apprenticeship and training schemes. We heard about research projects underway in Ireland, including on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, but that more needs to be done to involve the public in this research. We also heard ideas for tackling poverty and youth unemployment.



Photos courtesy of European Movement Ireland

Report on the Citizens' Dialogues on the future of Europe

Presentation of the European Movement Ireland / Red C poll

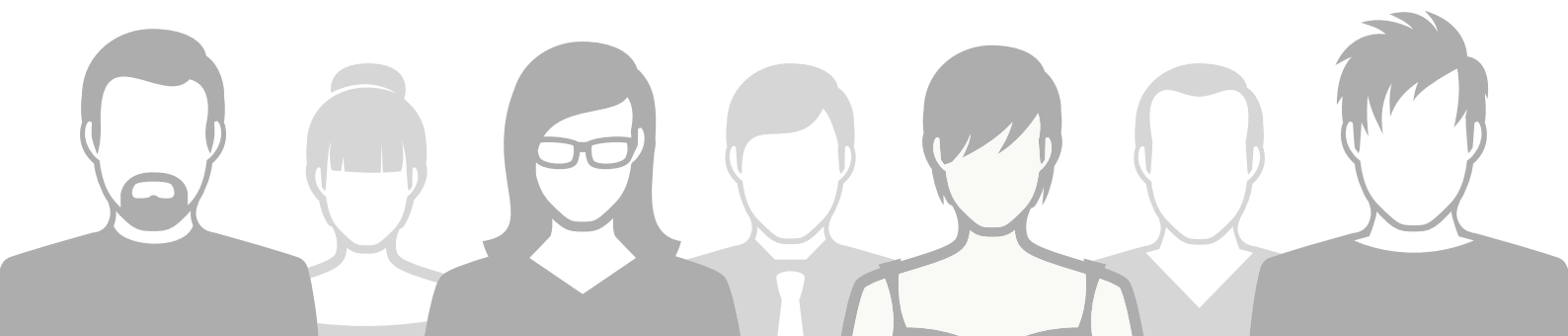
Noelle O'Connell of European Movement Ireland presented the results of the latest poll on Irish attitudes towards the EU. Amongst the findings are:

87% think that Ireland has benefitted from being in the EU

92% agree that Ireland should remain in the EU

59% agree that Ireland should be part of increased EU defence and security cooperation

92% think it is important that Irish people input into the future of Europe debate



Report on the Citizens' Dialogues on the future of Europe

The Blue Star Programme

Investment in education was one of the strong messages we heard at the regional dialogues and, with our sights firmly fixed on the future, we were particularly pleased to welcome pupils from primary schools participating in the Blue Star Programme to the day.

The Blue Star Programme aims to help school children better understand the EU and how it affects our lives.

Over lunch we were joined by students from:

- Drumraney National School in Westmeath;
- Gaelscoil Ui Drisceoil in Cork; and
- Scoil Mhuire in Knocknagoshel, Kerry.

The students took the long trip to Dublin to show off projects they had undertaken as part of the Blue Star programme. A special focus of this year's programme was giving students an opportunity to engage in creative exercises on 'My future of Europe'.

As well as energy and enthusiasm, the pupils also brought the programme's 'Handshake for Europe' to the Royal Hospital Kilmainham.

The citizen and the EU: A Brussels' perspective

The European Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly, said that most EU citizens do not spend their days thinking about the future of Europe. For them, politics continues to be local and about the reality of their daily lives. In short, she said, this is a debate about more or less Europe. Therefore, when people put forward their views on how to improve their lives in a future Europe, she said it is important that they are aware of who can actually deliver. While Europe can seem abstract, it matters. People need to get involved now and not be left wondering in a few years' time: "How did that happen?"



Photos courtesy of European Movement Ireland

“If the EU’s founding values of equality, solidarity and respect for the dignity of every human being are to continue to be embedded in everything it does, then awareness is key.”

Emily O'Reilly, European Ombudsman

Report on the Citizens' Dialogues on the future of Europe



European Voices

Evelina Šaduikyte, originally from Lithuania, Inguna Grietina-Daržina, from Latvia, Wojciech Kostka, from Poland, and Maria Plămăda, from Romania, talked about their experiences of moving to Ireland and how freedom of movement in the EU had made it much simpler.

Patricia Reilly and Tom Moylan have moved from Ireland and are now working in the European Commission in Brussels. They spoke about the influence of Irish officials in Europe and how living abroad has given them a greater sense of being both Irish and European.

Closing Address

The Tánaiste spoke about Europe's place in the world. He recalled that 9 May is Europe Day, which marks the anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, a first and significant step in the creation of a peace project which has become the European Union.

He said that Europe has much to offer, but its ability to deliver on its commitments is dependent on creating a safe and secure space for all of its citizens.

He finished by saying: "We should remember the progress made, lives saved, societies healed and economies grown. And we should reiterate our conviction by showing solidarity, sticking to our values and embracing innovation, the European Union will remain the best model we have for facing the challenges of the future together."



Photos courtesy of European Movement Ireland

"We have listened to what you have said to ensure that you and your voices shape the EU conversation."

Tánaiste Simon Coveney, T.D.

The wider future of Europe debate in Ireland



The Citizens' Dialogues have been complemented by a number of other initiatives taking place across the country where we have also had the opportunity to share views.

These include:

- the Oireachtas Joint Committee on European Union Affairs work on the future of Europe;
- the Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA) Future of EU 27 project which is supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade;
- events organised by the European Movement Ireland;
- the Citizens' Dialogues on the future of Europe organised by the European Commission Representation; and
- written submissions received by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

**“The EU has
never stood
still... Standing
still is never
smart...
Europe needs
momentum.”**

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Coveney, T.D., address to the Sutherland School of Law, University College Dublin, November 2017

Sharing perspectives with our European Partners



Photo courtesy of Maynooth University

Visiting Government representatives from other Member States and senior EU figures have also joined in public debates on the future of Europe in Ireland. Among the contributors was Nathalie Loiseau, Minister for European Affairs of France, who joined Minister McEntee and several hundred students, at a Citizens' Dialogue hosted by Maynooth University in February.

Other guest speakers included:

- Ann Linde, Minister for European Union Affairs and Trade of Sweden, at the IIEA in September;
- Tibor Navracscics, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, at a Citizens' Dialogue organised by the European Commission in December;
- Jüri Ratas, Prime Minister of Estonia, at the IIEA in January;
- Linas Linkevičius, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, at an IIEA event in University College Cork in February;
- Sergio Mattarella, President of Italy, during a State visit to Ireland in February;
- Marija Pejčinović Burić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia, at the IIEA in March;
- Phil Hogan, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development at an IFA-EU Commission Citizens' Dialogue in Kilkenny in April;

- Emilia Kravela, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, at the IIEA in May; and
- Victor Negrescu, Minister for European Affairs of Romania, at the IIEA in July.

In return, we have also taken opportunities to share our vision for the future with our European partners and to learn about their hopes.

- The Taoiseach participated in the European Parliament's series of debates with Heads of Government on the future of the European Union in January. He was the first EU leader to speak.
- The Tánaiste shared Ireland's aspirations for the future of Europe in several high profile speeches, including an address at the prestigious Humboldt University in Berlin in June.
- Minister McEntee joined the conversations on the future of Europe in other European capitals, including Citizens' Dialogues in Bratislava, Vienna and Lisbon.

“Building on the great successes and achievements of the past, I believe that with imagination, with creativity, and with courage, we can provide a soul and a heart for Europe, creating opportunities for all our citizens. We can ensure that the European ideal that took flight in the last century will soar in the twenty-first.”

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, T.D at the European Parliament, January 2018

Next Steps

This has been a long and exciting journey across all four provinces.

We launched the Citizens' Dialogues to ensure that our contribution to the wider future of Europe debate reflects your concerns and your ambitions.

We have listened and we have learned.

We want to be among the architects of the Europe of the future – sharing our designs and ideas – and not just responding to the plans of others.

The Citizens' Dialogues are part of a wider citizens' consultation initiative which is now underway across the Member States of the European Union.

As agreed in Bratislava, the aspiration across all Member States is to offer our citizens an attractive vision of Europe that they can trust and support.

The outcomes of the EU-wide consultation will be shared with the EU heads of State and Government to help identify priorities for action over the next few years.

Next May, European leaders will meet in Sibiu, Romania, where they will prepare the Strategic Agenda from 2019 to 2024. In advance of this summit, we will publish a statement on our strategic priorities for the European Union, capturing your ideas to set out Ireland's vision for the coming years.

We will be guided by your contributions and we are extremely grateful to all who brought their voices to bear in this debate.

Acknowledgements

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“A safe Europe, a united Europe, a prosperous Europe, a fair Europe, an enlightened Europe.”

A vision for Europe, participant at the Citizens' Dialogues





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