

1. Achievements of the Irish EU Presidency (January – June 2013)

The Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union came to a close on June 30th 2013. The Presidency Programme set out to succeed in a number of policy areas in various fields of action. Ireland's seventh Presidency of the Council achieved significant results and the complete detail of the Irish Presidency achievements is available here:

http://www.eu2013.ie/media/eupresidency/content/documents/EUReport_web.pdf

Objectives were based on the three pillars of **Stability, Jobs and Growth**. In short, the achievements of the Irish Presidency, from January to June 2013 were:

- The Multiannual Financial Framework – EU Budget – for 2014-2020 was agreed.
- The Irish Presidency managed to secure the commitment of all member states to the **Youth Guarantee**. It will give young people under the age of 25 the chance of training or a new job within four months of their becoming unemployed.
- It is clear to all of us that to tackle youth unemployment we must press ahead with **adapting our education and training systems** to 21st century norms including partnerships with employers.
- To boost employment and employability we have taken important decisions on cross-border mobility. Including a stronger **EURES** job-search facility. Presidency agreements on the expanded **Erasmus-Plus** programme and on **professional qualifications** will make an important contribution to this area. As will agreement with the Parliament on the proposal on portability of **pension rights**.
- The Irish Presidency negotiated the **16-billion euro Erasmus-Plus programme**.
- Securing agreement with the European Parliament on the EU's **Common Agricultural Policy** for the next seven years has been one of our Presidency's most important achievements. It will greatly enhance our efforts to transform our **agriculture and fisheries industries** into sustainable, 'green' sectors for growth.
- The **European Globalisation Adjustment Fund** will provide real support for an important section of our society - our redundant workers.
- Irish Presidency concentrated on securing agreement on the **mandate for EU-US** talks. Such agreement is essential to what should be a game-changing Transatlantic Partnership – one based on an equal and open relationship. This will allow us to turn the enormous potential for jobs and growth into reality.
- **SMEs** are vital for job creation. The Irish Presidency made Europe's small businesses a priority where for example, the Irish Presidency managed to achieve the political agreement that will make it easier for SMEs to access the EU's two trillion euro **public procurement** market through a simpler and cheaper bid process.
- A 70-billion euro **Horizon 2020** programme was agreed in principle which is crucial in terms of R&D. The proportion of such funds taken up by SMEs should go up by one-third.
- Major progress has been made on **data protection** and legislation on **e-identification**.
- **Banking union** was of critical importance where the EU needs to repair and renovate our banks to generate sustainable economic growth and to prove to our citizens they could depend on us to do what we said we would do at the meeting of Heads of State and Government. Which was to sever the link between banks and sovereigns. The follow-through achieved in the Irish Presidency was seen in three further developments.

The new, single supervisor, stronger capital rules for banks and, just last week, in agreeing new rules for bank wind downs. These new **bank resolution rules** will protect taxpayers from having to bail out the banks again.

- Headway has been made too on issues such as the **European Protection Order, Access to Lawyers in Criminal Proceedings, and Insolvency.**
- The Irish Presidency concluded, successfully, the historic negotiations that will allow the Union to accede to the European Convention of Human Rights. Extending the same standards of protection to our citizens in their dealings with the EU institutions as when dealing with their own governments.
- We have also shown significant leadership in the area of **CSDP** (Capability Development, Maritime Surveillance and Cyber Security). In addition we have laid the initial groundwork for the thematic discussion on Defence at the December European Council.

Irish Presidency...in numbers!

181	Days of the Irish Presidency
200	Estimated number of policy commitments achieved including more than 80 in legislative form
960	Billion agreed amount for the 7 year EU Budget including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 Billion euros to tackle Youth Unemployment 360 Billion on reformed Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) 70 Billion on Horizon 2020 Programme for research and innovation 30 Billion for the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) targeting enhancements in transport, energy and telecoms networks 16 Billion Erasmus+ Programme education and training 2 Billion for the COSME Programme to boost competitiveness of the EU's 20 million SMEs 3 Billion for the LIFE Programme to fund projects in the environmental area
2,477	Meetings & Events chaired by the Irish Presidency across Europe
374	Trilogues held with the European Commission and the European Parliament
54	Council meetings chaired by Irish Ministers during the Irish Presidency
111	Hours spent by the Taoiseach, Tánaiste and Irish Ministers in the EU Parliament
141	Irish Presidency speeches by Taoiseach, Tánaiste and Irish Ministers
929	Irish Presidency Culture Programme (Culture Connect) Events took place around the world
11	Record hours of European Parliament debate in a single sitting set by Minister for European Affairs, Lucinda Creighton
1,042	Litres of tea and coffee consumed in the Media Centre in Dublin during the ECOFIN Informal alone
517,322	Visits to www.eu2013.ie as of Friday, 28 June 2013
13,914	Twitter followers of Presidency Twitter Account



2. Achievements of the Irish Presidency – Youth

2.1 Priorities in the Youth Field

- The issue of 'Social Inclusion' was adopted by the Trio Presidency in late 2012 and this theme will run throughout the duration of the Trio Presidency until June 2014. The Irish Presidency focused on the issue of '**Social Inclusion and Quality Youth Work**' and also looked at the issue of how youth work can enhance the skills and capabilities of those young people affected by unemployment.
- The focus of the Structured Dialogue process under Ireland's Presidency (first of three phases) was on an initial broad exploration of social inclusion with a particular emphasis on quality youth work. The **EU Youth Conference**, the culmination of many discussions and research amongst young people from across Europe, took place in Dublin from March 11-13 2013. The **21 conclusions** from this event now go forward to be examined in greater detail during the Lithuanian and Greek Presidencies. A number of the conclusions were also used as part of the drafting of the policy papers by the Irish Presidency – the first time that this has happened.

Watch the EU Youth Conference Film here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgNQXlZvJE&feature=youtu.be>

See EU Youth Conference Conclusions & Photos here:

<http://eu.youth.ie/content/eu-youth-conference>

See video and report from Young Voices – Irish Consultation on Social Inclusion:

<http://www.youth.ie/youngvoices>

- **Informal Forum on Structured Dialogue:** The Irish Presidency organised an **Informal Forum on the Structured Dialogue** alongside the Council of Youth Ministers meeting hosted by Irish Minister Frances Fitzgerald. The Youth Ministers and youth representatives from Ireland, Lithuania, Greece and Cyprus as well as the European Youth Forum and Commissioner Vassiliou discussed how to support and enhance the follow-up of the Joint Conclusions from the EU Youth Conference (11-13 March, Dublin) and shared their expectations of the review of the Structured Dialogue process.
- **Council of Youth Ministers Meeting, 16 May 2013**
The Ministers responsible for Youth from all the 27 EU Member States met on Thursday, 16 May 2013. At the meeting, the Irish Presidency brought forward work on a number of issues relating to how quality youth work can contribute to young people’s development, well-being and social inclusion. The Council of Youth Ministers adopted two new policy papers and these are now recognised as EU Council Conclusions. These are: **Contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people** http://www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/Contribution_of_quality_youth%20work.doc and **Maximising the potential of youth policy in addressing the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy** http://www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/Maximising_the_potential_of_youth_policy.doc In addition, as part of the Ireland's EU Presidency, Minister Frances Fitzgerald hosted a high-level round-table conference of international experts to further examine the contribution youth work can make to youth employment.

Presentations from experts in the youth field informed the central question of the interactive Ministerial debate on issues which are impacting on Europe’s young people. The Ministerial debate focused on the immediate and practical actions Youth Ministers can take to harness the potential for quality youth work to better meet the present days challenges faced by Europe’s young people.

Key messages emerging from the debate include:

- The need for prompt implementation of the ‘Council Recommendation on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning’.
- Recognise the skills acquired by young people in their engagement in youth work through a common recognition mechanism such as certificates and portfolios in an effort to enhance and support employability.
- Well evidenced outcomes are needed to articulate the value of youth work to other fields through personal testimonies, interviews with stakeholders and desk research.
- A database and international exchanges to share learning and good practices in youth work is recommended at European level to ensure that youth work is horizontal and does not work in isolation.
- As youth policy is cross-cutting, consideration could be given to ‘youth proofing’ in future policy development.

Following from the Council of Youth Ministers Meeting, Ms. Frances Fitzgerald, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, wrote to President Von Rompuy to communicate the key messages emerging from the debate regarding the potential of youth policy and youth work to building a cohesive and inclusive Europe. In this letter, the outcomes of the Structured Dialogue process were conveyed which reaffirmed the importance and value of young people's voices being heard at all levels of policy making and that young people are willing and able to be part of the solution. In addition, the work of the Irish Presidency to promote more effective, coordinated youth policy through the adoption of Council Conclusions and the aim to raise the profile and mainstream youth work into broader EU policy responses to youth employment and social inclusion was articulated.

- **Follow-up on Joint Conference Conclusions:**

The EU Youth Conference of the Irish Presidency took place in Dublin last March 11th to 13th. Jointly hosted by the National Youth Council of Ireland, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the European Commission, and the European Youth Forum, the Conference brought together some 150 young people, youth representatives, and 100 policy-makers and representatives of the Commission from the 27 EU Member States. Young people and policy makers worked together to develop a set of 21 conclusions based on reports from consultations with over 20,000 young people from across Europe. The 21 conference conclusions will now be progressed in a number of ways:

- At European level, the Conclusions have been shared with Member State representatives on the EU Youth Working Party and European Commission. In particular, a number of Joint Conference Conclusions were included in the policy document *Contribution of Quality Youth Work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people* http://www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/Contribution_of_quality_youth%20work.doc proposed by the Irish Presidency and adopted by the Council of Youth Ministers on 16 May 2013. The conclusions incorporated relate to the thematic areas of quality youth work, youth organisations and participation.
- The 21 Conclusions from the EU Youth Conference will be taken forward by the Lithuanian and Greek Presidencies and will form part of a *Council Resolution on Social Inclusion* at the end of an 18-month EU-wide consultation with young people.
- National Working Groups (Youth Departments, National Youth Councils and others) in 27 Member States (including Ireland) have received copies of the conclusions and are expected to share and explore how they might be incorporated into government plans and policy across all government departments in respective EU Member States.
- The Joint Conclusions have also been shared by the Irish Presidency with policy makers in other related areas at national level including Ireland's Ministries for Education and Skills, Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Social Protection and Sport. Additionally, a project group of Ireland's National Youth Work Advisory Committee is considering the outcomes of the Irish Youth Presidency including the Conference Conclusions and how these can inform and shape Ireland's National Youth Policy Framework.

2.2 Other Achievements involving Youth

The Youth Guarantee

On June 12th 2013, the National Youth Council of Ireland together with the European Youth Forum held a roundtable event **‘Youth Guarantee: From Vision to Reality’** in Dublin to look at ways of tackling youth unemployment and in particular how to make the Youth Guarantee scheme a reality for young jobseekers. For more information see here: http://www.youth.ie/vision_to_reality

LGBT Youth and Social Inclusion, Dublin, 17 June 2013

Results from the consultations across Member States identified sexual minorities as being one of groups most at risk of social exclusion. As an associated EU Presidency Programme event, BeLong To, Ireland’s national youth service for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) young people, hosted a one-day event on LGBT Youth and Social Inclusion. BeLongTo progressed the EU Youth Conference Conclusions by focusing on actions to address the exclusion of LGBT young people.

A conference statement is currently being drafted by BeLongTo which will include a number of guiding principles and recommended actions for implementation in the following areas:

- LGBT youth and employment
- LGBT youth and education
- LGBT youth and participation and rights
- LGBT youth and youth services.

Expert Roundtable Event, 20-21 June, Kildare, Ireland

The final event of the Irish Presidency took place on 20 – 21 June, 2013 with a high level roundtable meeting of experts and stakeholders from Member States, European Institutions, European Youth Forum, Irish youth work interests and Irish Government Departments.

The topic of the Roundtable was informed by the results from the consultations in the EU Member States and at EU level which identified the transition from education to employment as a time of high risk of social exclusion. The purpose was to then further to examine the **contribution youth work can make to enhancing youth employment**. A number of experts were invited to provide inputs on this topic, including researchers, economists and youth work experts.

The outcome of the meeting, the Dublin Declaration, recognises the challenges facing young people in Europe as a result of the lack of jobs and work experience, as well as the challenges posed by the widening gap between skills being sought by certain employers and those held by many prospective employees. It also recognises that youth work can play a highly-relevant role in developing young people’s skill-sets, in particular with respect to ‘soft’ skills such as learning to learn, social and civic competence, leadership, communication, teamwork, and entrepreneurship – all of which are highly-valued and sought-after by employers. The Declaration in particular notes the centrality of the role of quality youth work in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee by Member States. The overarching principles are:

- Enhancing the visibility of youth work’s potential
- Building new partnerships between youth work and employers

- Ensuring that youth work is central to EU youth employment initiatives
- Delivering quality and innovative youth work which is responsive to the changing needs of young people, broader society, and the needs of the labour market.

Full text of the Declaration can be found here: <http://eu.youth.ie/content/dublin-declaration-contribution-youth-work-employment>

EU Summit on Youth Unemployment

An EU Summit was held in Berlin in early July which focused on youth unemployment. For more information see here: <http://www.youth.ie/nyci/Youth-unemployment-more-investment-not-more-statements>

Education, Youth, Culture and Sport (EYCS)

http://www.eu2013.ie/media/eupresidency/content/documents/EUReport_web.pdf

What happened during the Irish Presidency...

Education

- First Reading Agreement with the European Parliament on 'Erasmus+', the new European programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport
- Council Conclusions on 'Investing in education and training - a response to Rethinking Education: investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes and the 2013 Annual Growth Survey
- Council Conclusions on the social dimension of higher education
- Launch of U-Multirank, a new University ranking system

Youth

- Council Conclusions on maximising the potential of youth policy in addressing the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy
- Council Conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people

Culture

- Council Agreement on Europe for Citizens
- General Approach on a proposal for a Decision on a Union action for European Capitals of Culture from 2020-2033
- Stock take of 2008 Council Conclusions on Architecture
- Discussion on reform of format of the Council of Culture Ministers
- Designation of European Capitals of Culture for 2017 and 2018

Sport

- Council Conclusions on dual careers for athletes
- Adoption of a Recommendation for a Council Decision authorising the European Commission to participate, on behalf of the EU, in the negotiations for an international convention of the Council of Europe to combat the manipulation of sports results

