

EURO INNOVATION IN POLITICS 2020 AWARDS NOW OPEN

Irish nominations to this year's Innovation in Politics Awards are now being invited, to provide an opportunity to recognise Irish politicians who are making a difference. Innovative political projects can be submitted by politicians and/or nominated by citizens until 15 June, before the European awards final takes place in Berlin in December.

Last year a total of 402 entries were submitted for the Innovation in Politics Awards, before a jury of over 1,000 citizens from all European countries selected 80 finalists across eight categories: Civilisation (Arts, Science, Education), Democracy, Human Rights, Community, Ecology, Prosperity, Jobs and Quality of Life.

And for the second year running, nine finalists from Ireland reached the European Innovation in Politics Awards final in Berlin on 4 December 2019, including councillors from Longford, Meath, Limerick and Monaghan County Councils, in addition to Ministers Josepha Madigan and Michael Ring, Thomas Pringle TD and then TD Clare Daly.

NEW CATEGORIES FOR 2020

Now Irish nominations are again being invited to the fourth year of the European Innovation in Politics Awards across nine categories – (1) Community, (2) Democracy (3) Digitalisation, (4) Ecology, (5) Economy, (6) Education, (7) Human Rights, (8) Quality of Life and (9) Regional Development. Digitisation, Regional Development and Education are the three new award categories for 2020.

Edward Strasser, CEO of the Innovation in Politics Institute Foundation, explained: "As citizens across Europe worry about the state of democracy and what to do to ensure its survival, the Innovation in Politics Awards help out in two ways. Firstly, we find political projects that actually work and can, therefore, serve as best practice examples.

"Secondly, citizens can contribute to improvements in politics by becoming jurors to adjudicate on the submissions and select the best practice examples and put centre stage, new role models in politics."

Award winners will be selected by a jury of over 1,000 citizens from across Europe, and there is now also an open call to apply for jury membership on or before 31 July.

POLITICS AND DEMOCRACY

The Innovation in Politics Awards are administered and presented by the Vienna-based Innovation in Politics Institute, a Europe-wide organisation with offices and representatives in 15 countries – Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

The Innovation in Politics Awards initiative is partnered in



Ireland by Dublin City University (DCU). Dr Deiric Ó Broin from DCU's School of Law and Government, commented, "DCU sees its role as playing a strong part in making society better. Our involvement in the Awards is a reflection of this.

"We continue to work in Ireland and across Europe to support politicians and politics to make a difference to people's lives. We see the Awards as an important way to identify, celebrate and share why and how politics matters to democracy and to people's wellbeing."

Over the last two years politicians across a wide political spectrum and at all levels have received awards. In 2019 the city of Ii in Finland was amongst the award winners for its innovative approach to becoming the world's first zero-emissions town.



Edward Strasser, CEO of the Innovation in Politics Institute Foundation, (far right) pictured with 2019 award winners at the final in Berlin on 4 December. (Pic: Sebastian Philipp)

In 2018 Jean-Claude Juncker (who served as President of the European Commission from 2014 to 2019) took the prize for the European Solidarity Corps, an initiative to create opportunities for young people to volunteer in projects that benefit communities.

How to submit projects: Political projects can be nominated by citizens and/or submitted by politicians online until 15 June 2020. There is no financial cost to entering the Awards. For further information: <https://innovationinpolitics.eu/en/my-account/?page=submit>

How to become a juror: Applications for jury membership close on 31 July 2020. All citizens of the 47 Council of Europe member countries who are over 16 are eligible to participate. A representative jury will be randomly selected from among the applicants. To apply visit <https://innovationinpolitics.eu/en/my-account/?page=become-juror>

For more information visit <https://innovationinpolitics.eu/> or contact Joan O'Flynn, Ireland Representative of the Innovation in Politics Institute, by email jf@innovationinpolitics.eu or phone 087-9051514.

RECAP OF IRELAND'S FINALISTS FOR 2019

Here's a recap of those nine diverse and impactful Irish projects that reached last year's final of the European Innovation in Politics Awards. Despite not taking home any awards from Berlin, it provided Irish politicians and community activists with a unique opportunity to share experiences on their own initiatives with European counterparts.

CATEGORY: COMMUNITY

Longford Nua – This new mapping project was launched by Longford County Council, in a bid to give a voice back to the people and engage them at an early stage in the decision-making

process. Led by Longford Councillors Séamus Butler, Gerry Warnock, Joe Flaherty, John Browne, Martin Monaghan, Peggy Nolan and Gerry Hagan, the project allows local people through using an App to share stories about places in Longford Town and make suggestions about how some of them could be reused.

CATEGORY: HUMAN RIGHTS

'Your Vote Your Voice' Guide – An easy-to-read guide to voting in Ireland that uses an accessible layout, and explains Ireland's voting process and how young people over 18 may exercise their right to vote. The guide was identified as a priority by Monaghan County Council and Cathaoirleach Cllr Séamus Coyle felt it was time to focus on the rights of people with disabilities, in particular, the right to vote.

Reproductive Justice (Mandatory Inquests for all Maternal Deaths) – Between 2008 and 2014, eight families fought for inquests to discover why the mothers of their children had died giving birth. All returned verdicts of death by medical misadventure, signalling catastrophic failures of care. In 2014, Clare Daly, former Independent TD and now MEP, joined the Elephant Collective (grassroots citizen activists) to change things, and five years later, the introduction of mandatory inquests for all maternal deaths became law in July 2019, a first in Europe specifically for maternal deaths.

Athboy Walkability and Inclusive Town Developments – Promoting Athboy as an inclusive and progressive town, Meath County Council's Cllr David Gilroy led an Age-Friendly Walkability Audit in the town to address accessibility. He works closely with the business community, and Athboy was nominated as Meath's Friendliest Town in the 2019 Retail Excellence Awards. The town's community centre features a 'Changing Places' toilet facility, which has a height-adjustable bench and hoists to enable people with more profound disabilities to use the facilities.

INNOVATION IN POLITICS

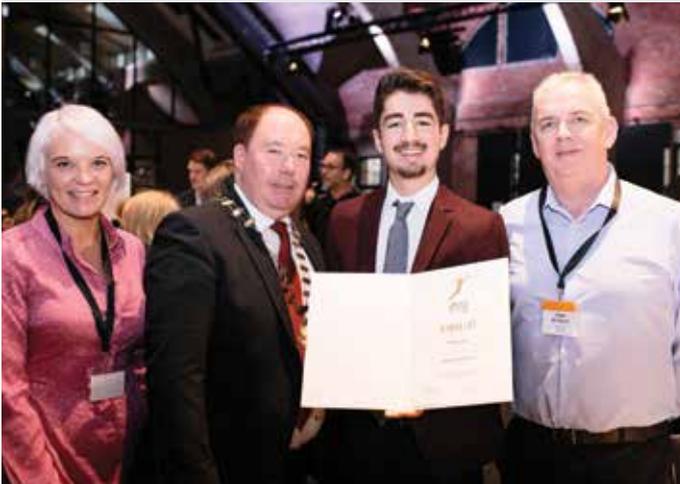
Councillors and local authority personnel from Meath, Monaghan and Longford who were presented with finalists' certificates, during the workshop sessions in Berlin, before the winners were announced at the Gala Awards Ceremony.



Ireland's Representative of the Innovation in Politics Institute, Joan O'Flynn, presented a Finalist's Certificate to Meath County Council's Cllr David Gilroy and Emer Coveney, for the Athboy Walkability and Inclusive Town Development Scheme.



Meath County Council's Cathaoirleach Cllr Wayne Harding and Barry Lynch received a Finalist's Certificate for their 'Age Friendly Ireland' project.



Representing Monaghan County Council, Cathaoirleach Cllr Seamus Coyle, Bernie Bradley and Fintan McPhillips, received a Finalist's Certificate for the council's unique 'Your Vote, Your Voice' guide.



Longford Municipal District's Cathaoirleach Cllr Séamus Butler (second right) pictured with John Browne and Lorraine O'Connor, presentation of a Finalist's Certificate for the 'LongfordNua' initiative.

CATEGORY: JOBS

Moyross (Training at The Bays) – A low level of economic activity and lack of any significant economic base has been a particular problem within the Moyross area of Limerick city.

Run in association with Limerick's Independent Cllr Frankie Daly, the target group for The Bays Training programme is unemployed adults aged over 18, from within the Moyross regeneration area of the city.

The facility provides a trades-based training approach focused on equipping clients with industry-specific skills, currently being sought in sectors such as construction and manufacturing. All training modules are certified.

CATEGORY: QUALITY OF LIFE

Age-Friendly Ireland Local Government Shared Service – In April 2019, Ireland became the first country ever to have the entire population committed to the WHO's Age-Friendly Programme. Led by Cathaoirleach Cllr Wayne Harding, Meath County Council took the lead by establishing this service, which provides support and guidance to all 31 local authorities in developing their own county and city age-friendly programmes.

Meath County Council recently won the 'National Impact Award' for this project at the 14th All Ireland Community & Council Awards, presented by IPB Insurance and LAMA (Local Authority Members' Association) in Dublin on 15 February.

CATEGORY: ECOLOGY

First Time Divestment from Fossil Fuels – The Fossil Fuel Divestment Act, which was introduced by Thomas Pringle TD, obliges the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) to divest public money from investments in companies whose primary activity is fossil fuel exploration, extraction or processing. The ISIF is a €7.9bn commercial investment fund, designed to support economic activity and employment in Ireland.

CATEGORY: CIVILISATION (ARTS, SCIENCE & EDUCATION)

Creative Ireland Programme – This five-year Government initiative aims to place creativity at the centre of public policy. Led by Minister Josepha Madigan at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, its core proposition is that participation in cultural and creative activity promotes individual, community and national wellbeing.

The programme is built around five pillars: Enabling the Creative Potential of our Young People; Creative Communities; Investing in our Creative and Cultural Infrastructure; Ireland as a Centre of Creative Excellence; Our Global Reputation.

A New Public Library Strategy – ‘Our Public Libraries 2022 – Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities’ was published by Michael Ring TD, Minister for Rural and Community

Development, in 2018 to provide the platform for an €8m investment in ICT, equipment and software across Ireland’s public libraries to improve access, use and visibility of the library, developing them as community hubs. The new ‘My Open Library’ service will extend to 100 branches by 2022.



Ending Homelessness... Creating Homes

How You Can Help

Making a donation to the Simon Communities of Ireland

The crucial work The Simon Communities of Ireland is only possible through the generosity of the general public and our corporate partners. If you too would like to help in the fight to end homelessness in Ireland there are a number of ways that you can help Simon including:

Online - By donating at www.simon.ie

By Post - Donations can be sent to Simon Communities of Ireland, 28-30 Exchequer Street, Dublin 2.

By phone - By Credit/Laser Card - Please call the fundraising team at (01) 671 1606 with your credit or laser card details and your transaction will be handled in confidence.

Become a Regular Giver

By Standing Order - A standing order form is available on www.simon.ie or you can contact your bank directly and provide our bank details as follows:

BANK: A.I.B.
BRANCH: 100
GRAFTON STREET, DUBLIN 2
SORT CODE: 93 12 33
ACCOUNT NO: 38792094

A Gift in Your Will Could Change Lives

Leave a Legacy – Further details on how to name Simon as a beneficiary in your will are provided on www.simon.ie or contact the Fundraising Team.

How could your company support the work of Simon?

Company partnerships – there are endless ways that a company can support Simon. Contact to discuss tailoring our projects and initiatives to match your company’s interests and needs.

Tax Effective Giving

Reclaiming Tax - At present under government legislation, the Simon Communities of Ireland can claim tax back on all donations over €250. If you are a PAYE taxpayer and donate €250 or more a year to us, we may be able to reclaim 69% of the tax you have paid at no additional cost to you. You must be paying the high rate of tax for this to apply. Please be assured that the scheme is confidential and only your name, tax relief number and amount donated are given to the revenue authorities. You can print a revenue form online at www.simon.ie or contact the Fundraising Team.

Volunteer

Simon welcomes both part-time and full time volunteers. Part-time volunteers work in various roles like on the soup run, fundraising, shop workers, committee members and as befrienders. To volunteer on a part-time basis, please contact your local Simon Community.

Full time volunteers must be aged over 18 and commit to a full time placement for at least 6 months working alongside our paid staff in a variety of projects across our communities. We provide accommodation, supervision, training and a small living allowance. This opportunity facilitates development of many skills both on a practical and professional level and is an ideal opportunity to gain valuable work experience.

We also offer our full time volunteers the opportunity of gaining a third level qualification as all now take part in our Certificate Programme in partnership with the DIT so you not only assist in our work but you also gain a practical qualification.

If you want to find out more or get involved, contact our Volunteer Coordinator at volunteering@simoncommunity.com

Campaign

Our campaigning mandate is to affect changes in social and economic policy in Ireland that will contribute to the elimination of homelessness and its causes. To achieve this, we need to demonstrate this is an aim shared across Irish society, and for this we need your help. We ask that you get involved in activities to help influence Government policy on homelessness. You can do this in a number of ways, highlighting the issue of homelessness by writing to your local TD, phoning your local radio talk show or writing to the newspaper, or even just discussing the subject with friends, family and colleagues. You can also sign up to the MakeRoom campaign at www.makeroom.ie where you can pledge to end homelessness by 2010.

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