

NINE IRISH PROJECTS SHOWCASED IN BERLIN

Nine impactful and diverse Irish projects reached the final of the Europe-wide Innovation in Politics Awards 2019, presented in Berlin on 4 December. And despite not taking home any awards, it was a great opportunity for Irish politicians and community activists to share experiences on their own initiatives with European counterparts.

A total of 402 entries were submitted for the 2019 European Innovation in Politics Awards competition, before a jury of more than 1,000 citizens from all European countries selected the 80 finalists across eight categories, including nine wide-ranging entries from Ireland.

The categories included Civilisation (arts, science, education); Democracy; Human Rights; Community (the highest number of entries); Ecology; Prosperity; Jobs; and Quality of Life, from across Europe.

Dublin City University's School of Law and Government is the Irish partner of the Innovation in Politics Institute, which administers the Europe-wide Innovation in Politics Awards.

Prof Iain McMenamin, DCU's Head of the School of Law and Government, said: "Dublin City University's partnership with the Innovation in Politics Awards is a reflection of our commitment to civic and political leadership at home and internationally. These Awards contribute to strengthening democracy by demonstrating the creative and collaborative work of politicians at national and local levels."

Edward Strasser, Founder and CEO of the Innovation in Politics Institute, said that by highlighting examples of effective political initiatives, the Institute wants to strengthen democracy and democratic politicians.



Joan O'Flynn, Irish Representative of the Innovation In Politics Institute, presents a finalist's certificate to Cllr David Gilroy and Emer Coveney, Meath County Council, for the Athboy Walkability and Inclusive Town Development scheme.

"This approach has gained acceptance – the Innovation in Politics Awards have grown in scope and influence since they commenced in 2017."

IRELAND'S NINE FINALISTS FOR 2019

CATEGORY: COMMUNITY

Political Initiative: Longford Nua:

Longford Nua – a new mapping project using an App – 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 to share stories about places in Longford Town and make suggestions about how some of them could be reused.



Monaghan County Council’s Cathaoirleach Cllr Seamus Coyle, Bernie Bradley and Fintan McPhillips, received a certificate for ‘Your Vote, Your Voice’ guide.



Meath County Council’s Cathaoirleach Cllr Wayne Harding and Barry Lynch receive a finalist’s certificate for their ‘Age Friendly Ireland’ project.

CATEGORY: HUMAN RIGHTS

Political Initiative: Your Vote Your Voice: This easy-to-read guide to voting in Ireland uses an accessible layout, and explains Ireland’s voting process and how persons over 18 may exercise their right to vote. The

guide was identified as a priority by Monaghan County Council and its Cathaoirleach Cllr Séamus Coyle in 2019 felt it was an important time to focus on the rights of people with disabilities, in particular, the right to vote.

The Innovation in Politics Awards recognise political work, showcasing it as an example of best practice for others. The Institute’s mission is to support initiatives at any level of governance and across the political spectrum that break new ground, are creative and achieve results. This Europe-wide organisation has offices in Vienna and Berlin as well as associated partners in Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK.

For further information visit www.innovationinpolitics.eu/



Political Initiative: 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



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

citizen activists) to change things, and five years later, the introduction of mandatory inquests for all maternal deaths become law in July 2019, a first in Europe specifically for maternal deaths.

Political Initiative: Athboy Walkability and Inclusive Town Developments:

Promoting Athboy as an inclusive and progressive town, Meath County Council's Cllr David Gilroy recently 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. Athboy has a fantastic community centre that features a 'Changing Places' toilet facility, which has a height-adjustable bench and hoists to enable people with more profound disabilities to use facilities.

CATEGORY: JOBS

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

The target group for The Bays Training programme, run in association with Cllr Frankie Daly, Limerick City and County Council, is unemployed adults aged over 18, primarily from within the Moyross regeneration area of Limerick 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: 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 has taken the lead by establishing an Age-Friendly Ireland local government shared service, which provides support and guidance to all 31 local authorities in developing their county and city Age Friendly Programmes.

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 €7.9 billion 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.

For the list of winners and finalists visit <http://innovationinpolitics.eu/finalists/2019>