

FIVE IRISH PROJECTS SHORTLISTED FOR EUROPEAN POLITICAL AWARDS

Five national and local projects, ranging from a community-led, rural initiative funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, targeted at increasing the number of females in local politics in Ireland, to various programmes led by Mayo County Council, Meath County Council and Longford County Council, have been shortlisted in this year's EU Innovation in Politics Awards.

Ireland's five projects, which have been shortlisted in the Community, Democracy, Economy and Quality of Life categories, are among a total of 90 entries received from 25 European countries for this year's finals.

Now in its fifth year, the Innovation in Politics Awards scheme recognises courageous and creative political projects in Europe. And this year, 413 projects were submitted by politicians from across Europe, with the finalists chosen by a jury of 1,032 European citizens.

"It is a huge achievement to have five finalists in these Europe-wide awards," said Prof Deiric Ó Broin, Professor of Public Policy Practice at DCU's School of Law and Government. DCU is the Irish partner of the Innovation in Politics Institute, which has offices in Vienna and Berlin, and representatives in countries across Europe.

"The Irish finalists are an example of the innovation that is driving local and national politics. Improving female representation in politics, regenerating local communities and economies, making businesses more responsive to older people – these are responses tailored to specific challenges and opportunities in Ireland and will impact positively on society at every level," noted Prof Ó Broin.

The winners of the awards will be announced in events across Europe taking place from December 2021 until February 2022. "Those in politics who are creative and courageous are rewarded by their citizens at home, but also at the Innovation in Politics Awards, so that others across Europe can draw inspiration from their work," said Edward Strasser, CEO and co-founder of the Innovation in Politics Institute.

CATEGORY: Community

***Mayo County Council** collaborated with local stakeholders in 'Night Skies Mayo' – a community-driven project protecting County Mayo's dark skies – to benefit local ecology and boost tourism. Mayo International Dark Sky Park involved partnerships between local stakeholders to reduce environmental light pollution and to promote the county as a haven for innovations in dark sky tourism.



Visit www.innovationinpolitics.eu to see all finalists of the Innovation in Politics Awards.

CATEGORY: Democracy

SHE (See Her Elected) is a community-led initiative that supports women to enter into politics in rural areas of Ireland, thereby strengthening local and national democracy by increasing the diversity of political participation.

The initiative is targeted at increasing the numbers of women in local politics in the rural northwest-midlands region, where anything from 78% to 95% of the elected local authority councillors are men.

SHE is fully funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage under the stewardship of Minister Peter Burke TD, Minister of State with responsibility for Local Government and Planning.



CATEGORY: Economy

Meath County Council is the lead local authority in the Age Friendly Business Recognition Programme, under the auspices of Age Friendly Ireland.

The programme provides training and support for businesses to help them make their services age friendly and involve older people in advising business about the changes which they would like to see.



Longford County Council was the first council in Ireland to develop a Rural Working Hub Strategy that suited the needs of the local community.

These state-of-the-art hubs in three towns now facilitate remote working, provide a base for entrepreneurs and start-ups, contribute towards a low-carbon future, help to redevelop a digital strategy in and boost regeneration of Longford's towns and villages.



CATEGORY: Quality of Life

Mayo County Council is the lead authority on the Vacant Homes initiative. The Vacant Homes web portal allows people to log vacant homes in their area and, once registered, an alert is sent to the relevant local authority vacant-home officer.

The aim is to help create new homes from existing vacant dwellings, rejuvenating areas in decline and sustaining community services such as schools and shops.

