



European Commission Representation in Ireland

ACTIVITY
REPORT

20
23





Message from the Head of the European Commission Representation

Barbara Nolan
Head of Representation

I am pleased to present the 2023 Activity Report of the European Commission Representation in Ireland.

2023 was a significant year for Ireland in the European Union. It marked the 50th anniversary of accession to the then-European Economic Community in 1973. Throughout the year, the Representation organised and participated in a series of events to celebrate this milestone. The highlight was a gala concert in the National Concert Hall in Dublin on 9 May, Europe Day, which included a powerful performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, the official anthem of the European Union.

The year was also important for gender equality in Ireland and ahead of International Women's Day in March, the Representation hosted a panel discussion on how the EU has advanced gender equality and examined the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality.

2023 saw Russia's unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine enter its second year. The Representation has continued to reaffirm the EU's unwavering support to Ukraine, and its commitment to peace, freedom and democracy. In June, a major milestone was the decision of the European Council to open accession negotiations with Ukraine (as well as the Republic of Moldova). In November, the Representation was pleased to host a panel discussion on best practice for countering Russian disinformation, in cooperation with the Ukrainian and US embassies as well as Ukrainian Action in Ireland.

I was also pleased to be invited by the Oireachtas EU Affairs Committee in October to discuss the highlights of President von der Leyen's 2023 State of the Union address as well as the Commission's work programme.

In a year of many important political, economic and social challenges, we continued to facilitate dialogue between the Commission, the government and stakeholders when we hosted visits by Commissioners and high-ranking representatives of the Commission and other EU institutions.

I would like to thank all the participants in our many events, the organisers, NGOs, representative bodies, schools and all those who contributed to our activities throughout the year. Particular thanks goes to Mairead Mc Guinness, European Commissioner for financial services, financial stability and Capital Markets Union, who has actively supported the Representation's work and enhanced its impact. I hope you find the information in this brochure on our main activities in 2023 interesting.

Happy reading!



OIREACHTAS COMMITTEE

Barbara Nolan presented the 2024 European Commission Work Programme to the Oireachtas EU Affairs Committee on 25 October.



CROCUS PROJECT

On 17 October, Barbara Nolan joined Holocaust Education Ireland to launch its Crocus Project 2023 which involves school children planting yellow crocuses in memory of all of the children who died in the Holocaust.



Foreword by the European Commissioner for financial services, financial stability and Capital Markets Union

Mairead McGuinness
European Commissioner

The year 2023 was extremely busy and productive for the Representation. So very well done on the breadth of engagements with groups, large and small and with events - from school debates, to engagements with journalists, to the now annual stand at the National Ploughing Championships. All of this outreach is essential for the work of the Commission. These engagements provide opportunities for Brussels and Ireland.

During 2023, we celebrated Ireland's 50 years in the EU. It was a chance to reflect on how much Ireland has changed since 1973, including as a result of EU membership - but also the contribution that Ireland has made and continues to make to the European Union. We also commemorated 25 years of the Good Friday Agreement, reflecting on the value of peace on the island of Ireland, and how the EU can continue to support that peace.

The global position of the EU was challenging in 2023 and it remains challenging. Geopolitical upheaval and economic uncertainty mean that the issue of competitiveness has come to the fore, and ensuring the single market is fully realised so that European businesses can continue to grow and prosper remains crucial. Sustainability and achieving our Green Deal targets also remain a priority, but we need to make sure that we bring people with us - the dialogue on the future of agriculture is a prime example of this; showing farmers that we appreciate their work, value their contribution to food security and want to ensure that they are a key part of a just and sustainable economy and society.

The European Commission proposed initiatives to support citizens' right to have access to cash and the right to use cash when shopping, as well as future proofing our currency - the euro, with a digital euro. And in the emerging area of AI (artificial intelligence), the EU is leading the way to ensure the technology is explored and used wisely to the benefit of society while having in place sufficient safeguards where needed.

In June, we will have European Parliament elections and I would encourage everyone to use their vote; active democracy is crucially important for Europe to remain strong and part of people's lives.

As the European Commissioner from Ireland, I was very happy to participate in a number of the Representation's events in 2023, to be out and about in Ireland meeting people and listening to how the EU impacts on the lives of citizens. This outreach is vital for the EU and I look forward to continuing this public engagement in 2024.



To mark Europe Day 2023, in May Commissioner McGuinness visited Aston Village Educate Together National School in Drogheda where she was presented with her portrait.



Commissioner McGuinness and Public Expenditure Minister Paschal Donohoe at the National Ploughing Championships in September.



Commissioner McGuinness and Ukraine's Ambassador to Ireland, Larysa Gerasko at the opening of the 'Into Europe: Ireland and the EU 1973-2023' exhibition in Leinster House on 10 May.

EUROPE DAY CONCERT AT THE NCH



On Europe Day, 9 May, Tánaiste Micheál Martin, together with the Representation and the European Parliament Liaison Office in Ireland, hosted a gala concert at the National Concert Hall commemorating Ireland's 50 years of membership of the European Union. The concert included a special performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony by the National Symphony Orchestra accompanied by an 'EUSO Choir'.

2023 STATE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION ADDRESS

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's address to the European Parliament on the State of the European Union in September is the pinnacle of the EU political season.

On 13 September, the Representation hosted a hybrid panel discussion assessing the key themes from the speech.



Speakers included Senator Lisa Chambers; Catherine Day, former Secretary-General of the European Commission; and Dan O'Brien, Chief Economist of the IIEA. The discussion was moderated by Professor John O'Brennan of Maynooth University.

THE PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS

The Representation participated in the National Ploughing Championships in Ratheniska, Co. Laois, once again in 2023. The EU tent was visited by Agriculture Minister, Charlie McCauley and several Irish MEPs.

Commissioner Mairead McGuinness and Minister for Public Expenditure, Paschal Donohoe, joined us to launch the impressive AI2Peat project to protect peatlands in Ireland and... for a bit of craic!



MODEL COUNCIL OF THE EU DEBATE FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The Model Council of the EU debate competition is the Representation's annual event for secondary schools. It mirrors the format of a real meeting of the Council of the European Union.

The 2023 event took place in Dublin City Hall on 21 March, and the theme was green energy.

Shauna Walsh and Maeve Murtagh from Scoil Muire agus Pádraig in Mayo, representing Poland, won first place and went on a trip to the European Parliament in Strasbourg.



The magnificent Dublin City Hall provided the backdrop for the debate on the European Green Deal

2023 Model Council winners with MEP Maria Walsh and Barbara Nolan



OUTREACH INITIATIVES AND EVENTS

WOMEN'S DAY

Ahead of International Women's Day, the Representation hosted a panel discussion on how the EU has advanced gender equality in Ireland, and to examine the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality, with Roderic O'Gorman TD, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; Ivana Bacik TD, Labour Party leader and Chair of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Gender Equality; and Dr Catherine Day, Chair of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality and former Secretary-General of the European Commission.



1 MAR

POETRY ON THE DART

Commissioner McGuinness and MEP Frances Fitzgerald joined Barbara Nolan to promote the 'Poetry in Motion' initiative which aims to bring the rich diversity of Europe's poetry into the lives of Dublin commuters.



21 APR

70 YEARS OF EU LAW

The Representation hosted an event marking 70 years of EU Law with Daniel Calleja Crespo, Director-General of the European Commission Legal Service; Karen Banks, former Deputy Director-General of the Commission's Legal Service; Professor Gavin Barrett of UCD Sutherland School of Law; and Attorney General, Rossa Fanning SC.

25 MAY



EUROPEAN YEAR OF SKILLS

The Representation welcomed Simon Harris TD, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to Europe House for a 2023 European Year of Skills event organised with EU agency Eurofound.

22 NOV



ONE YEAR OF RUSSIAN AGGRESSION

The Representation joined thousands in Ireland in expressing the EU's unwavering solidarity with the people of Ukraine on the anniversary of Russia's unprovoked war of aggression against their country.

24 FEB



EU50 PODCAST

The Representation, in cooperation with European Movement Ireland, hosted a discussion with Commissioner McGuinness and Brigid Laffan, Emeritus Professor at the European University Institute, on 50 years of Ireland's membership of the EU.

20 APR

EUROVISION 2023

We brought the glitter and joy of the Eurovision Song Contest to Dublin with a special Eurovision Trivia Party Extravaganza with Panti Bliss-Cabrera and former Eurovision winner, Niamh Kavanagh.

10 MAY



COUNTERING RUSSIAN DISINFORMATION

The Representation was delighted to partner with the US and Ukrainian embassies to discuss how Russian propaganda and disinformation impacts our societies and best practices for countering Russian disinformation.

14 NOV



VISITS BY COMMISSIONERS



In January 2023, Commissioner McGuinness joined Minister for European Affairs, Peter Burke TD, to launch a new postage stamp to mark the 50th anniversary of Ireland's accession to the European Communities.



Commissioner McGuinness visited a number of primary schools that participate in the Blue Star programme, which teaches primary school pupils about European cultures & the EU.



On one of her visits to Ireland throughout the year, Commissioner McGuinness attended the open day at the Directorate for Health and Food Audits and Analysis of the Directorate-General for Health & Food Safety in Grange, Co. Meath.



Solid cooperation between the European Commission and Irish and UK governments resulted in the start of the new PEACEPLUS programme in 2023. This will result in an investment of some €1.14 billion for building reconciliation and greater prosperity across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.



The celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement gathered together EU Commissioner Mairead McGuinness, Tánaiste Micheál Martin, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, UK Northern Ireland Secretary Chris Heaton-Harris and EU Commission Executive Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič on the stage of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin.



On an eagerly anticipated visit to Ireland in November 2023, EU Environment Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius held talks with Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and Agriculture Minister Charlie McConalogue on improving water quality in Ireland and the future of Ireland's derogation from the EU Nitrates Directive.

STUDY VISITS TO BRUSSELS



School teachers on a visit to Brussels in July 2023 met with Commissioner McGuinness

The Representation organised 6 study visits to Brussels in 2023. Irish journalists, teachers, economists, trade unionists and environmentalists had the opportunity to travel to the heart of Europe and learn first-hand how the EU institutions work.

They met with Commissioner Mairead McGuinness and Irish MEPs and discussed topical issues with European Commission experts.

Some environmental NGO representatives travelled to and from Brussels by 'slow travel', taking a ferry and two trains instead of a single flight, proving that sustainable travel is a viable alternative even for short journeys from Ireland to the continent.



Trade union representatives on a visit to Brussels in November 2023

GROUP VISITS TO EUROPE HOUSE IN 2023

In 2023, we were delighted to welcome 17 groups to visit the Representation and participate in our information sessions about the European Union.

Visits typically last 90 minutes and include a presentation on the EU, a short film about Ireland and the EU, a Q&A session, and for our younger visitors, an EU quiz.

The profile of our visiting groups in 2023 ranged from primary school students, aged 10, up to adult learners at post-Leaving Certificate, degree and masters level.

We met students from across Ireland including Dublin, Meath, Cavan, Galway, Kildare and Tipperary. We also welcomed visitors from Italy, Denmark, Sweden, France, the Netherlands, and Norway.



Italian students from TGS Eurogroup in July 2023

PRESS OFFICE OF THE REPRESENTATION

The Press Office organises media appearances for visiting European Commissioners and provides journalists with press releases and briefing material. It also organises workshops and study visits to Brussels for journalists. To follow the latest developments, check out the Representation's website and social media platforms. **Subscribe to the Representation's newsletter for a weekly roundup of EU news and events by scanning this QR code:**



Do you want your students to know more about the European Union?

The European Commission Representation in Ireland offers a range of activities and resources for secondary schools.



Sustained growth can only be achieved with sound fiscal rules

Increasingly visible. Credit. The EU's primary objective is to ensure that all member states are able to meet their obligations under the Treaty of Stability, Growth and Jobs. This requires a commitment to sound fiscal rules and appropriate measures to ensure their effectiveness. The Commission will continue to work with member states to ensure that these rules are effectively implemented.



Europe Day 2023 - 50 years together

Mairéad McGuinness, European Commissioner for Fiscal Services, Financial Stability and Capital Markets Union speaks about the bonds that bind Ireland and the European Union.



Celebrating Europe's achievements and unity

Minister for Public Expenditure, National Development Plan, Delivery and Reform, Paschal Donohoe TD shares a message in celebration of Europe Day 2023.

Comment

Von der Leyen's job application

The European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen has applied for a job in the private sector. This move has raised questions about her commitment to the role and the EU's interests.

Truck drivers in greater demand than rocket scientists due to staff shortage, says EU representative

There is a significant shortage of truck drivers in Europe, with demand far exceeding the number of available workers. This shortage is causing delays in the supply chain and increasing costs for businesses.



PREPARATION FOR CLIMATE CHANGE COSTS MONEY BUT SAVES LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

Global extreme weather events are becoming more common and Ireland is beginning to experience severe floods, heatwaves and droughts - but all is not lost, writes **Frans Timmermans**

As a subscriber you are reading this Premium article

Home (<https://www.independent.ie/>) / Business (<https://www.independent.ie/business/>) / Irish Business (<https://www.independent.ie/business/irish/>)

Top EU official says Brussels can help tackle Ireland's housing crisis

Director for structural reform says the bloc would be willing to 'intervene'

EU needs to expand and that will mean wins and losses for us

Taking a country at war into the European Union might seem an impossible task. But the prospect of emboldened Ukraine, fighting off Russian invaders, being given full membership is looking increasingly possible. Four months after the full-scale invasion in February last year, EU leaders gave Ukraine a special candidate status - an unusually rapid decision, changing the bloc's traditional slow approach to expansion.

Von der Leyen urges consensus on climate

European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen has urged member states to reach a consensus on climate policy. She emphasized the need for a unified approach to address the challenges posed by climate change.

Watershed speech triggers European election season and hits emotional note of solidarity with Ukraine

Ursula von der Leyen's speech at the European Council has marked a turning point in the EU's political journey. It has triggered the start of the election season and highlighted the EU's solidarity with Ukraine.

Irish Examiner

NEWS SPORT LIFESTYLE OPINION

IN FOCUS: Read My Lips Ben Dunne Israeli-Hamas War Dear Dailhí ieExplains Cork Club Championship

WHAT'S ON OFFER AT THE EUROPEAN UNION STAND?

What is the EU doing for Agriculture and Rural Communities? Visit our stand at the Ploughing and find out!

Block 2, Row 19, Stand 312

#EUPloughing

"It is time for Europe to once again think big and write our own destiny!"

Tackling climate change and the risks of AI is among the tasks at the top of the European Commission's agenda

EU BOFFIN: 'ROBOTS' WILL BE MORE LIKE VULCAN THAN ARNIE

AI'll be Spock!

OUR BIG YEAR

Irish Examiner

Irish Examiner | 14/09/2023

Von der Leyen: EU must prepare for growth

Changes to the EU's primary objective are being discussed. The Commission is looking for ways to ensure that the EU remains a force for growth and prosperity.

Irish more worried by housing and immigration than EU peers

Eurobarometer survey finds cost of living also high on

Irish Examiner

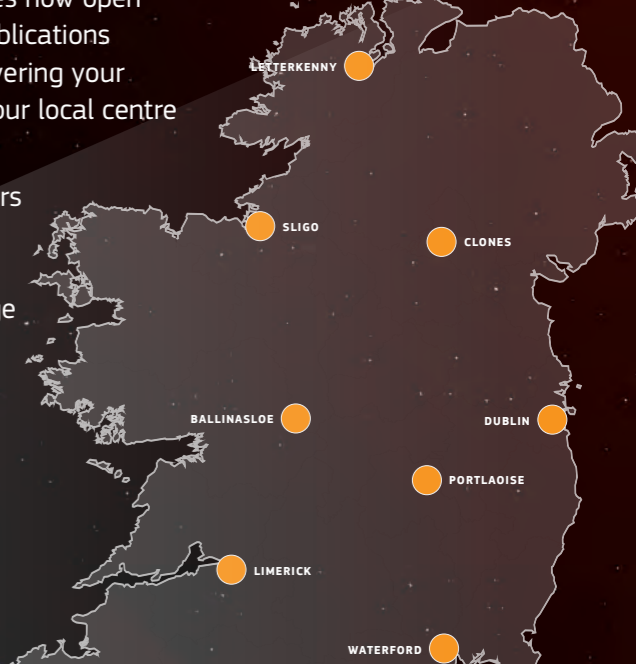
Irish Examiner | 14/09/2023

Do EU know what really happens in Brussels?

EUROPE DIRECT CENTRES

There are eight Europe Direct centres now open in Ireland, providing information, publications and materials for all ages and answering your questions about the EU. Call in to your local centre and get to know your EU.

In 2023 Irish Europe Direct managers took a trip to Malta to exchange best practices with their Maltese colleagues on bringing EU knowledge to citizens of island nations.



SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE SPOTLIGHT



WE PUBLISHED (all combined posts, reels, videos, stories)
534 times

BEST PERFORMING

European Commission President speaking at a commemoration ceremony to mark 25 years of the Good Friday Agreement (**369** likes)

Our Europe Day video (**2,577** accounts reached)



WE PUBLISHED (posts, videos, stories)
750 times

BEST PERFORMING

Photos of EU capitals from space (**25,926** accounts reached, **388** reactions, **7** comments, **58** shares)

Europe Day in 24 languages (**14,252** accounts reached, **291** reactions, **52** comments, **63** shares)



OVER with
620 posts **1.17m**
impressions



REPRESENTATION WEBSITE

KEEP UP-TO-DATE WITH OUR WEBSITE

www.euireland.ie

If you need information on the latest events organised by the Representation, EU legislation, Commission proposals, press releases, tender opportunities or recruitment competitions, it is just a click away. Get EU news of Irish interest sent directly to your inbox each week by subscribing to our newsletter "EU News You Can Use".

