



European Commission Representation in Ireland

ACTIVITY  
REPORT

2022







**Barbara Nolan**  
Head of Representation

## MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF THE COMMISSION REPRESENTATION

I am pleased to present the European Commission Representation in Ireland's 2022 Activity Report. Following the lifting of pandemic restrictions, we were delighted to reopen our doors to the public and welcome old and new friends to our cultural and information events. It was especially pleasing to witness the excitement and enthusiasm as normal business resumed, as we were able to reconnect in person with NGOs, interest groups and relaunch our activities with schools.

The past year was dominated by Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and the appalling suffering it has caused. The Representation has been proud to stand with Ukraine and reaffirm the EU's commitment to peace, freedom and democracy. In a year of many important political, economic and social challenges, we continued to facilitate dialogue between the Commission, the Irish government and key stakeholders when we hosted visits by 17 Commissioners. We were particularly delighted to welcome European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, who made a special trip to Ireland to mark the country's 50 years of EU membership.

I would like to thank all participants in our many events, the organisers, NGOs, representative groups, schools and Commissioners, as well as the Representation's staff for their contribution to our programme in the course of 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 2022 interesting – happy reading!



**Mairead McGuinness**  
European Commissioner for  
Financial services, financial stability  
and Capital Markets Union

## FOREWORD BY EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER MAIREAD MCGUINNESS

I would like to congratulate the Representation on a busy and productive 2022. It was a year that saw a return to in-person events after a period of online engagement as a result of Covid. I would also like to commend the Representation for keeping contacts going during those difficult times and for the efforts made as we returned to face-to-face events.

During 2022, we started work to mark Ireland's 50 years in the EU: the 50th anniversary of the signature of the accession treaty in January 1972 and the referendum in May of that year where 83 per cent of the Irish people voted to join the European Community. One of the high points of the year was the visit to Ireland of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in December to mark this momentous decision of Ireland to join the then EEC.

However, we also faced new and significant challenges in 2022 including Russia's illegal and unjustified invasion of Ukraine, which has shaped some of the outreach carried out by the Representation. Foremost in our minds is the suffering of the Ukrainian people. The priority of the European Union, including Ireland, is to show support and solidarity with our Ukrainian friends. Our support is unwavering and takes several forms including Ireland welcoming over seventy-five thousand refugees displaced from their homes in Ukraine. Alongside supporting Ukraine, the European Union has stepped up to deal with energy, trade and economic issues that have resulted from Russia's war. In this 50th year of membership, it is a reminder to us of the value of European solidarity in difficult times.

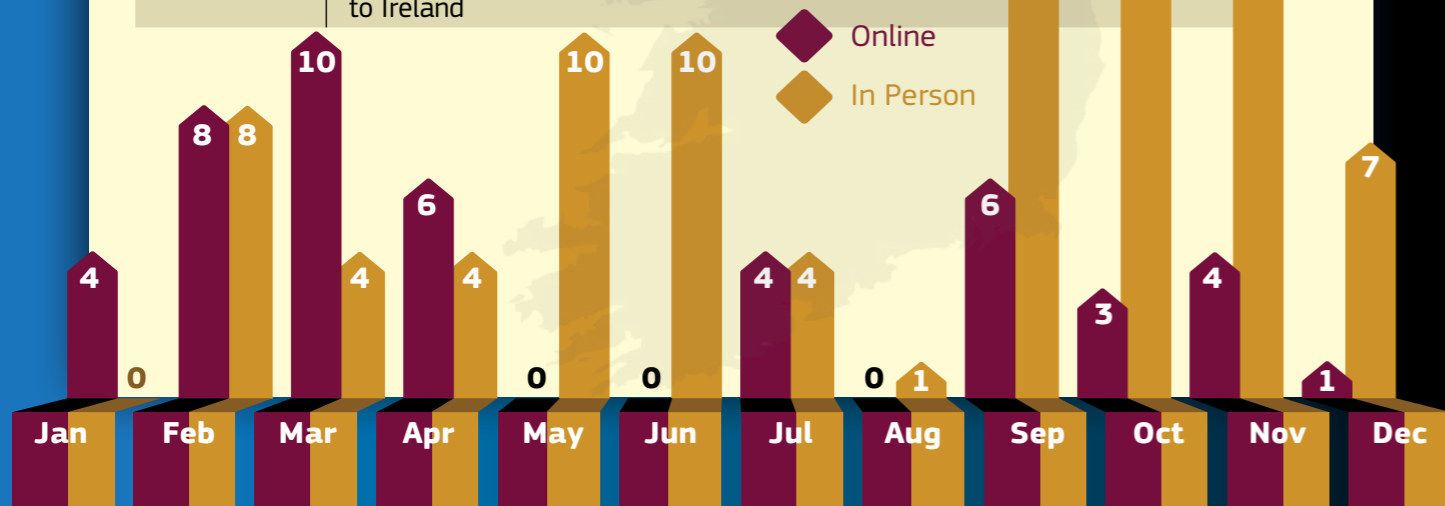
As the European Commissioner from Ireland, I was very happy to participate in a number of the Representation's events in 2022, to be out around the country meeting people and listening to how the EU has a positive impact on the lives of citizens. I look forward to meeting even more people in 2023.



## Number of events held throughout the year both online and in person

### FLAGSHIP EVENTS

25 – 27 Feb	Citizens' Panel of the Conference on the Future of Europe	22
3 Mar	Model Council of the European Union debate for secondary schools	
8 Mar	Women on Boards – Time to Level Up' discussion	
9 May	All about YOUth!, a hybrid event for Europe Day 2022	
14 Sep	European Commission President's State of the European Union Address	16
20 – 22 Sep	National Ploughing Championships	
1-2 Dec	Official Visit of European Commission President to Ireland	13





# Study Visits to Brussels in 2022

During 2022, the Representation began organising in-person study visits to Brussels once again. Groups of teachers, journalists and economists had the opportunity to travel to Brussels for briefings on topical issues at the European Commission, meet Commissioner Mairead McGuinness and Irish MEPs. These visits give participants the opportunity to learn first-hand how the EU institutions work.



Journalists from across Ireland meet with Commissioner McGuinness during their visit to Brussels in June 2022

Schoolteachers meeting with Commissioner McGuinness in July 2022. These teachers participate in the Blue Star Programme, which teaches children aged 5-12 about the EU.



Economists representing NGOs, professional associations, think tanks and financial institutions focused on discussing the European Semester during their visit.



# President von der Leyen's Visit to Ireland

On 1 December, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen made an official visit to Ireland and addressed a joint sitting of the Houses of the Oireachtas to mark 50 years of Ireland's membership of the EU. She praised Ireland's achievements noting that "Ireland shows Europe's best face. Innovative and inclusive. Loyal to your history and traditions. Open to the future and the world."

While in Dublin, President von der Leyen accepted the Peter Sutherland Leadership Award on behalf of the European Union at the Business & Finance Awards Ceremony.

This Award was created in memory of Peter Sutherland, who served as EU Commissioner for Competition and Director General of the World Trade Organisation.

Other highlights of President von der Leyen's visit included meeting the then Taoiseach Micheál Martin and the President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins. Schoolchildren who had won the Government's 'MyEU50' competition got a wonderful surprise when President von der Leyen met with them to encourage their interest in EU Affairs.





# Visits from European Commissioners

The Representation organised over 41 high level visits during 2022, including visits by 17 Commissioners – many of whom visited Ireland more than once. While the visit of European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, was naturally a highlight, a selection of memorable visits are illustrated on this page.

1. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen met with the President of Ireland during her official visit.
2. Energy Commissioner, Kadri Simson, met the Minister for Transport and Energy and visited a windfarm in Offaly.

3. Justice Commissioner Didier Reynders met with the Data Protection Commissioner and her staff. He also met the Minister for Justice and visited Twitter and Meta.
4. Vice-President Jourová discussed EU Values and Transparency with the Taoiseach, three government Ministers, the Chief Justice and academics working to counter disinformation.
5. Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa Ferreira, met with participants of youth and social inclusion projects co-funded by the European Social Fund.
6. Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, met with the Minister for Justice and held meetings with Facebook and Twitter.
- 7 & 8. Agriculture Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski met the Minister for Agriculture, addressed an IFA conference and visited local farms.

9. Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit, visited Youthreach in Clondalkin and met the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Innovation and Science.
10. Executive Vice-President Margarethe Vestager discussed Digital Europe with the Taoiseach, Tánaiste, and Minister for Finance and had speaking engagements at IBEC and the IIEA.
11. Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya Gabriel, met the Minister for Education and visited Science Foundation Ireland and the Old Library at Trinity College Dublin.

12. Commissioner for Financial services, financial stability and Capital Markets Union, Mairead McGuinness, meeting Gabriel Makhoulouf, Governor of the Central Bank of Ireland.
13. Commissioner for Budget and Administration, Johannes Hahn, met the Minister for Foreign Affairs and addressed an Oireachtas Committee.
14. Health Commissioner, Stella Kyriakides, discussed the European Health Union with Ireland's Minister for Health and visited a cancer centre at St James' Hospital
15. Vice-President Šuica participated in a Citizens' Panel at the Conference on the Future of Europe.



## Oireachtas Engagements

- President **Ursula von der Leyen**
- Vice-President **Věra Jourová**
- Commissioner **Johannes Hahn**
- Commissioner **Nicolas Schmit**
- Commissioner **Didier Reynders**
- Commissioner **Ylva Johansson**
- Commissioner **Kadri Simson**
- Commissioner **Mairead McGuinness**



# Overview of Outreach Initiatives



## SCHOOL VISITS

The Representation welcomes students and their teachers to Europe House to learn about the EU. Although Covid-19 curtailed this activity during the first half of the year, 13 school visits were held in 2022.



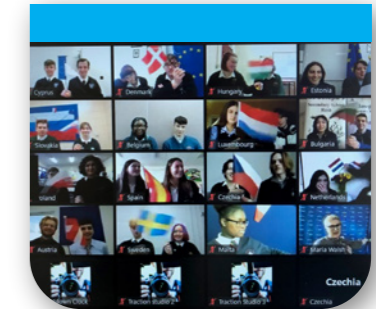
## ENERGY ROADSHOW

The Representation organised a series of four hybrid events in the form of an Energy Roadshow, where energy industry experts spoke to audiences in Athlone, Cork, Sligo and Waterford highlighting the RePowerEU initiative, the EU's plan to make energy affordable, secure and sustainable. Deirdre Clune MEP attended the Waterford edition of the Roadshow.



## MODEL COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION DEBATE DEBATED MIGRATION.

The Model Council of the EU is the Representation's annual flagship event for secondary schools. The 2022 competition was won by Ardscoil Rís from Dublin, representing Ireland. Second place went to Loreto Kilkenny and third place to Stepside Educate Together Secondary School.



## NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS

After a two-year Covid-related break, the Representation was delighted to attend the 2022 National Ploughing Championships. Queries on CAP, veterinary rules and food safety were the order of the day. Commissioner McGuinness was on hand to meet visitors to the stand and to launch an EU-funded project on using 5G technologies to drive a greener, more innovative Ireland.

## EUROPE DAY IS ALL ABOUT YOUTH

Together with the European Parliament Liaison Office and Eurofound, the Representation celebrated the European Year of Youth in which we brought together up to 100 young people aged 16-29, as well as an online audience from around Ireland, to learn, listen and engage on key issues and opportunities for young people in the EU. Many thanks to the Minister for European Affairs, Thomas Byrne T.D. and Ciarán Cuffe MEP for facilitating a great discussion.



## THE STATE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

*"Today we all see that we must fight for our democracies. Every single day. We must protect them both from the external threats they face, and from the vices that corrode them from within".*

The annual "State of the European Union" address was delivered by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who outlined the EU's response to the political, economic, and social consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and set out the Union's policy priorities.

The Representation, the European Parliament and the Institute of International and European Affairs hosted a live-stream of the address, followed by a panel discussion to analyse the key messages from the speech, as well as President von der Leyen's priorities for the future.



## DIPLOMATS FOR EQUALITY

*"All people, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity must be able to live freely without fear of violence or discrimination, and play an active part in society".*

Colleagues from the Commission Representation took part in the 2022 Dublin Pride Parade under the banner of 'Diplomats for Equality'.



## YOUNG TRANSLATORS

The 'Aistritheoirí Óga' (Young Translators) translation competition has been organised jointly by the European Commission and the Irish Government since 2017. The 2022 competition saw Cainnear Nic Réamoinn from Coláiste Chroí Mhuire in Galway awarded the overall prize for the best translation in the country. Minister of State for Gaeltacht and Sport, Jack Chambers presented Cainnear and regional winners Tomás Ó hUiginn, Coláiste Pobail Roscomáin, Roscommon, Seán Holt, Gaelcholáiste Cheatharlach, Carlow, Liam Ó hÓgáin, Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne, Kerry, and Niamh Ní Mhuirí, Scoil Iósaeaf, Tyrone with their awards.





# 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:



## EU commissioner to meet firms over abuse images

**NAOMI O'LEARY**  
European Commissioner

Ireland will have a key role in enforcing planned European Union laws to force tech companies to crack down on child sexual abuse images, the EU's home affairs commissioner, Naomi O'Leary, has said.

The Swedish visits Ireland today for meetings with Google, Twitter and Minister for Justice Helen McEntee before appearing before the EU Affairs Committee in the Dail.

There were almost 30 million images of child abuse material online in 2021, a 20% increase on the 25 million images in 2020, she said.

"With the online component now, more and more it means that these crimes, these rapes, are being sent and distributed to a lot of people. The images live there more or less forever. The Swedish law is a good example of how to deal with this," she said.

O'Leary said she will meet with tech companies to discuss how they can help to reduce the amount of child abuse material online. She will also meet with the Irish authorities to discuss how they can help to reduce the amount of child abuse material online.

"There will be a very important role for the Irish authorities to play here" as the contact point of the tech companies with their EU base in the country, she said.

"Several member states have expressed interest in hosting a proposed EU centre to tackle the issue. Ireland 'could be a good candidate'," Ms. O'Leary said, but it was "too early to decide".

"We should not make a safe space for these paedophiles and predators on the internet, and we need the internet companies to help us to work with them," Ms. O'Leary said. "We need to make sure that the legislation works like a spam filter to remove abuse content automatically without compromising the privacy of messages. The legislation will aim to encourage 'safety first' design, so that digital services are built to avoid being used to distribute child sexual abuse images, rather than being launched first and fixed later."

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## Ireland's example guides Europe's deliberative democracy

This weekend's Conference on the Future of Europe in Dublin is a unique and historical opportunity which we must grab firmly with both hands, writes **Dubravka Simic** of the European Commission

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## NextGenerationEU invests in Ireland's sustainable transformation

Barbara Nolan, Head of the European Commission Representation in Ireland

As we face the fallout of the global pandemic, Ukraine is aggressed and unprovoked war in Ukraine and the covid-19 living crisis, the European Union is re-evaluating its economic recovery strategy. NextGenerationEU – an €800bn that will keep our recovery on track and ensure that our economies are fit for the future.

At the heart of NextGenerationEU is the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). The European Commission is working with each Member State to implement Recovery and Resilience Plans that address the most pressing challenges in their economies, largely driven by the green transition and digital transformation. EU membership has been the engine for this progress, helping Ireland secure stability, peace and prosperity.

On helping Ireland become more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the green and digital transitions. With 18 dedicated measures and nine reforms, Ireland's plan is supported by €10.1bn in EU grants. Climate investments and reforms will benefit from 42% of the plan's expenditure and 32% will support the digital transition.

Ireland's key green investments relate to energy efficiency and renewable energy, private and public buildings, sustainable transport, and smart and sustainable water management, and the development of a shared government data centre. Ireland's plan will foster economic growth, stimulate investments and create jobs and is projected to increase the country's gross domestic product from 0.3% to 0.5% by 2026. This economic boost will provide jobs for an additional 6,200 people beyond what would be expected from the recovery and resilience plans implemented by other EU countries, with significant effects accounting for 0.4% points of gross domestic product in 2026. This demonstrates the added value of joint and co-ordinated action at EU level.

## Ryan considers windfall tax on energy companies

European Commissioner for Energy Kadri Simson says Ireland needs to focus on renewable energy sources, as Europe attempts to eradicate the need for Russian oil.

**Paul Horford**  
Political Correspondent

The Minister for the Environment has told the Dail he has not ruled out a windfall tax on energy companies.

Energy Ireland, posted over €1 billion Canadian dollars in pre-tax profits last year. "It needs to be in the rights of this Government," he said.

Mr Ryan had earlier met with the Minister, Deputy Donohoe, and look at whatever range of measures might be needed to help further.



## Farmers need more CAP supports – Ag Commissioner

**FAT O'TOOLE**  
Political Correspondent

Farmers are not getting adequate financial supports from CAP to protect food security, the European Commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz Wojciechowski, conceded this week.

The Commissioner highlighted the fact that the CAP budget was now just 0.2% of EU gross domestic product (GDP), which compared to a defence budget of 2% of EU GDP.

"Food security needs to be treated like defence and energy security," he said.

Farm to Fork strategy in the context of recovering food security. The targets within the strategy, including those relating to reductions in fertilizer and pesticide use on farms, were political rather than legal targets, he said.

There was a call for farmers to seek changes to the current CAP reforms. The Commissioner highlighted the fact that the CAP budget was now just 0.2% of EU gross domestic product (GDP), which compared to a defence budget of 2% of EU GDP.

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## EU Commission moves to rein in Big Tech due to 'distrust' of Irish regulation

Margrethe Vestager, EC executive vice-president, says new regime for Digital Services Act will assure member states rules will be properly implemented

**JACK KENNEDY**  
SPIN DOCTOR

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## Gas and nuclear essential during energy transition

Mairéad McGuinness

In an ideal world the EU would make the switch to renewables and abandon fossil fuels immediately.

The EU is in a difficult position as it tries to transition to green energy. Gas and nuclear are essential during the energy transition.

Mairéad McGuinness, EU Commissioner for Energy, said that gas and nuclear are essential during the energy transition. She said that the EU needs to ensure that it has a secure and affordable energy supply during the transition to green energy.

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## The EU's commitment to Ukraine is unwavering and steadfast

The president of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen says the EU is working hard to secure safe passage for civilians trying to escape conflict zones as well as supporting war crime documentation experts in Ukraine.

**EU COMMISSION**

The president of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen says the EU is working hard to secure safe passage for civilians trying to escape conflict zones as well as supporting war crime documentation experts in Ukraine.

It is also working to ensure stability of gas supplies for the future.

Reach  
Facebook Page reach 342,329  
Instagram reach 346,790

Twitter @eureireland  
EU Commission in Ireland @eureireland  
The EU Commission has today launched four new infringement procedures against the United Kingdom for not complying with significant parts of the Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland. [europea.eu/IMV3f3x](https://europea.eu/IMV3f3x) #Brexit

EU Commission in Ireland @eureireland  
EU Commission is recruiting Irish language translators to work with us. To join the team & do important & interesting work, contact: [GÁ-ÉARCAOCHT-EOLAS@ec.europa.eu](mailto:GÁ-ÉARCAOCHT-EOLAS@ec.europa.eu) (as Gaeilge) for more information. Applications deadline: 29 April 22.

EU Commission in Ireland @eureireland  
InvolveMeath is a Traveller youth project that helps tackle social exclusion in marginalised communities in Meath. They provide activities & programmes for young people & participate in youth exchanges through @EUERasmusPlus. Kay & Brian explain more @UnitedinDiversity

European Commission Representation  
Running can be a powerful way to bring attention to social issues. This is the mission of the Sanctuary Runners communities across Ireland to better understand and support refugees living locally. A finalist for the 2019 @Inclusive awards, the Sanctuary Runners have contributed to creating more inclusive societies throughout Ireland, showing solidarity through sport. #InclusivityMonth #UnitedinDiversity

We would like to give young people from the Travelling community,...

As of February 2022, there are 4500 Sanctuary Runners across Ireland

Twitter  
Impressions 2,126,500  
Total likes 9,600

Facebook  
Page reach 342,329  
Page visits 9,856  
New page likes 714

Instagram  
Reach 346,790  
Profile visits 4,862  
New followers 1,004

21 Jan 2 Mar 11 Apr 21 May 30 Jun 9 Aug 18 Sep 28 Oct 7 Dec



# EUROPE DIRECT Contact 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 2022 a new Europe Direct contact centre opened in Limerick, bringing the total number of Europe Direct centres across Ireland to eight. Located in public libraries, these Europe Direct Centres organized 370 Information and engagement activities and 117 school visits during 2022.

Their activities focused on NextGenerationEU, European Year of Youth, European Green Deal, Sustainability and the Circular Economy.



## Representation Website

KEEP UP-TO-DATE  
WITH OUR WEBSITE

[www.euireland.ie](http://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, the information is just a click away.

