



**Press Release**  
**Monday, 8 October 2018**

## **9 Irish Projects Shortlisted for European Innovation in Politics Awards**

Nine impactful and diverse Irish projects have been shortlisted for this year's Europe-wide Innovation in Politics Awards. They are among 80 finalists selected by a European Jury of 1,053 citizens. Organised by the Innovation in Politics Institute based in Vienna, the Innovation in Politics Awards aim to recognise ground-breaking political initiatives across Europe at any level of governance that can act as an inspiration to others. The winners will be announced at a gala ceremony on 17 November 2018 in Vienna, Austria.

Over 600 projects from all over Europe were nominated in eight categories: Civilisation, Community, Democracy, Human Rights, Ecology, Jobs, Prosperity, and Quality of Life. The European Jury selected 10 finalists in each category.

Edward Strasser, Chief Executive Officer of the Innovation in Politics Institute said: "With no less than nine Irish finalists selected by citizens across Europe, it is clear that the innovative approaches by Irish politicians stand out. Engagement with citizens, communities, and civil society as well as cross-party collaboration and support are key features of the projects."

The 9 Irish finalists reflecting political innovation at national (3), regional (1) and local level (5) are as follows:

- **HUMAN RIGHTS CATEGORY**

**Ireland's LGBTI+ Youth Strategy 2018-20 – Dr. Katherine Zappone, Minister for Children & Youth Affairs**

A finalist is the innovative LGBTI+ Youth Strategy 2018 -20 introduced by Dr. Katherine Zappone TD, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The Strategy, a first for Ireland and the world, is informed by the views of thousands of young people and by those who work with them and on their behalf. An advisory group of 14 committed young people helped steer the process. The strategy guarantees a cross-governmental approach to put additional measures in place to further enhance the lives of LGBTI+ young people and address some of the key challenges they may face as part of their day-to-day lives. The Strategy will make a significant contribution towards the Government's broader commitment to continue to strive for the full inclusion of LGBTI+ people in Irish society and to build a more inclusive Ireland.

**Legislation & Policy to Protect Victims and Tackle Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence - Frances Fitzgerald TD, former Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality**

Among the projects shortlisted is the suite of ground-breaking legislation introduced by Frances Fitzgerald TD, as Minister for Justice and Equality, to tackle violence against women, domestic violence, and improve the legal system's response to both the crime and the victim. A set of three pieces of legislation was introduced: the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Bill 2016, the Criminal Justice (Sexual Offences) Bill 2016 and the Domestic Violence Bill 2017. Informed by detailed consultations during the drafting process, innovations in the legislation include a comprehensive definition of consent, criminalisation of coercive control and protection for victims in all forms of intimate relationships. Taken together, these Bills - now laws - which garnered cross-party support, reform and strengthen protections against gender-based violence and the rights of victims.

- **JOBS CATEGORY**

**Protection of Freelance Workers - Senator Ivana Bacik**

Senator Ivana Bacik's efforts to protect freelance workers are also recognised. In 2017, the Oireachtas passed the Competition (Amendment) Act 2017 which restored to low-paid, vulnerable freelance workers, including freelance journalists, musicians and actors, the fundamental right to be collectively represented by trade unions. This began as a Private Member's Bill sponsored by Senator Ivana Bacik and came after years of campaigning by trade unions following a 2004 ruling by the Competition Authority. The legislation was developed collaboratively with Mary Mitchell O'Connor TD, as Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, and received cross-party support. It has attracted widespread international interest and praise for its innovative approach to workers' rights.

- **PROSPERITY CATEGORY**

**Atlantic Economic Corridor - Seán Kyne TD, Minister of State for Rural Affairs and Natural Resources, and the Northern and Western Regional Assembly**

From Kerry to Derry, the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) is one region with a shared goal to create economic prosperity along the Atlantic coast of Ireland. This initiative, led by Seán Kyne TD, Minister of State for Rural Affairs and Natural Resources, is a collaboration of geographical, sectoral and thematic interests with the aim of building a brighter and sustainable future for the 1.7 million people of the Atlantic region. Former Chair of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA), Councillor Patsy O'Brien, as Chair of the NWRA committed considerable resources in developing & launching the Atlantic Economic Corridor at [www.atlanticeconomiccorridor.ie](http://www.atlanticeconomiccorridor.ie). This demonstrated the leadership called for by Government in pushing this world-class example of 'place based' development promoting investment, living, learning and working in the region. The Atlantic Economic Corridor has the support of national and local government and of State agencies. The initiative wishes to bring together the State capital investment programme with the potential investment of the private sector to strengthen the region's economic contribution and make the Atlantic region a better place in which to live and work.

**Waterford Greenway – Waterford City and County Council**

The Waterford Greenway is a spectacular 46-km off-road cycling and walking coastal trail from Waterford to Dungarvan. It opened in March 2017. This followed a detailed and successful consultation process by Waterford City and County Council driven by former Councillor Ger Barron, Councillor Damien Geoghegan and others. It has become an important national tourism asset, creating employment and benefiting local communities and the economy in a rural area that was in decline. Between its opening in March and December 2017, the project has been a spectacular success with almost 250,000 people walking or cycling the Waterford Greenway in its first year. Local people see the Greenway as a great opportunity to pursue enterprises not previously considered viable. Economic renewal and growth, tourism and recreation-related spending on items such as bicycle hire, and food and lodging are just a few of the ways it has positively impacted on the local economy and Waterford more generally.

- **COMMUNITY CATEGORY**

**Dunmanway Community Garden – Cork County Council**

Not having such a space, the Dunmanway community garden initiative leased a one-acre site from Cork County Council and began developing the space with the active involvement of local Councillor Declan Hurley. The project trained people in basic horticultural skills, construction skills and co-operative working. It was developed for the people of Dunmanway, across all age groups, from toddler to the elderly regardless of physical ability, mental well-being or nationality. The Community Garden has got support from Government agencies and hosts courses for adults such as literacy and numeracy through gardening, therapeutic gardening, mental health and well-being sessions, painting, ceramics, photography and woodcraft. The Garden has improved the community's quality of life. It received further funding from Cork County Council and has engaged workers from an unemployment programme who take visitors on a tour of the garden or help new volunteers in getting involved. Dunmanway Community Garden is a success story due to the phenomenal input of the volunteers who established and maintain the garden to meet the needs of the community.

- **DEMOCRACY CATEGORY**

### **300K Have Your Say – Participatory Budgeting - South Dublin County Council**

In 2017, South Dublin County Council's Participatory Budget initiative, the first one in Ireland, allowed citizens to vote for projects designed and submitted by citizens. An additional €300,000 was provided specifically for this purpose. The then Mayor, Councillor Guss O'Connell and former Mayor, Dermot Looney with the support of the entire council membership, proposed that Participative Budgeting be piloted in an electoral ward in 2017. The initiative rolled out under the brand name **"300K - Have Your Say"** attracted some 160 project submissions. 17 were shortlisted for public voting of which 8, ranging from €5K to €120K, were successful. There were 2,598 valid votes cast which exceed expectations. The real objective, increased citizen participation in local government was achieved. The Participatory Budgeting process was independently evaluated by the Institute of Public Administration which positively endorsed the initiative and it has since been repeated in 2018.

- **QUALITY OF LIFE CATEGORY**

### **Just Eat dublinbikes - Dublin City Council**

Dublin City Council's Dublin Bikes (now called Just Eat dublinbikes) was one of the first bike-sharing schemes introduced in Europe and it has proven to be one of the most successful. Just Eat dublinbikes is rated so highly due to the intensity of use of the scheme, with its 1,500 bikes generating over 4 million trips a year. A key aim of the scheme was to encourage more people to cycle in Dublin. Since the introduction of the scheme in 2009, on the initiative of Councillor Andrew Montague, Just Eat dublinbikes continues to expand, with 15 new bike stations and 100 new bikes added in 2018. Just Eat dublinbikes has made it easier to travel around the city, has improved the environment with fewer motorised journeys, and improved public health by encouraging more active transport. It has been transformational for Dublin.

### **Peace Link – Building Relations through Sport – Monaghan County Council**

The Peace Link Project was developed by the Clones Erne East Sports Partnership which was a consortium of community, sporting and statutory organisations based along the Fermanagh and Monaghan border region. This initiative was built on previous work carried out by Clones Community Forum under EU PEACE I and PEACE II in bringing community and sporting organisations together to work strategically and collaboratively to build peace through the mechanism of sport. The project aimed to provide a sporting hub from which activities and events could be delivered that would positively impact meaningful relationships and peace building across the Clones and Erne East areas in counties Monaghan and Fermanagh respectively. The sporting hub is located within walking distance of Clones town centre and is approximately 500m from the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Monaghan County Council assumed the role as lead partner for a €7.8-million application to the EU PEACE III Shared Spaces Programme. The project received cross-party support in both jurisdictions. Opened in 2014, the project surpasses all expectations in terms of building community relations through sport and is a hub for building a healthy, vibrant community for all ages and backgrounds.

### **Promoting Innovation and Public Engagement**

Professor Iain McMenamin, Head of the School of Law and Government at Dublin City University said: "The poor reputation of democratic politicians is one the greatest problems in the contemporary world. Dublin City University's partnership with the Innovation in Politics Awards reflects our commitment to supporting civic and political leadership both in Ireland and internationally. We are delighted to see such a wide range of innovative Irish projects as finalists. These reflect ground-breaking, dynamic and collaborative work by politicians at Government, Oireachtas, regional and local government levels, which is making a real difference to people and communities around Ireland."

Dr. Deiric Ó Broin, Office of Civic Engagement, Dublin City University added: "We are also delighted that more than 1,000 citizens from across Europe, including Ireland, engaged with the Innovation in Politics Awards process. While Irish citizens did not select projects from Ireland, being a juror provided a great opportunity to learn first-hand what is happening across Europe and be part of choosing the most innovative projects. We also hope that participants take inspiration from their involvement back to their own communities and organisations."

### **About the Innovation in Politics Awards**

In their second year, the Innovation in Politics Awards were established in 2017 by the Innovation in Politics Institute based in Vienna, to give recognition to political work which improves the lives of all Europeans. Its mission is to improve politics in Europe by recognising and supporting initiatives at any level of governance and across the political spectrum that break new ground, are creative and achieve results. The Innovation in Politics Awards brings innovative work to the fore, showcasing it as an example of best practice for others.

The Innovation in Politics Awards are realised with the support of the Kahane Foundation, the B&C Private Foundation, and other private donors.

The list of all 80 finalists can be found on the [Innovation in Politics Awards website](#).

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### **Notes to Editor**

- For further information on the Innovation in Politics Awards see [www.innovationinpolitics.eu](http://www.innovationinpolitics.eu)