

REPORT ON CITIZENS' CONSULTATIONS ON EUROPE IN IRELAND

PART A: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Citizens' Dialogues on the future of Europe took place across Ireland between November 2017 and May 2018. The Taoiseach (Prime Minister), Leo Varadkar, T.D., was joined at the launch by the Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Coveney, T.D., and the Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee, T.D. The regional sessions were arranged and hosted by the Minister of State for European Affairs with the assistance of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the European Movement Ireland. Nearly 1,000 people participated and the process culminated with a day-long National Citizens' Dialogue in Dublin in May 2018.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive with almost 90% expressing satisfaction with the process. Almost all of those involved were positively disposed towards the European Union with participants associating words such as "peace", "unity", "solidarity", "security" and "cooperation" with membership of the Union. A national opinion poll conducted towards the end of the process confirmed this trend, finding that support for membership of the European Union is as high as 92%.

Those involved were much more interested in focussing on the future, rather than raking over the past, and the abiding message was that the Irish people see Europe at the heart of their future and Ireland at the heart of Europe. The overarching desire was for fairness - fairness between Member States, fairness in educational and employment opportunities and fairness between generations.

It emerged, however, that more needs to be done in terms of explaining and communicating the Union's policies and achievements. Often, the distinction between Member State competence and European Union competence is not understood. As Minister of State McEntee put it: "The European Union has many achievements to its name. But it still needs to reaffirm its relevance in the daily lives of its citizens. We have learned from our citizens that this renewal needs to be constant and not just in times of crisis."

The main outcomes were:

- Participants said that they want to be part of a Union that lives up to its values and is ready to meet the new challenges that we face.
- They see real value in cooperating on challenges like climate change, migration, cybersecurity, terrorism and cross-border crime.
- The overarching desire is for fairness – fairness in the opportunities available to citizens, fairness between generations, fairness between Member States, fairness in Europe's dealings with the rest of the world and fairness towards the environment.
- Citizens want the EU to continue to do what it does well. They support investment in policies like the Common Agricultural Policy, regional development and Erasmus+. They want more investment in young people, in education, training and innovation.

- They want to tackle social exclusion and to see stronger interventions at a European level to combat discrimination, integrate migrants and improve access to services.
- Businesses and consumers want to see the completion of the Single Market, especially in services and the Digital Single Market. They want corporate tax to remain a national competence and they want more support for small to medium sized enterprises, particularly in their early years.

A prosperous and competitive Union

Participants said they wanted to see more investment in young people, in education, in training and in innovation, particularly through Horizon 2020 (soon to be Horizon Europe), in order to develop the skills needed for the labour market of the future and to prepare for growing competition from new global players. They also wanted to tackle youth unemployment and long-term unemployment.

Investment, they said, should be spread across all regions.

The business community and the NGO sector want funding processes to be simplified and there was interest in a banking union that could facilitate access to affordable and safe credit.

There were calls for the completion of the Single Market in services and the Digital Single Market and broad support for the Union's growing network of free trade agreements.

There was strong support for corporation tax policy remaining a national competence. There was also strong support for the Common Agricultural Policy and the fishing community asked for more investment in equipment and an easing of quotas.

A safe and secure Union

Speaking at the National Citizens' Dialogue in May 2018, the Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Coveney, T.D., pointed out that "Europe has much to offer in terms of rights and advantages. But the Union's ability to deliver on its commitments is dependent on creating a safe and secure space for all its citizens."

There was strong attachment at the sessions to Irish neutrality but also broad recognition that security challenges such as terrorism, drug-trafficking and cross-border crime are best tackled in cooperation with others.

Participants tended to believe that enlargement would bring stability to Europe's neighbourhood and support for increasing the EU's development and humanitarian assistance was given voice.

Participants also felt that tackling social exclusion and focussing more attention on the integration of migrants would help make the Union a safer place.

Irish people are proud of the role Ireland and the EU play in peacekeeping missions and some want to see more public dialogue on new security initiatives such as Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO).

A sustainable Union

Participants want the European Union to be a global leader in tackling climate change. While there was broad support for tougher environmental legislation, there was a demand in some quarters for more engagement and debate on how the climate action agenda is impacting on peoples' day-to-day lives.

More incentives for the transition to renewable energies were sought and, while some concerns were voiced about the impact of modern farming on the environments, there were also calls for more protection for rural landscapes and a concerted effort to close the rural-urban divide.

As one participant put it: "A dead planet will not provide jobs or livelihoods."

A social Europe

Participants wanted to see stronger intervention at European level to combat all discrimination and improve access to services.

The voluntary sector asked for a greater role in the decision-making processes in Europe.

Concerns were raised about work-life balance and quality of life indicators, participants argued, should be factored in when measuring competitiveness.

The trade union movement said that full effect must be given to the European Pillar of Social Rights and called for stronger rights at EU and Member State level for the collective bargaining in the workplace.

Some aspects of the Posted Workers Directive were criticised as being unfair.

The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) pointed in a written submission to the values enshrined in article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and said: "It is only if the EU can demonstrate that it is using its values to guide its decisions that it will have the confidence and support of its people."

Shaping globalisation

Concerns were expressed about job security in an increasingly competitive world with calls for more investment in lifelong learning, up-skilling and language training.

Education was seen as key, with demands made for more EU-funded universities, a greatly expanded Erasmus+ programme (involving more apprentices, teachers and people from all generations) and the mutual recognition of specialist qualifications across the EU.

It was felt that the EU has a moral imperative to do more for countries to the south and east and to promote education and empowerment in Africa.

Strong views were expressed that globalisation should not be allowed to proceed at the expense of human rights.

Conclusion

In an address to the European Parliament in January 2018, the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), Leo Varadkar, T.D., said that “the EU has always offered the promise of a better future. It is not a future that will be handed to us. We must work to create it.” The Citizens’ Dialogue process in Ireland has been of invaluable assistance in creating the vision of an attractive EU that citizens can trust and support. We are immensely grateful to all who responded to our call to “get involved” and we are confident that their participation will inform Ireland’s contribution to the Strategic Agenda which EU Heads of State and Government will prepare in Sibiu, Romania, in May 2019.

PART B: NATIONAL REPORT

I. MAIN OUTCOMES

- Support for Ireland’s membership of the EU is high, but the EU needs to constantly reaffirm its relevance in the daily lives of its citizens.
- More needs to be done in terms of explaining and communicating the Union’s policies and achievements.
- Participants associate membership of the EU with values. Words such as “peace”, “unity”, “solidarity”, “security” and “cooperation” were replicated throughout the country.
- They said that they want to be part of a Union that lives up to these values and is ready to meet the new challenges that we face. They see real value in cooperating on challenges like climate change, migration, cybersecurity, terrorism and cross-border crime.
- The overarching desire is for fairness – fairness in the opportunities available to citizens, fairness between generations, fairness between Member States, fairness in Europe’s dealings with the rest of the world and fairness towards the environment.
- Citizens want the EU to continue to do what it does well. They support investment in policies like the Common Agricultural Policy, regional development and Erasmus+. They want more investment in young people, in education, training and innovation.
- They want to tackle social exclusion and to see stronger interventions at a European level to combat discrimination, integrate migrants and improve access to services.
- Businesses and consumers want to see the completion of the Single Market, especially in services and the Digital Single Market. They want corporate tax to remain a national competence and they want more support for small to medium sized enterprises, particularly in their early years.

II. CALENDAR AND METHODOLOGY OF CONSULTATIONS

Calendar of the Citizens' Dialogues on the future of Europe

Date	Event	Location
15 November 2017	Launch of the Citizens' Dialogue on the future of Europe	Dublin
8 February 2018	Regional Citizens' Dialogue	Galway
22 February 2018	Regional Citizens' Dialogue	Cork
8 March 2018	Regional Citizens' Dialogue	Donegal
29 March 2018	Sectoral Citizens' Dialogue with representatives of the Community and Voluntary Sector	Dublin
19 April 2018	Regional Citizens' Dialogue	Meath
9 May 2018	National Citizens' Dialogue	Dublin
12 October 2018	Launch of the Report of the Citizens' Dialogues	Dublin

Methodology of Citizens' Dialogues on the future of Europe

The Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, T.D. launched a series of Citizens' Dialogues on the future of Europe in November 2017. At the launch he noted that the EU was one of the most successful political projects in human history which had brought an end to war in Europe, by creating a dynamic for peace and co-operation. He said it was important for Ireland to be actively engaged in shaping and influencing the debate about its future.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade partnered with European Movement Ireland (EMI), an independent, not-for-profit, membership-based organisation to organise a series of Regional Citizens' Dialogues in the four provinces of Ireland between February and April of this year.

Each regional event was held in the evening and hosted by Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee, T.D. The dialogues were widely advertised and open to everyone. They were designed to raise awareness and encourage participation. But, most of all, they were a listening exercise.

Those who came along were asked to join roundtables and to say at the outset the first words that came to mind when they think of the EU. To give shape and continuity to each of the events, participants were then asked to discuss questions based on the five key challenges identified by EU leaders in the Bratislava Declaration.

The questions focussed on how to make the EU:

- prosperous and competitive;
- safe and secure;
- sustainable;
- socially responsible; and
- prepared for the future by shaping globalisation.

Discussions at each table were guided by trained moderators and summarised by note-takers. Participants were given 8 minutes to discuss each question and given two minutes to prepare and agree summaries of the key points of their discussions. Each moderator was invited to summarise their table's discussions later.

To finish the evening, there was an 'open mic' session during which participants could raise any issues they did not get to address during the dialogues. Participants were also invited to give written feedback on the organisation of the events and to set out their vision for the future of Europe in "Postcards from the Citizens' Dialogues".

In April, a special Sectoral Citizens' Dialogue was arranged for representatives of non-governmental organisations in Dublin. The event was organised by The Wheel, Ireland's National Association of Community and Voluntary Organisations, Charities and Social Enterprises, in cooperation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Dialogue took the same format as the regional events.

On 9 May 2018, Europe Day, the Government hosted a National Citizens' Dialogue on the future of Europe in Dublin. The event drew together politicians, civil servants, representative groups, think tanks and members of the public to discuss some of the most important issues raised during the dialogues with key interlocutors from the Government, farming communities, the trade union movement, business and academia.

The Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, T.D., opened the event by way of a video address. Keynote speeches were delivered by Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Coveney, T.D., Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee, T.D., and European Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly.

The Tánaiste spoke about Europe's place in the world, Minister McEntee reflected on what she had heard during the Citizens' Dialogues, most importantly people's desire to ensure fairness in an increasingly competitive world.

The programme included sessions on:

- Reflections on Citizens' engagement on the future of Europe;
- Jobs, Competitiveness and Sustainable Growth;
- Youth, Education and Innovation;
- A presentation of the findings of an EMI / Red C poll on Irish attitudes towards Europe; and
- A panel discussion on the experience of EU citizens living in Ireland and Irish citizens working in the EU institutions.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade supports the Blue Star Programme which helps primary school children better understand the EU. Pupils from three schools participating in the programme presented their projects at the National Citizens' Dialogue on the future of Europe. A special focus of this year's programme was giving pupils an opportunity to engage in creative exercises on 'My future of Europe'.

On 12 October 2018, Minister McEntee was joined by the Austrian Federal Minister for the EU, Art, Culture and Media, Gernot Blümel, at the launch of a narrative [Report on the Citizens' Dialogues on the future of Europe](#). The report offered a snapshot of the rich and varied contributions heard during the dialogues and the summaries of the regional and sectoral dialogues are drawn upon in this report.

In addition to the Citizens' Dialogues, a future of Europe website – www.dfa.ie/eu - and a twitter handle - #futureofeuropa – were also set up to raise public awareness and to help them to engage with the debate. The Citizens' Dialogues accounted for around 380,000 impressions on social media.

Citizens were also invited to submit their views to the future of Europe through the website. This facility is continuing and the Department continues to receive expressions of interest. Eight submissions have been received to date.

The Government has also supported other public outreach initiatives on the future of Europe. This includes financial support for the Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA) Future of the EU27 programme, designed to enhance public engagement and understanding of the policy challenges facing Ireland in the EU.

Through the Communicating Europe Initiative, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade provides grants to voluntary organisations, education bodies and civil society groups to deepen public awareness of the role that the EU plays in citizens' daily lives and improving the quality and accessibility of public information on European issues, at local or national level. This year grant applications which promote dialogue on the future of Europe were particularly encouraged.

As part of its ongoing work on Brexit, the Government has engaged with business and civic society through the All-Island Civic Dialogue process. This has included four plenary sessions hosted by the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste. It has also included a large number of sectoral dialogues in locations across the country, which have discussed the impact of Brexit on specific areas including Agrifood, Transport, Energy, Tourism and Hospitality, and Education. This process has been an invaluable opportunity to hear directly about the all-island implications of Brexit, from a variety of stakeholders and across a wide range of sectors. In addition, a dedicated Brexit Stakeholder Forum, chaired by the Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister), meets every 4 to 6 weeks to engage directly with a wide range of stakeholders, addressing their concerns and perspectives, and updating them on the latest developments in the Brexit negotiations, and on Government efforts to prepare for the departure of the UK from the European Union

Other citizens' engagement initiatives on the future of Europe with the involvement of the Government of Ireland

Date	Event	Location
30 June 2017	<p><i>"Where lies the future of Europe"</i>, public event organised by Deirdre Clune, MEP, in conjunction with the European Parliament Offices in Ireland</p> <p>Address by Simon Coveney, T.D., Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade</p>	Cork
14 September 2017	<p>Opening event of the Dublin City University Brexit Research and Policy Institute</p> <p>Keynote Speech by Helen McEntee, T.D., Minister of State for European Affairs, <i>"Brexit and the Future of Europe"</i></p>	Dublin City University
27 September 2017	<p>IIEA Future of the EU27 event</p> <p>Addresses by Ann Linde, Minister for European Union Affairs and Trade, Sweden and Helen McEntee, T.D., Minister of State for European Affairs, <i>"The Future of the EU27"</i></p>	Dublin
12 October 2017	<p>Statement by Helen McEntee, T.D., Minister of State for European Affairs on the future of Europe</p>	Seanad Éireann (Irish Senate)
28 November 2017	<p>Address by Simon Coveney, T.D., Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, <i>"The Europe we want"</i></p>	University College Dublin
13 December 2017	<p>European Commission in Ireland, Citizens' Dialogue on the Future of Europe</p> <p>Guest speakers: Tibor Navracsics, European Commissioner for Education,</p>	Dublin

Date	Event	Location
	Culture, Youth and Sport and Helen McEntee, T.D., Minister of State for European Affairs	
26 January 2018	<p>Inaugural event of the Dublin City University Brexit Institute</p> <p>Address by Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland, <i>“Giving the European Union a Future that will Engage Citizens - A Shared Challenge”</i></p> <p>Address by Simon Coveney, T.D., Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, <i>“Brexit, Ireland and the future of Europe”</i></p>	Dublin City University
6 February 2018	Helen McEntee, T.D., Minister of State for European Affairs, participated in a discussion with university students about EU Jobs and the future of Europe	University of Limerick
12 February 2018	<p>IIEA Future of the EU27 regional event – Forging Partnerships: Ireland and Lithuania in the EU27</p> <p>Guest speakers: Linas Linkevičius, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Lithuania, and David Stanton, Minister of State for Equality, Immigration and Integration, Ireland, followed by panel discussion with students</p>	University College Cork
20 February 2018	<p>Citizens’ Dialogue on the future of Europe hosted by Maynooth University</p> <p>Guest speakers: Nathalie Loiseau, Minister for European Affairs, France, and Helen McEntee, Minister of State for European Affairs, Ireland,</p>	Maynooth University

Date	Event	Location
	followed by panel discussion with students	
22 February 2018	Helen McEntee, T.D., Minister of State for European Affairs, participated in a discussion with university students about EU Jobs and the future of Europe	University College Cork
8 March 2018	Call for applications under the Communicating Europe Initiative	Nationwide
8 March 2018	Helen McEntee, T.D., Minister of State for European Affairs, participated in a discussion with university students about EU Jobs and the future of Europe	Letterkenny Institute of Technology
19 April 2018	Helen McEntee, Minister of State for European Affairs launched Ibec's position paper <i>"Ireland in the EU: a dynamic future"</i>	Dublin
20 April 2018	Irish Farmers' Association – EU Commissions' Citizens' Dialogue Guest speaker: Phil Hogan, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development	Kilkenny
8 May 2018	Helen McEntee, Minister of State for European Affairs, announces the awarding of €100,000 in grants under the Communicating Europe Initiative	Nationwide
14 June 2018	IIEA Future of the EU27 Regional Event <i>"Whose Job is it Anyway? A Debate on Globalisation and the Future of Work in Europe"</i> Guest speakers included Michael D'Darcy, T.D. Minister	Dundalk

Date	Event	Location
	of State at the Department of Finance	
18-20 September 2018	Future of Europe information stand at the National Ploughing Championships	Offaly

Sharing Ireland's perspective on the future of Europe with our European Partners

Date	Event	Location
17 January 2018	Participation by Leo Varadkar, T.D., Taoiseach, in the first of the series of European Parliament debates with Heads of Government on the future of the European Union	European Parliament, Strasbourg
15 March 2018	Participation by Helen McEntee, T.D., Minister of State for European Affairs in a Citizens' Dialogue on the future of Europe	Bratislava, Slovakia
17 March 2018	Participation by Helen McEntee, T.D., Minister of State for European Affairs, at a future of Europe event at the Europa Club	Vienna, Austria
26 April 2018	Participation by Leo Varadkar, T.D., Taoiseach, Martens Lecture on the Future of Europe	University of Leuven, Belgium
10 May 2018	Speech by Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland, <i>"Solidarity in Europe - Achieving Authenticity in the European Street"</i>	European University Institute, Florence, Italy
20 June 2018	Speech by Michael D. Higgins, President Higgins of Ireland, <i>"Ireland and Lithuania: Towards a shared future within the European Union"</i>	Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania

Date	Event	Location
20 June 2018	Address by Helen McEntee, T.D., Minister of State for European Affairs, to the Diplomatic Institute of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on the theme of the "Future of Europe"	Lisbon, Portugal
28 August 2018	Address by Simon Coveney, T.D., Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to the German Ambassadors' Conference	Berlin, Germany
5 September 2018	Address by Simon Coveney, T.D., Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, <i>"Brexit and Beyond: The post-Brexit EU, from Ireland's perspective"</i>	Finnish Institute for International Affairs, Helsinki, Finland

III. MAIN THEMATICS DISCUSSED AND / OR RAISED BY THE CITIZEN

Regional and Sectoral Citizens' Dialogues:

1. What words first come to mind when you think of the European Union?
2. How can we achieve a fair and competitive market for our businesses, that creates jobs and improves living standards, while continuing to protect consumers?
3. How can we work best with our European partners to maintain peace, security and stability?
4. How can we plan and manage our rural and urban landscapes in a way that improves the quality of our lives and protects the planet and our natural resources?
5. How can we ensure a Europe of equal opportunities while maintaining fair working conditions and good social protection for every generation?
6. How can Europe best support innovation and provide the education, training and skills needed to equip us for the jobs of the future and remain competitive?
7. Free format open-mic session
8. "Postcards from the Citizens' Dialogues – your vision for Europe"
9. Feedback and evaluation forms

National Citizens' Dialogue on the future of Europe:

1. Reflections on citizens' engagement on the future of Europe
2. Jobs, competitiveness, sustainable growth
3. Youth, Education and Innovation
4. Presentation of European Movement Ireland / Red C annual survey on Irish attitudes towards the EU
5. The Citizen and the EU: A 'Brussels' Perspective by Emily O'Reilly, European Ombudsman
6. European Voices: A panel discussion centred on the experience of EU citizens living in Ireland and Irish citizens working in the EU institutions
7. Free format questions and answer time at the end of each session

Written submissions:

1. Free format submissions

IV. MAIN INTERROGATIONS / CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY THE CITIZENS

Summary of the Regional and Sectoral Citizens' Dialogues on the future of Europe

1. What words first come to mind when you think of the European Union?



2. How can we achieve a fair and competitive market for our businesses, that creates jobs and improves living standards, while continuing to protect consumers?

Participants told us they want **investment in youth, education and skills**, especially in IT and languages. They are worried about the effect of automation on job security and want to ensure that people can upskill throughout their lives.

To foster **innovation**, they want support for young entrepreneurs, links between research and business, and to learn from our European partners. Participants also believe that more could be done to promote products made in the European Union.

On **agriculture**, we heard support for continuing subsidies which benefit the consumer, with some saying they want the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to be more favourable to small farmers.

From **fishing communities**, we heard support for increasing subsidies for small-scale fishermen so that they can invest in equipment to help them to compete against larger competitors. Some also want to see an easing of fishing quotas.

Participants said they would like more **EU investment in the regions** and **more infrastructure**. In the context of **Brexit**, they want to prioritise direct routes to the European market and they do not want to see a return of borders.

There is strong support for **corporation tax** remaining a national competence. But there is some unease about the level of dependence on foreign direct investment in Ireland.

Some believe that the EU should be more vigorous in pursuing violations of **trade and competition policy**. They also criticise EU policies as lacking dynamism and falling behind countries such as China.

Participants said they want to see the completion of the **Digital Single Market** and the development of the **Single Market in Services**. They would also like to see more Member States encouraged to join the Eurozone.

We heard that more should be done to highlight the **supports available to business** through the EU, but many said that application processes are overly complex and off-putting.

Some see **EU regulation** as a good thing that protects consumers and businesses, but others feel that there is too much regulation and more responsibility should be devolved back to Member States. We also heard calls for regulations to be simplified and made “people friendly”.

There is some interest in an EU-wide regulation on **affordable and safe credit for borrowers** as well as the strengthening of the **banking union** and in **energy independence**.

3. How can we work best with our European partners to maintain peace, security and stability?

Participants said that as a small country **security is best achieved through cooperation** with others and that citizens should be involved in these discussions.

Many see **cybersecurity** as a priority. They want to know more about how to identify and stop cyber threats. They are also worried about the age of young people using **social media**.

Terrorism is a concern, with participants calling on the EU to do more to prevent terror attacks.

Some would like to see **greater cooperation in policing**, the **strengthening of Europol** and a **common EU counterterrorism framework**.

While people value **freedom of movement**, some participants would like better screening at borders and a common EU policy on migration.

We heard calls for citizens' **concerns about migration** to be addressed and to ensure greater **integration of migrants** into their new communities, including through EU-wide programmes.

Participants felt that more should be done to **combat people trafficking and drug trafficking**.

Some said that doubts about the EU have not been adequately addressed and participants said that the **EU needs to improve how it communicates**. They also want young people taught about the benefits of membership as this would enhance stability within the Union.

Believing that **social exclusion and poverty** have contributed to doubts about Europe, some feel that the focus should be on raising living standards.

Participants said that they want an **ethical and values-based approach towards foreign policy**. They believe that this is an area where the EU is strong and want the Union to speak with one voice. They also want the **rule of law** protected in the EU.

There is support for the **EU increasing development aid** and **investing in Europe's neighbourhood**. Participants also want **enlargement** to be smooth and stable.

Some suggest that the EU should **lower trade barriers** and **promote free trade agreements** with developing countries. They believe that this could help developing countries to grow, which in turn could ease migration.

Ireland's **peacekeeping** record is a source of pride, with people also recognising the role that the EU has played in keeping peace. But some have misgivings about the level of public engagement around the decision to participate in the EU's **Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)**.

There is a strong attachment to Irish **neutrality**, but it is not unquestioning.

4. How can we plan and manage our rural and urban landscapes in a way that improves the quality of our lives, and protects the planet and our natural resources?

For some participants, nothing is more important than tackling **climate change**.

They want the EU to be a leader in finding **global solutions**, but also feel that it needs to do more to promote green policies and to enforce environmental regulations.

There is support for the EU introducing **tougher environmental laws** and some believe that trade agreements should be conditional on the EU's partners conforming to environmental standards.

We heard worries about **plastics**, with some are calling for a tax or a ban on their use. People are also interested to learn about what other Member States are doing about plastics.

Others told us that "one for all policies" do not work and that environmental targets should be **realistic and achievable**.

Across the range of views, there is strong interest in **more engagement and debate** on the climate action agenda and how it impacts on people's day to day lives.

Environmental education is seen as key, with people believing that it is needed across all generations and all sectors of society.

Participants said they would like to see more incentives to invest in **renewable energy** and support for the greater use of electric cars. They want to know more about solar, wind and tidal energy, with some open to discussing nuclear power.

There is also interest in providing **financial incentives** to firms supporting environmentally friendly practices.

People are worried about **sea pollution** and some are unhappy with the presence of super-trawlers in the waters off the coast.

There are concerns about the impact of **farming** on the environment, but people also recognise the importance of agriculture to the economy. CAP is seen as important in fostering sustainability and eco-friendly farming.

Participants told us that **concerns about local issues** can affect their attitudes towards the EU. We also heard that people have a strong sense of a **rural and urban divide**.

Local communities are interested in having more say in how their space is developed. There is also some interest in the EU having an oversight role for decisions on planning.

There are worries about the **impact of tourism** on the environment, with some suggesting that the EU could learn about sustainable tourism from New Zealand.

In Meath, we heard calls from participants to **protect their ancient historical landscape**.

5. How can we ensure a Europe of equal opportunities while maintaining fair working conditions and good social protection for every generation?

Participants want equality and want to see the EU help to **combat discrimination**.

They want **accessible services, increased opportunities** for people with disabilities, **greater awareness** about mental health and they want homelessness tackled.

Some think that the **voting age** throughout the EU should be lowered to 16 and that voting should be mandatory.

While some believe that there are too many social and cultural differences across the EU to legislate for **social policy**, others are interested in a common welfare system and some harmonisation of wages and employment laws.

People told us they want **employees to know their rights**, earn wages that are in line with the cost of living and have security of tenure. They do not want people who are 'working poor' and are concerned about zero hour contracts, with some wanting to see them banned.

There are worries about **job security** and again participants told us that they want people to be able to train and up-skill during their career. There is interest in increasing the retirement age, but also in facilitating greater **work-life balance**.

Gender equality is important, with some feeling that women need to be higher on the EU's agenda and concerned that issues around childcare disproportionately affect women. Participants also want to ensure equal pay and gender parity. There is some interest in exploring a basic income.

Some see **voluntary work** as a valuable way of getting experience, but others are concerned that it may be the only way into a job in a particular sector.

We also heard that some in the **voluntary sector** would like to strengthen their links with the EU, with some saying that they do not know about supports available from the EU or how to influence decision-making.

Participants told us that the EU had helped Irish people to become more open minded. They also said that they **feel that their social rights are better protected in the EU**.

Others feel that EU laws can be inconsistently applied with Member States implementing them in different ways.

There was criticism of the **Posted Workers' Directive** which some believe has negatively affected the fairness of working conditions.

6. How can Europe best support innovation and provide the education, training and skills needed to equip us for the jobs of the future and remain competitive?

Participants want to know what the **jobs of the future** will be and they want to know if Europe knows what it needs to be competitive in.

They are curious about the **balance between competition and collaboration**. They see opportunity in learning from other cultures and countries, but wonder how Member States can both compete against each other and compete collectively.

We heard that when **measuring competitiveness** we should look beyond pure economic data and into **quality of life comparators**.

Education is seen as vital, but there are concerns about the cost for low income households.

Participants want students to learn **languages** as well as **new skills** such as coding. They want to explore more research-led teaching. They think we should look at how emerging economies are fostering competition in their education systems.

There is interest in more **EU-funded universities** and some would like to see standardised course content, teaching styles and fees across Europe.

Erasmus+ is popular, with some participants calling for an increase in funding. But we also heard access to the programme could be made more equitable and affordable.

Some believe that too much emphasis is placed on **university education**. They want to see greater value placed on skills and apprenticeships and **recognition of technical qualifications across the EU**.

Participants want to ensure that there are meaningful opportunities for **life-long learning** and would like to see employers encouraged to provide training to staff of all ages.

Some think that the EU should do more to support **small to medium sized enterprises**, particularly during their first three years in business.

While some feel that Ireland has done well from globalisation, others disagree. We heard that **globalisation** has created winners and losers and that some are concerned that this could lead to disenfranchisement. There is a strong view that globalisation should not be at the expense of human rights.

We heard calls for a greater focus on **fairness and transparency in trade**, with some suggesting that a commission should be established to review trade agreements.

Others said that the EU has a “**moral imperative**” to do more for countries to its south and east and to promote education and empowerment in **Africa**.

National Citizens' Dialogue on the future of Europe

1. Opening

In a video address the *Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, T.D.* said that Ireland's place should be at the heart of a strong Europe and he encouraged participants to focus on what we want to achieve together rather than on what we want to resist.

2. Reflections on citizens' engagement on the future of Europe

Panellists: Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee, T.D., Noelle O'Connell, Executive Director of European Movement Ireland, Michael Healy-Rae, T.D., Chair of the Oireachtas (Parliamentary) Committee on European Union Affairs; Barry Andrews, Director General of the Institute of International and European Affairs.

Each of the panellists gave an overview of the citizens' engagement initiatives on the future of Europe that they have been involved in.

In a keynote address, **Minister McEntee** said that the Citizens' Dialogues had shown that the **EU needs to re-affirm its relevance in the daily lives of its citizens**. This renewal needs to be constant and not just in times of crisis. Participants wanted to talk about the future, not the past, and it was clear that, despite its imperfections, Irish people see Europe at the heart of their future and Ireland at the heart of Europe.

The overriding message has been about fairness. She said that people want to protect the **environment** for future generations. They want **older people** able to enjoy their retirement in dignity and comfort. They want **young people** to be able to enjoy the best of opportunities. One of the strongest messages was about the importance of **skills and innovation**, and equipping people with a competitive edge in an ever changing world.

While the EU enjoys high levels of support in Ireland, the panellists said that this cannot be taken for granted. People feel that the EU **needs reform** and they want to be involved in **regular conversations about its future**.

The persistent view is that, despite all efforts, the **EU is not good at communicating what it does** and greater efforts are needed to show the difference it makes in people's everyday lives. An important way to do this is to focus on issues that really matter including through a **stronger, more enhanced social Europe**.

Other contributions during the session highlighted concerns about **populism**, great interest in security developments such as **PESCO**, enhancing the role of the **Fundamental Rights Agency** and improving **the rights of persons with disabilities**. The Dialogues suggested that Irish people could see the benefits **enlargement** when it extends to countries that share our core values and are ready for the obligations of membership. Other emphasised the importance of **subsidiarity** and **solidarity**, as well as the need to maximise the potential of the **Digital Single Market** and to engage young people in the debate on the future of Europe.

3. Jobs, Competitiveness and Sustainable Growth

Panellists: Patricia King, General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions; Dr. Pat Ivory, Director of EU and International Affairs, Ibec; Joe Healy, President, Irish Farmers' Association; Oonagh Duggan, Environmental Pillar.

From the *trade union movement*, we heard that the EU is facing unprecedented challenges – **low growth, high levels of youth unemployment, terrorism, migration and Brexit**. The legacy of austerity has led, it argues, to unprecedented levels of mistrust between Europe and citizens. A key question for Europe is **how to maintain its voice and its values in a changing world**.

While overall levels of **unemployment** are falling, 17 million people are still looking for work and 3.5 million of these are young people. There are concerns that employment growth has mostly been in **temporary or part-time jobs**, and that one in six workers are **low paid**. There were calls to ensure that Europe gives full effect to the **Pillar of Social Rights** and to challenge the narrative that sees social progress as an obstacle to growth.

The movement believes that Europe can be trusted and embraced by workers if it **promotes more and better jobs, real solutions to the challenges faced by people in their daily lives** and if it can **guarantee the security and wellbeing of its citizens**. There were also calls for the EU to support the **collective bargaining of workers** and to address the **impact of digitalisation and climate change** without further **labour fragmentation** or the **extension of precarious work**.

The *business community* said that the proper application of **subsidiarity** and **proportionality** is essential and that all EU policies and laws should be tested for their **impact on innovation**. There are a number of priority areas in which the business community believes the EU can add value. These include:

- Unleashing the potential of the Single Market and digitalisation;
- Leading the word in trade and investment;
- Embracing competitive taxation policy;
- Respecting Member State competence to design labour market and social policy;
- Championing better regulation;
- Ensuring fiscal rules are in tune with all Member States.

The *farming community* emphasised the importance of agriculture to Ireland and Europe's overall economies. Their key concern is to ensure that **CAP is adequately funded and takes account of inflation**. They question what kind of message it would send out about European solidarity if farmers became worse off because of the United Kingdom's departure.

They are keen to highlight the benefits that CAP has brought to all EU citizens, particularly through the availability of **high quality, affordable food**, as well as the important role they play in **sustainability**. The strong feeling among farmers is the budget needs to be strong enough to take account of the costs associated with acquiring those high standards.

Farmers are critical of EU plans to give more access for Brazilian beef pointing out that a kilo of Brazilian beef leaves four times the carbon footprint of a kilo of Irish beef. We heard that beef and poultry should be "off the menu" in the **MERCOSUR** talks.

They also want to see **simplification of rules and regulations** and said that farmers' experience had been that they face **more red tape after every reform**. This, they said, was not just an issue at EU level but also at national level, leaving farmers feeling that they are "under siege".

Environmental issues featured prominently in the Citizens' Dialogues. *Environmental activists* said that the future of Europe that they want to see is one that provides prosperity for all, starting with **sharing wealth; social wellbeing** in the form of **quality affordable public services** and a **caring society**; and **environmental wellbeing** residing in a healthy natural environment that **sustains life, protects soil, water and air quality and minimizes climate change**.

While the EU has a strong suite of **regulations** to protect the environment, there was criticism of their **implementation**. The Environmental sector also shares concerns about the impact of the **proposed cuts to the CAP, especially to Pillar 2** and their impact on the environment and rural communities.

From the floor, we heard concerns about the creation of **sustainable jobs in rural Ireland**, the need for **regional development**, including **infrastructure**, and a **just transition** on the environment. People want to ensure that at national and EU level we take steps to avoid another **economic crisis**, including providing people with access to **life-long learning, training and skills development**.

4. Youth, Education and Innovation

Panel: Linda Doyle, Professor of Engineering and the Arts and Dean and Vice President for Research and Trinity College Dublin; Dr. Darrin Morrissey, Director of Programmes and Investment with Science Foundation Ireland; Cathal Coffey, student at Maynooth University; and Mary McCaughey, Head of Information and Communication, Eurofound

This lively session heard that **to be innovative is to be European**. The panel stressed the importance of **education** both for **personal development** and for **social cohesion**.

There were calls for young people to leave school with a command of two **languages** other than their mother tongue. This, in turn, would help build greater social cohesion and improve young people's **employment prospects**.

There was great support for the **Erasmus+** programme, with calls to further **diversify** it and to **support** more people to engage with it. A strong theme throughout was that such programmes should not just be targeted at university students, but that people on **apprenticeships and internships** should also be supported to have the same **opportunities to go abroad and to experience Europe**. There were also calls to extend opportunities for **inter-railing** to older people.

The session heard that a lot of the research that is happening in Europe is funded through **Horizon 2020** and focusing on the **Sustainable Development Goals**. While there are challenges around engaging the public in research, initiatives such as '**Citizen Science**' help to **involve the community in research projects** and should be celebrated more.

There was a strong sense that people need to **know more about how the EU works** and that this is particularly important for young people.

The session emphasised the importance of **early interventions** to tackle the long term consequences of **youth unemployment**.

5. Presentation of European Movement Ireland (EMI) / Red C poll

The audience heard about the results of newly published results a Red C opinion poll, commissioned by EMI to establish the views of Irish people on a variety of topics related to the Ireland's membership of the EU. The results include:

Question	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
Ireland should remain a part of the EU	92%	7%	1%
Taking everything into consideration, Ireland has on balance benefited from being a member of the EU	87%	10%	3%
Ireland should contribute more to the EU budget to continue to get these benefits	58%	35%	7%
Ireland should be part of increased EU defence and security co-operation	59%	33%	8%
Given that the UK has voted to leave, Ireland should also leave the EU	11%	87%	2%
It is important that Irish people input into the Future of Europe debate	92%	5%	3%

6. The Citizen and the EU: A Brussels Perspective

As **European Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly**, has a unique insight into the operation of the EU institutions and agencies as well as the **problems faced by citizens, businesses and organisations in their dealings with the European Union**. With few citizens having direct contact with the EU, the Ombudsman said her aim is to open up and demystify the EU's processes.

A key element of this means **helping citizens to understand what the EU can and cannot do**. She said she receives hundreds of complaints and queries that she cannot deal with because the EU's institutions have no direct competence in the particular area of an individual's life that is causing them problems.

She said that most EU citizens do not spend their days thinking about the future of Europe. For them, **politics continues to be local and about the lived realities of their daily lives**. When they put forward their views on how to improve their lives in a future Europe, it is important that they are aware of who can actually deliver.

7. European Voices

Panel: Evelina Šaduikyte, from Lithuania; Inguna Grientina-Daržina, from Latvia; Wojciech Kostka, from Poland; Maria Plamada, from Romania; Patricia Reilly from Ireland; and Tom Moylan from Ireland.

Each of the panellists discussed their experience of moving to or from Ireland and noted how much simpler that experience was by virtue of **freedom of movement**. They spoke about their efforts to **maintain their national identities, integrate into their new communities** and how moving within the EU had enhanced their **sense of "Europeanness"**, something which became even more acute for Patricia Reilly and Tom Moylan as Irish officials working in Brussels.

The audience was interested in knowing how to get people to care about Europe. It heard that the EU must be **transparent, share all relevant information** and **communicate** about what it is trying to achieve, how it makes a difference and how what it does relates to our values as Europeans, which are a powerful tool in advocating for Europe. Other issues included how to engage effectively with **Russia**, concerns about how much those working for Europe represent the **diversity of the citizens** of the Union. There were also calls to concentrate more on the **social pillar**.

8. Closing Address

The *Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney, T.D.*, closed the event by speaking about Europe's place in the world and what it has to offer. He said that Europe's ability to deliver on its commitments depends on creating a safe and secure space for all its citizens.

Written contributions to the future of Europe debate received by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Submissions from individuals pointed to the importance of **subsidiarity**. Despite the EU's promotion of regional governance, some believe that this is not exercised in practice and that the EU makes decisions that would be better made locally. This is compounded by a perception that **decision-making in the EU is opaque**. For some, greater local autonomy could counter the **rise of nationalism** in some Member States. Some warned against turning Europe into an empire

Others want to see **school children** taught more about **the structure, ideals and objectives of the EU** as a political entity as well as **what it means to be an EU citizen**. There were calls for a new version of the **cross-border European Studies project** and for **greater links and exchanges** with schools in other Member States.

Continuing the education theme, we heard calls for the creation of a **"European Committee on Community Science"** to develop a free science bundle pack for every local library in Europe. This would help to provide long-term, widely accessible, focussed support to educate and inspire people to follow **careers in science** as well as to **develop critical thinking skills**.

Fianna Fáil, the second largest party in Parliament, praised the EU's achievements, but said that **reform is needed** and **placing the citizen at the heart of all that the EU does** is vital to securing its future.

In order to progress, they said that the **EU must return to the principles upon which it was founded**, with each Member State, irrespective of size, being treated equally. They expressed concerns at **developments within some Member States** undermining **core values**, including the **rule of law**, which, unaddressed, could lead to a **contagion effect**.

The Union, they said, needs to be characterized by **strong and stable democracies, balanced economic growth, sustainable employment, fair wages and welfare systems**. They called for the completion of the **Single Market**, the **Digital Single Market** and the **banking union**, and a **relaxation in State aid rules** and support for those particularly exposed to **Brexit**. Persistent challenges relating to **unemployment**, in particular **youth unemployment**, are also a source of concern and the submission calls for the proper implementation of the **Pillar of Social Rights**.

The submission said that much remains to be done with regard to **fiscal rules** and **protection against crisis**, but **taxation** should be left to individual Member States and that the best way forward on **corporation tax** is through the **OECD Base Erosion and Profit Shifting project**.

While there is **no support for joining military alliances**, the submission recognises a **need for greater intelligence sharing among Member States**.

A submission on behalf of the **Irish Platform for Patient Organisations, Science and Industry** (IPPOSI) related to health considerations. With over 400 members, IPPOSI is a patient-led organisation that works with patients, government, industry, science and academia to put patients at the heart of health innovation.

Pointing to a recent Eurobarometer survey in which 70% of respondents said the EU should "do more" on health, the group expresses full support for the positions put forward by the pan-European **#EU4Health campaign** and **concern at proposals to reduce the focus on health cooperation**.

The submission calls for the existing governance, expertise and resources attached to the Directorate for Health to be retained and seeks the creation of a **Vice-President for Health**.

The submission calls for patients to be able to benefit from the **Cross-Border Healthcare Directive**. IPPOSI also says that **European Reference Networks** need to be supported to ensure that patients with rare diseases can avail of highly specialised expertise across the EU. There are calls also for the realisation of proposals for **joint clinical assessments** to improve the efficiency and evidence-based nature of the health technology assessment process.

The submission cites the **Taoiseach's speech** to the European Parliament in January 2018, where he called on Europe to “**pool the buying power of 450 million people**” to **address rising drug prices**, as an example of what could be done.

The Wheel is Ireland's National Association of Community and Voluntary Organisations, Charities and Social Enterprises. Their submission calls for the establishment of a **forum for the sector to engage with politicians and senior public servants on a regular basis on key European issues**.

There is criticism of the **onerous application procedures associated with many EU programmes**, including calls for a national support service to assist civil society in accessing funding. They would like to see the **ring-fencing of funds for the sector** and a **special national fund** to assist with **fund matching requirements** for successful applicants.

While welcoming that most EU funded programmes require **partnerships** with other Member States, they state that **partner search** and **agreement management** imposes a heavy burden on the sector. Noting that the **Horizon Programme** offers initial **funding for partner search** to potential applicants, the submission calls for a **special partnership facility** for the community and voluntary sector. They also called for more **operating grants** for the sector and for **'lump sum' grants** to take into account the cost of living in each Member States.

Finally, for a more robust, multidisciplinary approach, the submission calls for the **National Contact Point structures for Horizon 2020** to include the voluntary and community sector.

The **European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland** finds that economic priorities have dominated the EU with “little regard for the social consequences resulting in a **high level of social damage and a loss of support for the EU**”. Pointing to high numbers of people experiencing **material deprivation** and to those **at-risk-of poverty and social exclusion**, they call on Member States to focus on making Europe **more equitable and inclusive**.

Recalling the **values** set out in **Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union**, the submission concludes that **the EU is fundamentally about improving the quality of life of everyone living in the EU**. The submission finds that: “It is only if the EU can demonstrate that it is using its values to guide its decisions that it will have the confidence and support of its people.”

In order to ensure that all policies complement and support positive social outcomes, the submission calls for the **strengthening of social impact assessment in policy design** and is critical of the current process which it states “has been largely ineffective and lacking in transparency”.

Highlighting that the EU has a role in progressing social rights, the group calls for the implementation of an **ambitious integrated rights-based EU anti-poverty strategy** with clear targets and objectives and the introduction of a **Minimum Income**. Such a strategy, it argues, must address policies related to the provision of adequate income for everyone, access to **decent jobs** and **quality services**,

including housing, health, education and care as well as water and electrical utilities, and **tackle discrimination**.

It calls for specific and integrated policy responses to address the **higher levels of poverty experienced by some groups** in society, including **people with disabilities, one-parent families, migrants and people from ethnic minority** backgrounds including **Travellers and Roma**.

An essential element would be the **effective and direct participation** of those with direct experience of poverty and social exclusion and their representative organisations.

They call for the **European Pillar of Social Rights** to be used as an effective measure for driving integrated policy across the EU, including the **European Semester process**.

Ireland's largest business lobby group, *Ibec*, published *Ireland in the EU: A dynamic future: The priorities of Irish business for the Future of Europe*. The report was launched by the Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee, T.D., and outlines of the principles which Ibec believes should be at the core of EU policy making for the future. These include:

- **The innovation principle:** Ibec believes that all EU policies and law should be tested for their impact on innovation and that this would help the EU to develop a regulatory and legislative environment which supports technological innovation, job creation and economic prosperity, thereby boosting competitiveness and growth.
- **Subsidiarity and proportionality:** The report states that the proper application of these principles is essential if the EU is to achieve its full potential both collectively and at Member State level.

Ibec's report also identifies a number of priority areas where it believes the EU can add value by:

- **Unleashing the potential of the Single Market and digitalisation** by prioritising the deepening of the single market, including completing the Digital Single Market, the capital markets union and the banking union.
- **Leading the world in trade and investment** by continuing to pursue ambitious trade deals with key partners, including with the United Kingdom, as well as advancing and implementing deeper trading and investment partnerships with the US, Canada and Japan. They call for trade policy to be designed for the 21st century, facilitating cross-border data flows and unlocking the potential of EU business in a digitalised world.
- **Embracing a competitive taxation policy** by supporting companies, economies and Member States as they strive to compete effectively, grow and prosper. They call for dynamic, competitive markets across the EU and for the EU to be able to compete and win internationally. For this to happen, they say, Member States must have the power to choose tax strategies that meet their economic needs.
- **Respecting Member State competency to design labour market and social policy**
- **Championing better regulation** through continued commitment to the Better Regulation agenda, promoting better and more effective legislation as a long-term commitment across EU institutions. They call for EU regulations to be developed in conjunction with national

representatives, business organisations and civil society, with EU regulation harnessing, not hampering, innovation.

- **Ensuring that fiscal rules are in tune with all Member States.** Ibec finds that, at any point in time, the economic needs of different Member States may be very different. As such, they say, the need for flexibility must be recognised in both the creation and application of EU rules.

The report also addresses the **Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)**, stating that Ibec's priority is that the EU strengthen its commitment to spending in essential areas while also ensuring that the next cycle of the MFF is flexible enough to meet current challenges. The report lists the following priorities:

- Acting only in the areas where the EU has **proven added value** and can **achieve tangible results**.
- Increasing funding for **research and innovation** and ensuring that these areas, **job creation** and **economic prosperity** remain core goals of the EU finance strategy.
- Upholding current commitments to the **Common Agriculture Policy (CAP)**.

V. RECURRENT AND / OR INNOVATIVE CITIZENS' PROPOSALS AND / OR REPRESENTATIVE VERBATIMS

Feelings towards Europe

- "Diversity – Unity – Support – Tightly intertwined"
- "Build on what we have"
- "Bring back the basics of the EU"
- "People feel European and like Europe, but think the decision-making system is too fragmented and complicated"
- "The big problem with the EU is the way it markets itself"
- "We need to ensure a fair balance of power in the EU"
- "Flexibility – small countries"
- "Don't re-invent the wheel, look at what works well and use it to progress"
- "Respect diversity"
- "We want to be European, but we want to be Irish"
- "Coalitions of small countries"
- "LISTEN"
- "Facts should be told"
- "We need to live the values we espouse, face terror with tolerance"
- "*One for all policies* do not work"

Policy suggestions

- "Invest in youth"
- "Funding for small business and start-ups"
- "Education and training are key"
- "Protect the rule of law in the EU"
- "Migration needs to be managed"
- "Neutrality is important"
- "A common European framework needed around plastics and recycling"
- "More support for renewable energy"
- "Climate change should be a priority"
- "Ensure gender equality"
- "More emphasis on social inclusion for minorities"
- "Help to retain small family farms"
- "More research into jobs of the future"
- "Skills, investment, jobs, education"
- "There should be a citizens' Erasmus, it shouldn't be just for young people"

“Postcards from the Citizens’ Dialogues” – Participants’ visions for Europe

- “A Europe for all its citizens where we all drive for a Europe that will be here for generations to come”
- “A people’s entity – more than the sum of its parts – a cultural and social ideal”
- “A place that’s safe, open and welcoming, non-threatening, sustainable and fair”
- “Neutral, sustained, ongoing citizens’ engagement on facts”
- “Ireland remaining a member”
- “A more fair Europe for the people”
- “A safe Europe, a united Europe, a prosperous Europe, a fair Europe, an enlightened Europe”

VI. OTHER (FURTHER COMMENTS ON AND / OR EVALUATION OF THE EXPERIENCE, e.g. best practices on communication)

Feedback from participants at the Regional Dialogues

At the end of each Regional Citizens' Dialogues, participants were invited to give feedback on the event. This was generally positive and demonstrated a strong demand for continued engagement and more consultation with citizens.

Asked specific questions about the events, of those who gave feedback:

- 82% said there was enough time to discuss each topic;
- 86% said that they felt more informed after attending;
- 87% said that the event met their expectations; and
- 89% said that they would recommend the Citizens' Dialogues.

Communications

Throughout the Citizens' Dialogues we heard calls for the EU to improve how it communicates. Most recognise that communication is a two-way street, but as Emily O'Reilly, European Ombudsman, pointed out most people do not spend their time thinking about Europe. As she, and many others, have said throughout this process, for most people politics continues to be local and about the reality of their daily lives.

The argument, therefore, that when communicating about Europe, we should explain how its decisions impact the daily lives of citizens. There was also a call for communications to focus on how we are delivering on the treaty-based values that bind us together as Europeans, not least, rule of law, respect for human rights, equality and human dignity.

We must also ensure that citizens not only have a platform to contribute to discussions on Europe, but that they are aware of these platforms. These platforms should facilitate constructive and forward looking contributions to the discussions on Europe and citizens must feel that their contributions are heard.

There is, at the same time, a pressing need to explain existing policies better to citizens. Significant numbers are unaware of the European policies already in place.

A common theme is that people have a tendency to blame Europe when they are dissatisfied. We must try to combat this. One suggestion for doing this is to ensure that, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, decisions which are best made locally are taken locally.

We heard few short-term solutions to the problems posed by populism or nationalism, but in the longer term, we must ensure that our young people are taught about what it means to be European, the benefits of membership, and that the EU supports efforts to integrate migrants into their new communities.

We also heard calls to ensure that those who make decisions and speak on behalf of the EU reflect the full diversity of its citizens.

As Minister of State McEntee said in her address at the National Citizens' Dialogue: "The European Union has many achievements to its name. But it still needs to reaffirm its relevance in the daily lives of its citizens. We have learned from our citizens' engagement process that this renewal needs to be constant and not just in times of crisis."