



Blue Star Programme

Blue Star Programme

Report and Review of the Fifth Year of the
Blue Star Programme
by European Movement Ireland

**European Movement Ireland
August 2016**

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Executive Summary – Year 5, 2015-2016

In its role as National Implementation Body for the Blue Star Programme, European Movement Ireland is pleased to have the opportunity to submit this report reviewing the fifth year of the Programme. This report has a number of different goals and objectives, namely:

- To provide a full review of the fifth year of the Blue Star Programme to the Department of the Taoiseach and other stakeholders;
- To outline the learning objectives and journey paths of the schools and pupils involved;
- To analyse the achievements and outcomes of the fifth year of the Programme;
- To document media coverage of the Programme;
- To offer observations and recommendations for the Programme going forward.

The Programme benefitted greatly from strong working relationships at all levels with the Department of the Taoiseach, the Office of the Minister of State for European Affairs, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection, the European Commission Representation in Ireland, the European Parliament Information Office in Ireland and the Department of Education and Skills.

The idea of the Blue Star Programme is simple: to foster better understanding and knowledge of the European Union and how it affects our lives among Irish primary school pupils. This is achieved through a series of classroom-based projects, activities and tasks centred around a number of different themes and concepts, culminating in specific events to mark Europe Day on and around 9 May each year.

Over the course of the 2015-2016 school year, the Blue Star Programme introduced participants (pupils, teachers, parents and the wider community) to the EU, what it means and how it works. Year on year, the Programme succeeds in fostering a strong sense of citizenship and knowledge of Europe within schools and this knowledge and sense of 'belonging' extends into the wider local communities.

The 2015-2016 Blue Star Programme saw 190 schools from all 26 counties in Ireland participate – the highest ever number since the establishment of the Programme 5 years ago. Moreover, 5 schools from around the country have taken part in the Programme in each of those 5 years. We were delighted to honour those 5 schools – namely, Fanore National School and Scoil na Maighdine Mhuire in Co. Clare, Gardiner Street Primary School in Dublin, Waterford Educate Together National School and Saint Thomas' National School in Co. Westmeath – with specially commissioned trophies. At the time of submitting this report to the Department, 92 schools have successfully completed the Programme and each has been awarded Blue Star certificates of achievement. We expect a number of additional reports to be submitted in September 2016. Based on the information given by the participating schools, we estimate that approximately 16,350 pupils from across Ireland participated in the Programme in Year 5.

EM Ireland is delighted to have been the organisation managing the fifth year of this Programme and is proud to have played our part in ensuring that the Programme continues to go from strength to strength. EM Ireland welcomes the opportunity to continue driving and developing the potential of the Programme even further into the future.



Noelle O Connell
Executive Director
August 2016

Background to the Programme

Initial Concept

At the heart of the Blue Star Programme is the goal of informing young Irish people about Europe, and Ireland's engagement with Europe. The idea of the Programme is to foster better understanding and knowledge of the European Union amongst Irish primary school pupils through classroom projects and activities. The Programme aims to help lessen the information and communications deficit that exists in European affairs among this key demographic in Ireland.

The Blue Star Programme asks schools, teachers and pupils to focus on four key areas of EU knowledge:

1. Historical
2. Geographical
3. Cultural and Creative
4. Institutional

In addition, schools are required to organise an event to celebrate Europe Day on or around 9 May.

Timeline

The level of interest and success the Programme enjoyed in previous years, combined with the positive feedback received from pupils, teachers and the Programme partners, led to a national continuation of the Programme in autumn 2014. EM Ireland was delighted to once again act as the Blue Star National Implementation Body, following public tender.

For the 2015-2016 school year, work began in September 2015 when the Steering Committee was reconvened, composed of the Minister of State for European Affairs, Dara Murphy TD, and officials from the Department of the Taoiseach, the European Commission Representation in Ireland, the European Parliament Information Office in Dublin and the Department of Education and Skills. The Committee agreed and signed off on targets, the implementation process and marketing plan. September 2015 saw EM Ireland reach out to every primary school in the Republic of Ireland (approximately 3,100 schools), inviting them to register and participate in the Programme. We also sent bespoke invitations to all schools that had previously participated in the Programme, inviting them to take part again.

In order to continue to grow the number of registered schools, all MEPs and Oireachtas Members were asked to nominate schools in their constituencies to participate and these schools were then targeted with bespoke invitations. In addition, the Minister of State for European Affairs also reached out to Members of the Oireachtas.

In addition to this, primary school resource websites such as www.scoilnet.ie and www.seomraranga.com (see screenshots below) were leveraged to increase the Programme's profile. As in Year 4, this significantly increased awareness and promoted the Programme among the specific target market.



A concerted public relations campaign was again put in place at national, regional and local level around the launch of the fifth year of the Programme, using targeted press releases, which received media coverage, and various social media promotions to increase awareness. Moreover, *In Touch*, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation's magazine, featured an article by Brian Hayes MEP on the Blue Star Programme which also helped to raise awareness.

EM Ireland divided the work programme for Year 5 into a number of different phases and grouped the work activities in this regard in order to maximise and plan around the school year calendar. The below timetable was based on our experience over previous years of successfully running the Programme.

Timetable of Activities and Deadlines

Phase 1	Action
September and October 2015	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communicate with all primary schools in the Republic of Ireland inviting them to participate in the Programme 2. Contact all MEPs, Oireachtas Members and European Ambassadors encouraging them to engage with schools in their constituency and to make themselves available for school visits throughout the year 3. Meeting of the Blue Star Steering Committee 4. Incorporate and finalise proposed changes from Programme partners 5. Agree format of collateral and material with all Programme partners 6. Organise official launch of the programme with the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD, and Minister of State for European Affairs, Dara Murphy TD 7. Contact www.scoilnet.ie and www.seomraranga.com to advertise the Blue Star Programme 8. Contact the INTO's magazine, <i>In Touch</i>, to include an article on the Blue Star Programme 9. Deal with school queries in relation to undertaking the Programme and the workload involved

	<p>10. Collate responses from schools and file all registration forms (deadline for registration: 19 October 2015)</p> <p>11. Registration of participating schools</p>
November 2015	<p>12. Organise a regional launch of the Programme with the Minister of State for European Affairs, Dara Murphy TD, in Cork in Gaelscoil Uí Drisceoil, Glanmire to tie in with the school's 10th anniversary and awarding of 2014-2015 Blue Star certificates of achievement and EU flag</p> <p>13. Send out Action Plan to all participating schools along with teachers' Curriculum Guide prepared in cooperation with Blue Star 'Champion Teachers'</p> <p>14. Mail out resource packs with Programme materials to all participating schools</p> <p>15. Provide in-house assistance to schools with the preparation of participating schools' Action Plans</p> <p>16. Update the FAQ section on the Blue Star website on an ongoing basis to provide assistance to schools</p>
Phase 2	
November 2015	<p>17. Begin coordinating school visits with the Office of the Minister of State for European Affairs, MEPs, Oireachtas Members and European Ambassadors</p> <p>18. Hands-on support and advice to schools regarding engagement with local media</p> <p>19. In-house assistance to schools starting their projects</p>
January and February 2016	<p>20. Host in-service training day in conjunction with the European Parliament Information Office for participating Blue Star teachers</p> <p>21. Meeting of the Blue Star Steering Committee (24 February)</p> <p>22. Ongoing support to schools regarding visits of MEPs, Oireachtas Members, European Ambassadors and staff members of EM Ireland</p>

April 2016	<p>23. Final reminder/communications push regarding Europe Day, 9 May</p> <p>24. Contact MEPs, Oireachtas Members and European Ambassadors encouraging them to make themselves available for school visits on and around Europe Day</p>
Phase 3	
May 2016	<p>25. Europe Day events</p> <p>26. National Blue Star Europe Day event with “Handshake for Europe”, etc. will be organised along the lines of hugely successful events that previously took place with the Minister of State for European Affairs and the Lord Mayor of Dublin</p> <p>27. Final Report submissions (teachers are required to complete soft copy proof of the completion of the Programme through photos, videos, voice recordings and also project work completed using online tools)</p>
Phase 4	
June and July 2016	<p>28. Successful schools notified; Blue Star certificates of achievement and EU flag presentation ceremonies (to be attended by a ‘VIP’, if possible)</p> <p>29. Study trip for teachers to Brussels to visit the European Commission, European Parliament and the Irish Permanent Representation to the EU (funded by the European Commission Representation in Ireland)</p>
August and September 2016	<p>30. EM Ireland to submit a Report of the fifth year of the Programme</p> <p>31. Presentation of Report to Minister of State for European Affairs, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection and the Department of the Taoiseach</p> <p>32. Blue Star Steering Committee meeting</p> <p>33. Initiation of planning for 2016-2017 Programme</p>

Year 5, 2015-2016

Once schools had registered to participate in the fifth year of the Programme, they were provided with a resource pack and resource materials from a variety of Programme partners. These included wall-charts and EU country guides to offer tips on the types of projects the pupils could undertake and to help guide the teachers in how best to facilitate the pupils. In addition, all schools were supplied with EM Ireland's comprehensive Curriculum Guide, which was developed with the help of previous Blue Star participant teachers ('Champion Teachers') and includes extensive advice and recommendations on all elements of the Programme.

Blue Star participants were also invited to visit the FAQ page on the Blue Star Programme website which answers the most common question submitted by teachers. Updated regularly, this serves as a useful source of information and advice for schools taking part in the programme:

www.bluestarprogramme.ie/faq.

Throughout the year, teachers were required to ensure that the four pillars of the Programme, as well as the Europe Day activities, were carried out. It was agreed that at the end of the school year all successful schools would be awarded two Blue Star certificates of achievement.

As part of the Blue Star Programme, a large number of schools received 'VIP' visits, including from the Minister of State for European Affairs, MEPs, Oireachtas Members and European Ambassadors, which added to the excitement and success of the Blue Star Programme among participating schools.

Blue Star Programme Website

A bespoke Blue Star Programme website, www.bluestarprogramme.ie, had been launched in September 2014 by Minister of State for European Affairs, Dara Murphy TD. It offers a centralised source of information for all Blue Star participants and allows schools to see what their peers are working on and be inspired and motivated by Blue Star activities, events and projects from around the country. It also provides a means by which all participants can be easily updated on deadlines, registration dates and other useful information. The site continues to be updated on a regular basis by EM Ireland staff, with practical information and tips for participants and with news of success stories and media coverage of the Programme occurring nationwide.

Implementation of the Programme

Partnerships

The Blue Star Programme was operated for a fifth year by European Movement Ireland on behalf of the Department of the Taoiseach and the Office of the Minister of State for European Affairs, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection.

The Programme benefitted greatly from strong working relationships at all levels with the Department, the Minister's private office, the European Commission Representation in Ireland, the European Parliament Information Office in Ireland and the Department of Education and Skills.

The partnerships with all Blue Star Steering Committee members were vital when it came to preparing collateral and material for schools, as well as coordinating school visits, teacher training and award ceremonies. The European Commission Representation continued to provide much of the educational material and collateral which was extremely important as source documentation and information for the participating schools.



Blue Star Steering Committee

The Steering Committee that had been established in the pilot year of the programme was continued in the fifth year. As in previous years, the Steering Committee decided the initial strategy of the Blue Star Programme, monitored its progress and offered counsel to EM Ireland in the Programme's implementation and delivery.

The members of the Steering Committee included:

- members of staff from the private office of the Minister of State for European Affairs, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection
- officials from the Department of the Taoiseach, EU Division
- officials from the European Commission Representation in Ireland
- officials from the European Parliament Information Office in Ireland
- officials from the Department of Education and Skills
- members of staff from EM Ireland

The Steering Committee met formally twice over the course of the 2015-2016 Programme in order to agree parameters, roll out strategy and secure buy-in to the project from stakeholders. A number of informal bilateral ad hoc meetings were also convened as needed. In addition, EM Ireland continued to provide both the Minister and the Committee with regular updates and progress reports so as to ensure that the organisation remained true to the overall goals and objectives of the Programme's successful delivery.

Expressions of Interest

EM Ireland initiated the marketing and public awareness campaign of the Programme in September 2015. The fifth year of the Programme was officially launched by the Taoiseach and Minister Murphy on 5 November 2015 with pupils from Saint Mary's National School, Dublin. A concerted public relations campaign was put in place by the EM Ireland communications team around this launch and around the Programme in general, using targeted press releases and various social media promotions to increase awareness of the Programme. On 23 November 2015, Minister Murphy visited Gaelscoil Uí Drisceoil in Glanmire, Cork to launch the school's participation in the Blue Star Programme 2015-2016 and to award the school and pupils with Blue Star certificates of achievement and an EU flag for their participation in the Programme 2014-2015, as well as to mark the school's 10th anniversary.

As a consequence of this coordinated outreach, 190 schools officially registered to take part in the 2015-2016 Blue Star Programme, the highest ever number since the Programme was established. Moreover, 5 of these schools have now participated in all 5 years of the Blue Star Programme.



Regional launch of the Blue Star Programme 2015-2016 with Minister Murphy in Gaelscoil Uí Drisceoil, Co. Cork (left); Official launch of the Blue Star Programme 2015-2016 with the Taoiseach; Minister Murphy; Head of the European Commission Representation in Ireland, Barbara Nolan; Head of the European Parliament Information Office in Ireland; Francis Jacobs; Chairman of EM Ireland, Maurice Pratt; Executive Director of EM Ireland, Noelle O Connell; and pupils from Saint Mary's National School, Dublin (below)





The Taoiseach with pupils from Saint Mary's National School, Dublin at the official launch of the Blue Star Programme 2015-2016 in Government Buildings (left)

Resource Packs

A designated information resource pack for teachers was developed by EM Ireland. This was also accompanied by background material and collateral for pupils in order to help stimulate ideas and provide guidance on suitable projects.

Again, we also provided participating teachers with a Curriculum Guide document which was created in conjunction with some of our Blue Star 'Champion Teachers'. The Curriculum Guide served as a very useful resource for participating teachers as it outlines ways in which the teachers can integrate the programme into their curriculum.

All the above proved extremely useful in helping teachers gain a greater awareness and understanding of the programme, and the feedback from teachers in this regard was extremely positive.

Teacher Training Day

The European Parliament Information Office supported a teacher training day for 22 teachers on Saturday, 6 February 2016. Teachers were addressed by the Head of the European Parliament Information Office in Ireland as well as officials from the European Parliament and staff from EM Ireland on various relevant topics. As in previous years, this day was much welcomed by the teachers involved, who found it to be a useful forum to share ideas, best practice and problem solving techniques.

From EM Ireland's perspective, the ongoing flexibility and support the organisation receives from its partners must be commended as it enables EM Ireland to proceed with the successful delivery and management of this training, and all other elements of the Programme.

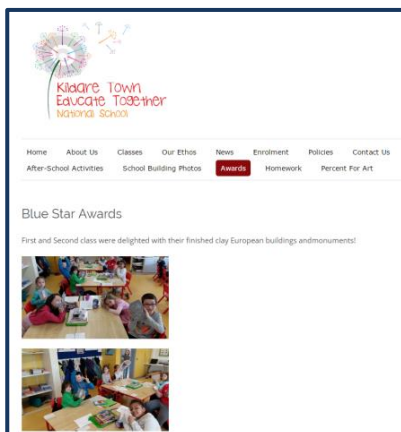
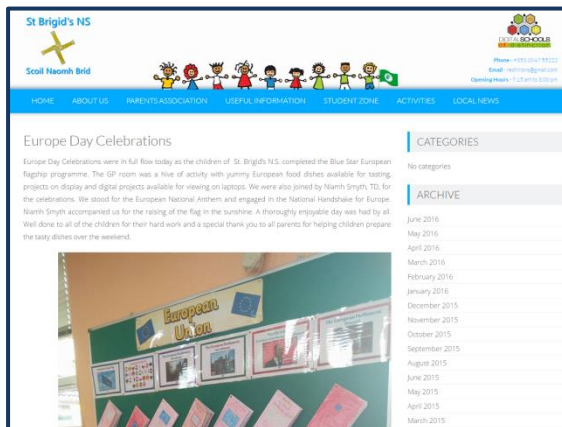
Blue Star Programme

Programme Content

The Blue Star Programme is composed of four key modules:

1. Historical
2. Geographical
3. Cultural and Creative
4. Institutional

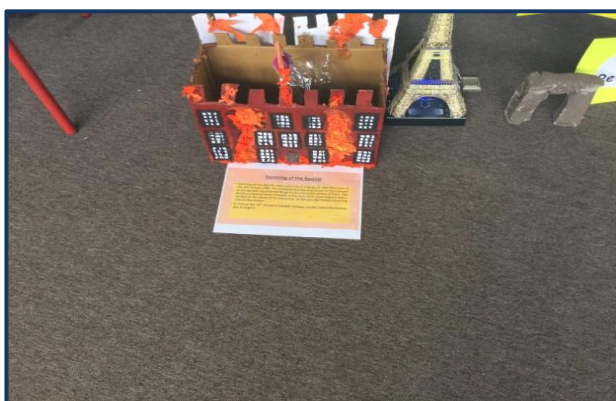
When researching their projects, pupils were encouraged to use all means of technology available to them, including online resources. Many projects were presented using interactive tools such as PowerPoint, video clips and school websites. The use of technology amongst the different schools was extremely impressive and brought the goals of the programme to life in a technological sense. We are pleased that the high level of engagement of pupils with online resources, and the creativity demonstrated when using these tools, continued in 2015-2016.



Saint Brigid's National School, Co. Cavan posted Europe Day photos on their school website to help keep the wider community informed and engaged, pupils from the school used technology as part of their Blue Star projects (above left and right); Pupils in Scoil Mhuire agus Naomh Treasa, Co. Kerry filmed a live debate on Ireland's place in the EU (bottom left); Kildare Town Educate Together posted photos of various Blue Star projects on their school website (bottom right)

1. Historical

For this module, pupils picked an event, time or person pivotal to European history and completed a project on this topic. Projects focused on a range of areas including the EU's Founding Fathers, World War II and the Holocaust, Anne Frank, Marie Curie, the French Revolution, The Renaissance, and the Ancient Olympic Games, among others. Pupils were able to select and focus on a historical theme appropriate to their age and class. In this way, the Programme afforded teachers the necessary flexibility to adopt the Programme to suit their particular class need.



Pupils in Scoil Mhuire agus Naomh Treasa, Co. Kerry used art work to depict different historical events such as the Storming of the Bastille in Paris in 1789 (above left); Pupils in Castleknock Educate Together National School, Dublin did projects on the Ancient Olympic Games (above right)



Pupils in Saint Mary's Central National School, Co. Tipperary assembled their World War II project on a large wall display in the school hall for all pupils and teachers to see (above)

2. Geographical

For the geographical section of the programme, pupils prepared a short project on a European country. Elements included illustrating the country's flag and providing information on that country's capital city, population, language, what it is famous for and its similarities and differences to Ireland. This section of the programme was particularly successful as pupils from outside Ireland were encouraged to share knowledge of their home countries with classmates which helped to integrate non-Irish pupils amongst the school population in addition to increasing awareness and knowledge of different nationalities and cultures amongst all participating schools. In addition, parents were often invited to present to the different classes. This in turn helped to extend the programme to something beyond an abstract concept in the classroom and involved the wider community in the process.

For this module, some pupils also did projects on the rivers and landmarks of Europe, and used maps and technology to learn about the capital cities and currencies of the European countries.



*Flags of Europe from Scoil Íosagáin, Limerick (above left);
a geographical project on Denmark by pupils in Bunscoil Bhríde, Co. Kildare (above right)*

*Geographical projects from Carrigboy National School, Co. Cork (below left) and
Saint Paul's National School, Co. Roscommon (below right)*



3. Cultural and Creative

In this module, pupils explored the music, food, literature and art of Europe. Pupils prepared and tasted food from different European countries, for example, or performed a dance or song about the different peoples and countries of Europe.

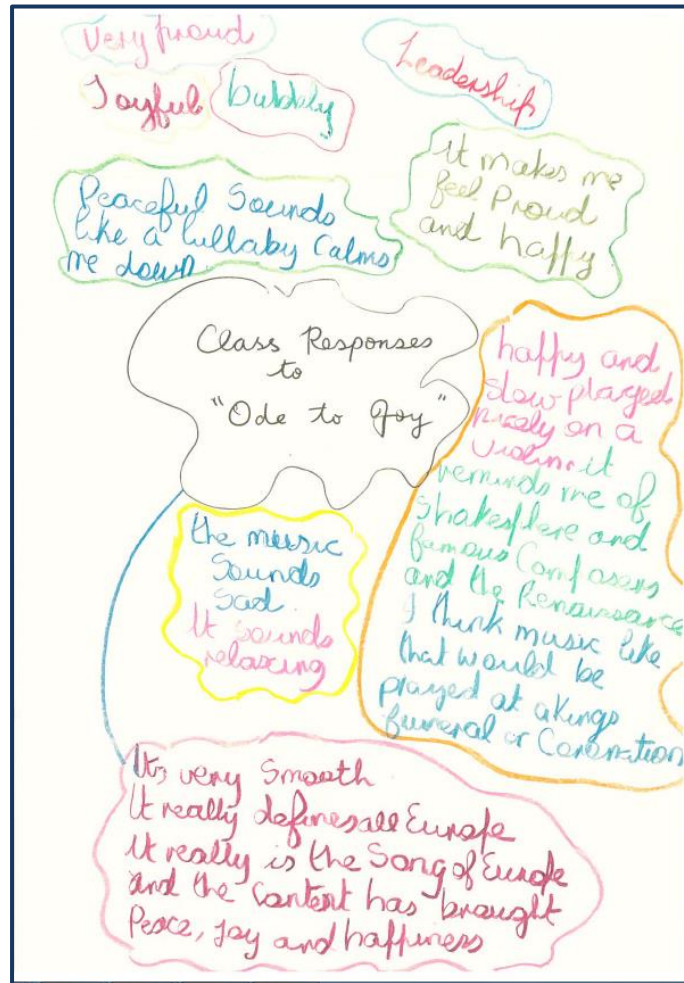
This module led to some interesting and high quality submissions ranging from class reactions to “Ode to Joy”, costume design work and some excellent interpretations of European art.



Pupils from Cappagh National School, Co. Offaly painted their own interpretations of Vincent van Gogh's "The Starry Night" (above)

Pupils from Saint Mary's Primary School, Co. Roscommon prepared food from different European countries (below)





Bohermore National School, Co. Limerick listened to "Ode to Joy" and recorded their reactions to it (above)

Feedback from teachers and principals was very positive in relation to this module. It was felt that the Cultural and Creative section of the programme was a great way to include the whole school in the Blue Star Programme and also provided an opportunity for non-Irish pupils to showcase their own cultures. This part of the Programme also further engaged the wider community as parents were invited to assist their children in putting together their projects and contributing in any other way they felt would be interesting and beneficial for the Blue Star participants.



Pupils in Kilcoe National School, Co. Cork playing their instruments for a Swedish musician, as part of the music video they made as part of their Blue Star cultural project (above)

4. Institutional

Under the Institutional section of the Blue Star Programme, pupils learn about how the EU works, how the different Institutions cooperate with each other and the impact that these Institutions have on the daily lives of EU citizens. Many of the pupils made posters which illustrated the timeline and different Institutions of the EU. Navan Educate Together National School in Co. Meath organised a trip to Germany for a group of their 6th class pupils, including a visit to the European Central Bank in Frankfurt.



Pupils from Navan Educate Together National School, Co. Meath on their trip to Frankfurt (above)



Pupils in Saint Patrick's National School, Co. Louth made a timeline of the development of the EU (above left); Pupils in Bunscoil Rinn an Chabhlaigh, Co. Cork made a poster on the different EU Institutions (above right)

Pupils also organised debates and completed projects on 'A Day in the Life of an MEP'. A number of MEPs, Oireachtas Members and European Ambassadors visited schools to speak about Europe and answer pupils' questions on their work as public representatives.



Pupils at CUS Junior School, Dublin putting their questions to Brian Hayes MEP (above)

Europe Day

All schools participating in the Blue Star Programme are required to mark Europe Day and to use this event as a platform to exhibit and showcase projects within the school itself and to the wider community.

Following on from the resounding success of the initiative introduced during the Irish Presidency in 2013, it was decided that the nationwide “Handshake for Europe” would be carried out again. All Blue Star schools were encouraged to take part in this initiative and pupils were asked to wish each other a “Happy Europe Day!” as they joined together in a group handshake. This handshake aimed to acknowledge the diversity and solidarity that exists amongst the classmates who are ultimately all connected together as citizens of the EU. All schools were provided with a press release for Europe Day which outlined the theory behind the handshake. The handshake proved to be a popular initiative with the schools across the country and received press coverage, details of which are provided in the press section of this report.

Over 100 schools with approximately 10,000 pupils, in communities across Ireland participated in their own Europe Day events. Representing all of them at Dublin City Hall were pupils from Gardiner Street National School, Dublin, and Saint Thomas’ National School, Co. Westmeath. These Leinster schools were chosen because both had participated in the Blue Star Programme in each of the 5 years since its establishment. With Dara Murphy TD and Deputy Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Janice Boylan, the pupils formed a handshake chain to celebrate Europe. The pupils then presented their Blue Star project work, and the two schools were awarded with a trophy from Deputy Murphy to mark their 5 year participation in the Blue Star Programme. This event was filmed by RTÉ News2Day and broadcast on the programme later on Europe Day.



“Handshake for Europe” in Dublin City Hall marking Europe Day (above)



Europe Day celebrations in Dublin City Hall (above left and right)



EM Ireland's Ryan Levis awarding Waterford Educate Together National School with a trophy during Europe Week to mark their 5 year participation in the Blue Star Programme (above left); Pupils in Scoil Baile an Phiarsaigh, Co. Wexford created artwork to welcome parents and the wider community to their Europe Day celebrations (above right); Pupils in Cappagh National School, Co. Offaly showing off their handmade EU flags on Europe Day (below)



Participating Schools in 2015-2016

School	County
Saint Laserian's School	Co. Carlow
Darley National School	Co. Cavan
Kildallan National School	Co. Cavan
Saint Brigid's National School	Co. Cavan
Scoil Bhríde	Co. Cavan
Ballynacally National School	Co. Clare
Barefield National School	Co. Clare
Boston National School	Co. Clare
Coolmeen National School	Co. Clare
Doonaha National School	Co. Clare
Fanore National School*	Co. Clare
Feakle National School	Co. Clare
Gaelscoil Uí Choimín	Co. Clare
Saint Flannan's National School	Co. Clare
Saint Mochulla's National School	Co. Clare
Saint Tola's National School	Co. Clare
Scoil Mhuire Corofin	Co. Clare
Scoil na Maighdine Mhuire*	Co. Clare
Scoil Réalt na Mara	Co. Clare
Stonehall National School	Co. Clare
Beaumont Boys School	Co. Cork
Bunscoil Rinn an Chabhlaigh	Co. Cork
Carriganima National School	Co. Cork
Carrigboy National School	Co. Cork
Carrignafey Community College	Co. Cork
Coachford National School	Co. Cork
Coppeen National School	Co. Cork
Cullen National School	Co. Cork
Drimoleague National School	Co. Cork
Dromleigh National School	Co. Cork
Gaelscoil Bheantraí	Co. Cork

School	County
Gaelscoil Uí Drisceoil	Co. Cork
Glantane National School	Co. Cork
Kilcoe National School	Co. Cork
Knockskeagh National School	Co. Cork
Rathmore National School	Co. Cork
Scoil an Chroí Ró Naofa	Co. Cork
Scoil Iosagain	Co. Cork
Saint Colman's National School	Co. Cork
Saint Fergal's National School	Co. Cork
Saint Mary's National School	Co. Cork
Shanballymore National School	Co. Cork
Shandrum National School	Co. Cork
Tirelton National School	Co. Cork
Drumfad National School	Co. Donegal
Faugher National School	Co. Donegal
Gleneely National School	Co. Donegal
Saint Baithin's National School	Co. Donegal
Saint Eunan's National School	Co. Donegal
Saint Patrick's Girls National School	Co. Donegal
Scoil Bhríde	Co. Donegal
Scoil Cholmcille Drumman	Co. Donegal
Scoil Náisiúnta Ghort a Choirce	Co. Donegal
Scoil Náisiúnta Na Croise Naofa	Co. Donegal
Castleknock Educate Together National School	Co. Dublin
CUS Junior School	Co. Dublin
Drumcondra National School	Co. Dublin
Gaelscoil Ros Eo	Co. Dublin
Gardiner Street Primary School*	Co. Dublin
Glasnevin Educate Together National School	Co. Dublin
Holmpatrick National School	Co. Dublin
Holy Spirit Senior Primary School	Co. Dublin
Kilcoskan National School	Co. Dublin

School	County
Mary Help of Christians	Co. Dublin
Milverton National School	Co. Dublin
Naul National School	Co. Dublin
Presentation Primary School	Co. Dublin
Ranelagh Multidenominational School	Co. Dublin
Rush National School	Co. Dublin
Saint Brigid's Girls National School	Co. Dublin
Saint Columba's National School	Co. Dublin
Saint Mary's National School	Co. Dublin
Saint Mary's Primary School	Co. Dublin
Saint Patrick's Boys National School	Co. Dublin
Saint Patrick's Girls National School	Co. Dublin
Saint Raphael's National School	Co. Dublin
Scoil Assaim Boys National School	Co. Dublin
Scoil Naithí	Co. Dublin
Swords Educate Together National School	Co. Dublin
Creggs National School	Co. Galway
Gaelscoil Iarfhatha	Co. Galway
Garrafrauns National School	Co. Galway
Killeeneen National School	Co. Galway
Scoil Áine Naofa, Lough Cutra	Co. Galway
Scoil Bhriocain	Co. Galway
Scoil Cholmain	Co. Galway
Scoil Éanna	Co. Galway
Scoil Iosaif Naofa	Co. Galway
Scoil Mhuire Clarinbridge	Co. Galway
Scoil na Maighdine Muire Gan Smál	Co. Galway
Scoil Naomh Sheosaimh	Co. Galway
Scoil Shéamais Naofa	Co. Galway
Castledrum National School	Co. Kerry
Holy Cross Mercy School	Co. Kerry
Knockaclarig National School	Co. Kerry
Saint Brendan's National School, Blennerville	Co. Kerry

School	County
Saint Brendan's National School, Fenit	Co. Kerry
Saint Brigid's National School, Duagh	Co. Kerry
Saint Oliver's Primary School	Co. Kerry
Scoil an Ghleanna	Co. Kerry
Scoil Mhuire agus Naomh Treasa	Co. Kerry
Scoil Treasa Naofa, Kilflynn	Co. Kerry
Bunscoil Bhríde	Co. Kildare
Gaelscoil Nás na Ríogh	Co. Kildare
Kildare Town Educate Together	Co. Kildare
Rathmore National School (Scoil Chéile Chríost)	Co. Kildare
Saint Brigid's National School, Ballysax	Co. Kildare
Scoil Colmcill Naofa	Co. Kildare
Scoil Muire	Co. Kildare
Scoil Mhuirne Sinsearach	Co. Kildare
Scoil Naomh Lorcáin	Co. Kildare
Scoil Naomh Mhuire National School	Co. Kildare
The Glebe Primary Montessori School	Co. Kildare
Lisdowney National School	Co. Kilkenny
Ardlios National School	Co. Laois
Camross National School	Co. Laois
Gaelscoil Liatroma	Co. Leitrim
Saint Michael's National School	Co. Leitrim
Scoil Naisiunta Bhríde Naofa	Co. Leitrim
Askeaton National School	Co. Limerick
Banogue National School	Co. Limerick
Bohermore National School	Co. Limerick
Crecora National School	Co. Limerick
Milford National School	Co. Limerick
Scoil Íosagáin	Co. Limerick
Scoil Mhuire	Co. Limerick
Saint John's National School	Co. Longford
Saint Mary's National School	Co. Longford

School	County
Monksland National School	Co. Louth
Redeemer Girls School	Co. Louth
Saint Oliver's National School	Co. Louth
Saint Patrick's National School	Co. Louth
Tullyallen National School	Co. Louth
Bekan National School	Co. Mayo
Creevagh National School	Co. Mayo
Foxford National School	Co. Mayo
Kinaffe National School	Co. Mayo
Quay National School	Co. Mayo
Richmond National School	Co. Mayo
Saint Columba's National School	Co. Mayo
Saint Dymphna's School	Co. Mayo
Saint Joseph's National School	Co. Mayo
Gaelscoil an Bhradáin Feasa	Co. Meath
Kells Parochial National School	Co. Meath
Kilbride National School	Co. Meath
Navan Educate Together National School	Co. Meath
Robinstown National School	Co. Meath
Saint Fiach's National School	Co. Meath
Saint Michael's National School	Co. Meath
Saint Patrick's National School	Co. Meath
Scoil Caitriona Naofa	Co. Meath
Yellow Furze National School	Co. Meath
Deravoy National School	Co. Monaghan
Knockconan National School	Co. Monaghan
Scoil Mhuire na mBuachaillí	Co. Monaghan
Cappagh National School	Co. Offaly
Cloneyhurke National School	Co. Offaly
Drumboylan National School	Co. Roscommon
Knockcroghery National School	Co. Roscommon
Saint Mary's Primary School	Co. Roscommon
Saint Patrick's National School	Co. Roscommon

School	County
Saint Paul's National School	Co. Roscommon
Scoil Naomh Bhríde	Co. Sligo
Burncourt National School	Co. Tipperary
Cloneen National School	Co. Tipperary
Gaelscoil Aonach Urmhumhan	Co. Tipperary
Gaelscoil Chluain Meala	Co. Tipperary
Redwood National School	Co. Tipperary
Saint Mary's Central National School	Co. Tipperary
Christ Church National School	Co. Waterford
Fenor National School	Co. Waterford
Knockmahon National School	Co. Waterford
Mount Sion Primary School	Co. Waterford
Rathgormack National School	Co. Waterford
Waterford Educate Together National School*	Co. Waterford
Cornafulla National School	Co. Westmeath
Drumraney National School	Co. Westmeath
Mullingar Educate Together National School	Co. Westmeath
Saint Thomas' National School*	Co. Westmeath
Ballycullane National School	Co. Wexford
Ballyoughter National School	Co. Wexford
Boolavogue National School	Co. Wexford
Clonroche National School	Co. Wexford
Danecastle National School	Co. Wexford
Kilrane National School	Co. Wexford
Saint Ibars	Co. Wexford
Scoil Baile an Phiarsaigh	Co. Wexford
Jonathan Swift National School	Co. Wicklow
Kiltegan National School	Co. Wicklow
Saint Laurence's National School	Co. Wicklow

**The 5 schools which have participated in all 5 years of the Blue Star Programme*

Mentoring & Support

As in other years, EM Ireland's role in mentoring and supporting the participating teachers and responding to their queries was ongoing during the 2015-2016 Programme. This constituted providing advice and guidance to teachers looking for additional information and resources as well as fielding a range of questions posed by teachers, either over the phone, via email or in person.

All EM Ireland staff members were regularly briefed on the project so as to ensure that queries could be dealt with and processed efficiently and accurately by the whole EM Ireland team. Ensuring that schools were ready for 'VIP' visits and to complete the Europe Day aspect of the Programme and providing advice and support for interaction with local press were also major aspects of EM Ireland's project management.

Teacher Training Day

Following on from the success of previous training days, it was decided that another teacher training day would be held for participating Blue Star teachers early in the year. A training day was organised in the European Parliament Information Office on Saturday, 6 February 2016. 22 Blue Star teachers from across Ireland attended. The timetable for the training day is outlined below:

Blue Star Training Workshop, 6 February 2016	
1.	Welcome Francis Jacobs, Head of the European Parliament Information Office
2.	Overview of the Blue Star Programme European Movement Ireland
3.	Training Module and Best Practice Sharing European Movement Ireland
4.	Maximising Media Opportunities European Movement Ireland
5.	Roundtable Discussion and Q&A European Parliament



It was very useful for EM Ireland, as National Implementation Body, to hear from teachers in a non-school environment on their recommendations for the Blue Star Programme as it continues to develop.

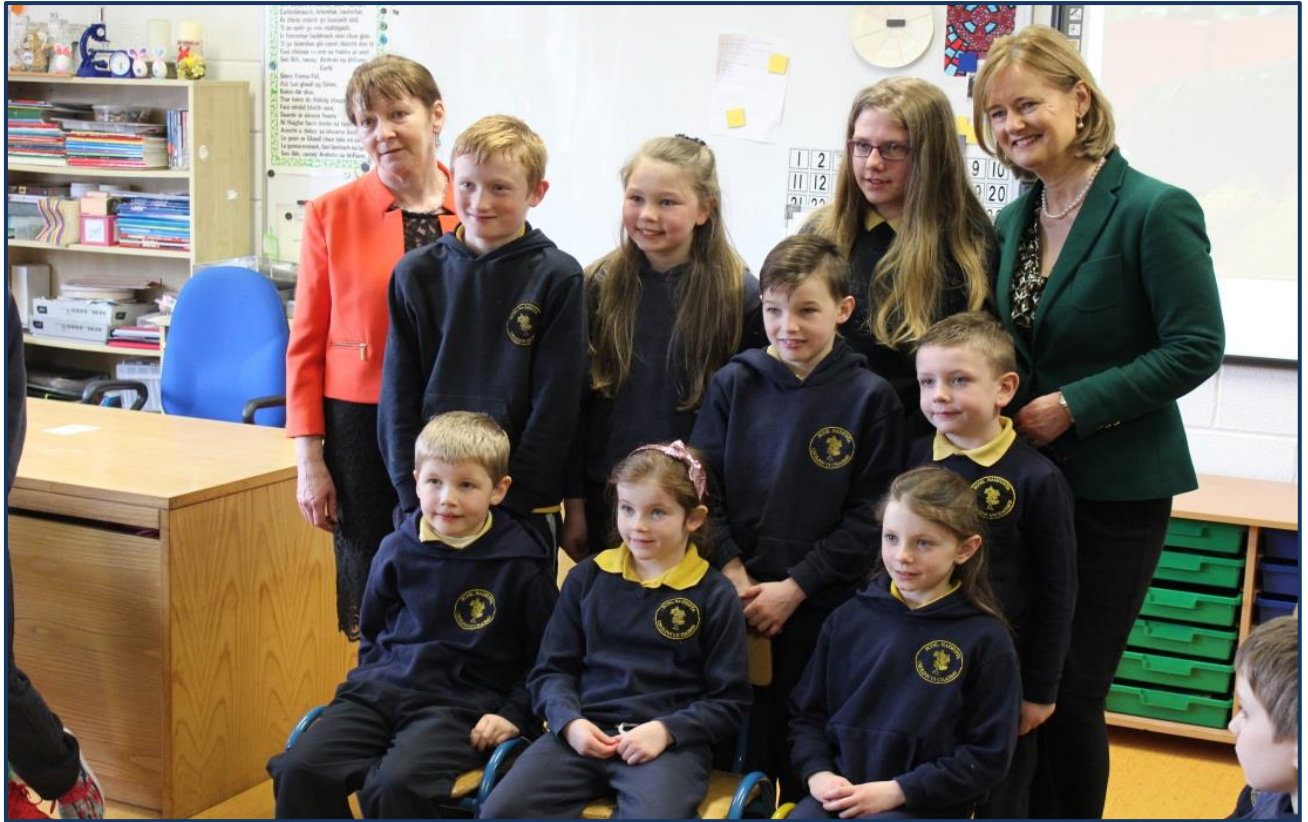
EM Ireland's Frances Byrne addresses Blue Star Programme teachers at the training day in the European Parliament Information Office on Saturday, 6 February 2016 (left)

'VIP' Visits

Over the course of the Programme, approximately 40 schools were visited either by Minister Murphy, MEPs, Members of the Oireachtas, European Ambassadors or members of staff from EM Ireland. These visits took many forms and allowed schools to show off their hard work and ask questions.



*Marian Harkin MEP answers pupils' questions in Scoil Mhuire Clarinbridge, Co. Galway (above);
HE Dušan Matulay of the Embassy of the Slovak Republic visiting pupils and teachers at Creggs National School, Co. Galway to celebrate Europe Day (left)*



Deirdre Clune MEP visiting Cullen National School, Co. Cork (above top); HE Philippe Roland of the Belgian Embassy celebrating Europe Day with pupils from the CUS Junior School, Dublin (left); Pupils from Fenor National School, Co. Waterford taking part in a “Handshake for Europe” with Seán Kelly MEP to mark Europe Day (above)

Assessment

At the outset of the Programme, the Blue Star Steering Committee agreed the awarding criteria for assessing each school's efforts in their project submissions. The following process was agreed to be the most suitable and fair in evaluating the submissions received:

- 1) Participating teachers were asked to send a comprehensive Final Report including evidence of projects and events by either hard or soft copy;
- 2) These submissions were reviewed in-house by the EM Ireland Blue Star Programme team;
- 3) It was decided to award the two Blue Star certificates of achievement to schools who submitted these Final Reports to the satisfaction of the team, and to award an EU flag to those who had not received one in previous years or who had requested another one.

92 schools have been deemed to have successfully completed the Blue Star Programme (as of mid-August 2016).

We expect additional Final Reports to be submitted in September 2016. To note that a number of schools who did not complete the Blue Star Programme 2015-2016 explained that it was due to the school year being particularly busy with the 1916 Centenary Programme, but most of those expressed their interest in taking part in the Blue Star Programme again.

Communications & PR

Programme Collateral



PR & Media Coverage

The Blue Star Programme 2015-2016 received extensive coverage across the media.

From the outset, participating schools were encouraged to publicise their participation in the Programme, and the work they were carrying out. A number of the participating schools received good media coverage in local papers in relation to the project as a whole, in light of visits from Minister Murphy, MEPs, Oireachtas Members and European Ambassadors, covering Europe Day celebrations or on foot of the awarding of the EU flags. All schools were sent a press release for circulation around their Europe Day celebrations and this allowed for some good local media coverage during Europe Week.

Due to the project being run in primary schools, it received great coverage for the 3rd year in a row from RTÉ's News2Day, which is aimed at a younger audience. The TV programme covered the Europe Day celebrations in Dublin City Hall on 9 May.

Furthermore, European Movement Ireland ran a broad awareness campaign across our social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Receiving a number of high-profile re-tweets, shares and mentions from Irish politicians and media accounts played an important role in further promoting the Programme. Following on from previous years, given that a number of participating Blue Star schools are active online and on social media sites, such as Twitter and Facebook, we encouraged schools to use social media to highlight their participation in the programme and promote their Europe Day activities. We were pleased to see a high level of online engagement with regard to the Programme again this year.

In May 2016, the Blue Star Programme was featured in the 'Europe Letter' in The Irish Times in the context of education programmes which aim to inform students about the EU (<http://bit.ly/EMINews14Apr16>).



An RTÉ cameraman covers the "Handshake for Europe" with Deputy Murphy, Deputy Lord Mayor Boylan and Noelle O Connell, along with pupils from Gardiner Street National School, Dublin, and Saint Thomas' National School, Co. Westmeath at Blue Star Europe Day celebrations in Dublin City Hall, 9 May 2016 (left)

Media Coverage Snapshot

The following is just a selection of the media coverage surrounding Year 5 of the Blue Star Programme:

Date	Publication
17-Oct-15	Carlow People ➤ Blue Star Launch 2015/16
27-Nov-15	Cork Evening Echo ➤ Blue Star Regional Launch 2015/16 with Minister Murphy
10-Feb-16	Drogheda Independent ➤ Blue Star visit
27-Feb-16	Fingal Independent ➤ Blue Star visit
24-Mar-16	The Corkman ➤ Blue Star visit
08-Apr-16	Connacht Tribune ➤ Blue Star visit
14-Apr-16	The Irish Times ➤ Article on EU education programmes
04-May-16	The Kerryman ➤ Blue Star visit
09-May-16	RTÉ TV ➤ Europe Day celebrations
11-May-16	The Kerryman ➤ Blue Star visit
17-May-16	The Laois Nationalist ➤ Blue Star visit
18-May-16	Drogheda Independent ➤ Blue Star visit
25-May-16	The Kerryman ➤ Blue Star visit
09-Jun-16	Leinster Express ➤ Blue Star visit
27-Jul-16	Drogheda Independent ➤ Blue Star trip to Brussels

Evening Echo, Friday, November 27, 2015

EU're stars, minister tells Glanmire students

MINISTER for European Affairs Dara Murphy launched the Blue Star programme for primary schools for the 2015-2016 school year in Gaelscoil Ui Drisceoil, Glanmire.

Minister Murphy presented the Blue Star award to the pupils and teachers of the school after they took part in the programme last year. The school is currently celebrating its tenth anniversary.

The objective of the Blue Star programme, now in its fifth year, is to foster better understanding and knowledge, among Irish primary pupils, of Europe and how the European Union affects people's lives.

"I'm delighted to present the Blue Star award to the pupils and teachers of Gaelscoil Ui Drisceoil in Glanmire to mark the school's tenth anniversary," Minister Murphy said.

"I had the pleasure of visiting the school to launch Blue Star last year when the pupils were about to embark on the programme. It's great to be back today to see first-hand all the work that the pupils have done in the meantime, to chat to them about Europe, and to present the Blue Star award."

"Congratulations to the pupils and teachers on their achievement in this special year for the school. I



Pupils at Gaelscoil Ui Drisceoil, Glanmire, holding Blue Stars to mark the school's participation in the Blue Star Programme. Picture: Denis Scannell

Ronan Bagnall

know that, like in all of the other schools around Ireland taking part in the programme, teachers and pupils have found that it is a really worthwhile initiative. Since it began in 2011, hundreds of

schools throughout Ireland have participated in the programme, with the involvement of thousands of pupils. Each year we get more and more schools taking part.

"I hope that participation in the Blue Star programme is the beginning of a sustained interest in

learning all about the EU and Ireland's membership of it. Through Blue Star and other programmes such as the EU Jobs initiative, we are aiming to ensure that Ireland and Irish people are engaged on European issues and connected into the EU at all levels."

Coverage of the Blue Star Programme in the Evening Echo, November 2015 (above) and the Laois Nationalist, May 2016 (below)

24 NEWS 17 May 2016 | THE NATIONAL

DOWN YOUR WAY WITH CARMEL HAYES

Stradbally, Ballylinan, Arles, The Swan, Barrowhouse, Timahoe, Crettyard, Ballickmoyler, Wolfhill, Vicarstown

School children put on a special show for distinguished visitor

JUNIOR pupils played a starring role when a special visitor called to Wolfhill NS last week. The youngsters dressed in the colours of eight European countries to welcome Laois TD and foreign affairs minister Carmel Hayes.

The children from junior infante to first class also exhibited beautiful puppets, which they made from recycled materials, each representing one of the eight countries they studied.

The event, which marked Europe Day on Monday 9 May, was part of the school's ongoing involvement in the primary-level Blue Star programme. The programme aims to foster better understanding and knowledge of the European Union (EU) through classroom projects and activities. Pupils are challenged to get creative and to learn about Europe through projects relating to the history, geography, culture and institutions of the EU.

As part of Laois County Council's visits to schools programme, local area TD Carmel Hayes visited Wolfhill NS once a week. She helps students to create eye-catching puppets for Europe Day, each wearing the typical outfit of a European nation. The use of recycled materials tied in with the vibrant green school programme at Wolfhill.

The students dressed in a variety of national costumes to welcome minister Flanagan to the event which was attended by a number of proud parents. The countries chosen were Ireland, England, Scotland, France, Germany, Spain, Italy and Poland.

The visit later day also brought an unexpected visitor in the form of an inspector from the Department of Education and Science, who was delighted to see the Blue Star programme in action during the unannounced inspection.

One of many highlights on a joyful day was the pupils' lively recital of well-known songs from a variety of EU countries, including the popular 'The Jacques and Louison Bridge in Falling Down'.

Deputy principal Marie O'Connor says the programme is a rewarding and easy way for young people to learn about a variety of European cultures.

They particularly love the life stories of famous people such as Leonardo Da Vinci of Italy, Louis Braille of France and Marie Curie of Poland which in turn, leads them to learn more about the arts, science, culture, history and geography of different European nations.

Minister Charlie Flanagan with Kaylen (France) and Ronan (England)

Margaret Dowling (primary divisional inspector), minister Charlie Flanagan, Janet O'Grady (infante in schools with Lucie Kryst Ofsted) and Marie O'Connor (class teacher)

Minister Charlie Flanagan with Cian (Switzerland) and Nelly (Switzerland)

Marie O'Connor (class teacher) greeting minister Charlie Flanagan

Puppets made by the pupils: Ronan (England), Marie O'Connor (class teacher) and Kaylen (France)

Landmarks made by the pupils: Andrew (Spain) and Lucy (Germany)

Landmarks made by the pupils: Shane (Italy) and Louisa (Ireland)

Brussels Trip

As part of the Blue Star Programme, the European Commission Representation in Ireland kindly supported a study trip to Brussels for participating teachers. In all, 20 teachers from all corners of the country visited Brussels from 11 to 13 July 2016. The itinerary for this trip is outlined below:

Tuesday, 12 July 2016	
8.45	<p><u>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION</u> Christina OLDMAN Visitors' Centre, European Commission</p>
9.00	<p><u>THE ROLE OF THE COMMISSION AS THE EXECUTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE TEN PRIORITIES OF THE JUNCKER COMMISSION</u> Marc TAQUET-GRAZIANI Secretariat-General, European Commission</p>
10.45	<p><u>MIGRATION, REFUGEES, HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND HUMANITARIAN AID & CIVIL PROTECTION</u> Zoi SAKELLIADOU Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission Catherine DELACOUR Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission Esther HUERTA GARCIA Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection, European Commission</p>
11.45	<p><u>EU SUPPORT OF TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS</u> Kristina CUNNINGHAM Directorate-General for Education and Culture, European Commission</p>
12.45	<p><u>WORKING LUNCH</u> Shane SUTHERLAND Member of Cabinet of Commissioner HOGAN Kevin KEARY Policy Adviser in Cabinet of Commissioner HOGAN</p>
14.45	<p><u>AGRICULTURAL POLICY AND THE ROLE AND WORK OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MR PHIL</u> Kevin KEARY Policy Adviser in Cabinet of Commissioner HOGAN</p>
15.45	<p><u>ACTIVITIES TARGETING SCHOOLS (THE TEACHERS' CORNER)</u> Nicoletta FLESSATI Directorate-General for Communication, European Commission</p>

Wednesday, 13 July 2016	
9.00	<u>VISIT Parliamentarium</u> European Parliament Visitors' Centre
10.30	<u>BRIEFING BY Olav GADE</u> European Parliament Visitors' Service
11.00	<u>Q&A WITH Irish MEPs</u>
14.15	Departure to Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU
14.30	<u>VISIT TO PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF IRELAND TO THE EU</u> Eddie BRANNIGAN Spokesperson



Blue Star teachers on their visit to the European Commission, Brussels in July 2016 (above)

The Brussels trip was featured in the Drogheda Independent. The teacher from Tullyallen National School, Co. Louth who had gone on the trip and later contacted the newspaper with the story emailed EM Ireland to explain that he did so because he thought that highlighting the Blue Star Programme is “very important...as it creates positive awareness of the work of the EU”.

Drogheda Independent
Drogheda Independent (Ireland)

July 27, 2016
Edition 1;
National Edition

Tullyallen teacher makes his mark in European Blue Flag visit

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 6

LENGTH: 163 words

TULLYALLEN N.S was awarded the Blue Star Flag in June, with the aim of the programme to increase awareness among pupils of Europe and the European Union.

Teacher Niall Moonan, the Blue Star programme co-ordinator along with 20 other teachers visited the EU Commission and parliament in Brussels recently as part of the Blue Star Programme.

The teachers received presentations on the EU which included Education, Agriculture & Refugee/Migrant crisis. There was a working lunch with members of the

cabinet for Agriculture & rural development Phil Hogan. There was also an opportunity to meet and greet Irish MEPS via a question and answer session.

Those attending thanked the organisers Joan Flanagan, Political Section, European Commission Representation in Ireland and Christina Oldman, Visitors Centre, European Commission, Brussel. Thanks also to Ms Anne McEvoy-Smyth of the European Parliament Information Office in Ireland and to Nora Trench Bowles of **European Movement** Ireland.

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The Brussels trip was featured in the Drogheda Independent in July 2016 (above)

Conclusions & Recommendations

This report has enabled European Movement Ireland to assess and evaluate the success of the fifth year of the Blue Star Programme in our role as the Programme's National Implementation Body.

The fifth year of the Blue Star Programme was the most successful yet in terms of the number of participating schools. The pilot programme began in 2011-2012 with 32 schools. In 2015-2016, this number had increased to 190 registered schools. 92 of these schools have been awarded certificates of achievement as of the end of the school year, and we anticipate that this number will rise again in September 2016. The participating schools ranged from two teacher rural schools to large urban schools with hundreds of pupils. Approximately 16,350 pupils from across Ireland participated in the fifth year of the Programme. Perhaps the most impressive result of this year's Programme is that, for the second year in a row, we had schools participating from every county in the Republic of Ireland.

Undoubtedly, this Programme is an exceptional way of promoting Ireland's European engagement in a curriculum friendly manner through primary schools that reaches beyond pupils and teachers to the wider community.

From its humble beginnings, it is no exaggeration to say the Blue Star Programme continues to grow in its successes, both in terms of numbers and in terms of impact. Already, approximately 40 schools have contacted EM Ireland to enquire about getting involved in the 2016-2017 Programme. EM Ireland is proud to have been associated with the Programme from its inauguration and would welcome the opportunity to continue driving and developing the potential of the programme even further.

Expressions of Interest for 2016-2017

We have received expressions of interest from approximately 40 schools who would like to participate in the Blue Star Programme 2016-2017. These potential participants heard about the Programme through media coverage, social media sites and from teachers who are currently participating in the Blue Star Programme. Included in this 40 are current Blue Star teachers who have expressed intent to enrol their school in the Programme again next year as they found it to be so beneficial and enjoyable.

Teacher Feedback

As part of the Final Report, teachers were asked to give feedback to the National Coordinator about their impressions of the Programme. We are pleased to report that the general concept of the Programme was again extremely well received by teachers, principals and pupils with special appreciation of how compatible it was with the school curriculum. The phrase "very curriculum friendly" once again featured in many of these teacher surveys this year. Overall, the responses indicate that both teachers and pupils had a huge amount of fun with this Programme, and many mentioned the 'VIP' visits as being a particular highlight. The main challenge mentioned by some teachers was in managing their time to successfully complete all aspects of the Programme, particularly in light of 1916 Centenary Programme which was an important part of the curriculum for many schools this year. Another piece of feedback which came up was that teachers would value further exchange of ideas and best practice amongst the participating schools. This is something we will seek to work with teachers on in future years of the Programme.

Below is a verbatim sample of the feedback provided by teachers and pupils, based on their experience of the Blue Star Programme in 2015-2016:

- *"I for one studied Romania, it was so much fun! I didn't know half the things I found out. Finally, it came to Europe Day! We all brought in food from different countries. I loved everyone's food, it was delicious. In my opinion, the Programme was great and we should do it every year."* (5th class pupil)
- *"The children particularly enjoyed the Europe Day, especially the mock EU Court discussing whether Ireland should leave or stay in EU. This also impacted greatly on their development of the English language as we have a lot of students where English is a second language."*
- *"The classroom teacher could easily intergrate this Programme into a number of curriculum areas without making major changes to subjects and themes already planned for."*
- *"Great that parents and local community can get involved."*
- *"There was fantastic debate regarding the EU and the children have learnt so much about what it is to be a European citizen. Europe Day was a resounding success and a real highlight of the Programme. The children were immensely proud to showcase their project work to the school community."*
- *"The school loved being involved in the Blue Star Programme this year. The children got great enjoyment from it and worked very hard to receive the flag. We would not have studied the EU otherwise."*
- *"We really enjoy participating every year. It's very easy to fit in with our school curriculum as we would be doing a lot of the activities already. Therefore it's wonderful to make it a school-based project and event so all classes can showcase what they have been doing and everyone learns something. We were so excited to be invited to City Hall this year to receive our award and the children were delighted that their efforts were being rewarded. The project really highlights our place in Europe and has had a really positive effect on the children, parents and teachers. It is very well run and we will certainly keep getting involved, maintaining what we have achieved already and trying out new things as well."*
- *"The support from the people in the office of the Blue Star Programme was extremely helpful and they were always quick with their reply. No question/request was too big or small! Thank-you!"*
- *"I loved taking part in this Programme with my class, and I have recommended the Programme on my website (www.muinteoirvalerie.com) which has over 100,000 page views. It is a great Programme. My only minor quibble would be that we found it difficult to find information on the institutions of the EU. The visit from the MEP really helped us in this regard however."*
- *"Our experience of this project is hugely positive. And the children's final reports reflect this sentiment entirely. They loved all aspects and they themselves felt they learned a great amount. I do think having Deirdre Clune MEP visit us was the actual 'icing on the cake'. It made them feel that their work was being acknowledged and equally they loved listening to her responses."*
- *"The Programme was very inclusive and facilitated great integration between subjects."*

- *“I have really enjoyed teaching this to the children and I know by their level of knowledge and confidence in speaking about the topic that I have given them a fantastic foundation going forward into the future. I think young people should take more interest in what’s happening around them and be aware of their country and membership of such a Union.”*
- *“The Blue Star team make the Programme accessible to all and for the first time in a long time I have come across a Programme which enables all students to take part. Many Programmes exclude the junior part of the school. Thank-you to the Blue Star team for your continued cooperation. Keep doing as you are doing! The Programme is relevant and accessible and is a great way of recognising much of the work that is already done in schools today, whilst inspiring the teachers to broaden their horizons and stimulating new ideas.”*
- *“We found the Blue Star Programme excellent. The layout of the Programme is fantastic and allowed us to complete it across all class levels. The resource packs and guidance is excellent. The fact that each curriculum area is covered and allows for in-depth study of each area is excellent. The children thoroughly enjoyed the Programme and we would definitely participate again.”*
- *“Thank you so much for allowing our school to participate in such a wonderful Programme. Without a doubt it has been the highlight of my teaching career this year. As Principal of this school, it will be an initiative that I would love to be a part of again next year. Congratulations on a wonderful Programme.”*

European Movement Ireland Response & Recommendations

It is absolutely vital that the Blue Star Programme remains curriculum friendly in order to continue the high-level of interest in the Programme. As the National Coordinator, we have dealt first-hand with the participating teachers and are consciously aware that the ease of integration of the Programme into the existing curriculum is a critical factor at the start of the year when schools are deciding what programmes to undertake.

EM Ireland feels that the four main elements of the programme (Historical; Geographical; Cultural and Creative; and Institutional), as well as the Europe Day celebrations every year, have worked extremely well and this is highlighted by the increase in participation over the five years of the Programme. These four elements represent the foundation blocks of the Blue Star Programme, and they should be cemented as a constant throughout the life of the Programme.

EM Ireland also proposes to explore the possibility of introducing alternative awards for repeat Blue Star schools, of which there are many, as an incentive for them to continue participating. Some ideas for these alternative awards are:

- A bespoke Blue Star award instead of/as well as the EU flag;
- Website badges;
- Visits to Leinster House with their local Oireachtas Members or the Minister of State for European Affairs, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection;
- Visits to Europe House;
- Additional competition element for the best school in each European Parliament constituency – perhaps a debate could be organised between schools, for example.

EM Ireland again recommends exploring the possibility of allowing some schools, mainly smaller, rural schools, to enter into a two-year cycle of the Blue Star Programme, whereby they would focus their attention on two elements per year, as opposed to all four. This would also work for larger schools that are just involving one or two classes in the Programme. Repetition of material year-on-year can present itself as a problem for the type of schools mentioned above, and this would allow schools to explore completely new elements each year if they wish.

Regarding school visits, EM Ireland would propose to continue to invite all Programme partners to visit at least 5 schools per year, which would afford a lot more schools the opportunity to showcase their work from the year. Consideration might be given to particularly encouraging visits to those schools with a Blue Star 'Champion Teacher'. This may serve as an incentive for teachers and as a reward for those who really excel in their delivery of the Programme. If the above option of a two-year cycle for some participating schools was introduced, visits from all programme partners would allow schools progress to be reviewed, similar to the Green Flag programme - <http://www.greenschoolsireland.org/about-us/renewing-the-award.290.html>.

EM Ireland would continue to encourage all Irish schools to explore eTwinning, which is a European Commission platform that allows teachers to communicate, collaborate, develop projects and to share ideas with teachers in other European countries. Teachers from all participating schools can register and use the eTwinning online tools to find each other, meet virtually, team up in groups, learn together and engage in online-based projects. It would really bring all elements of the Programme to life. The possibility of funding being available for the eTwinning activities of schools under the Europe for Citizens programme could also be explored by schools.

The above observations for the future of the Blue Star Programme are based on EM Ireland's experience of coordinating the programme over the last five years and could be introduced to complement the current delivery strategy already in place.

EM Ireland is delighted to have been the organisation which managed the fifth year of this Programme and to have helped the Programme go from strength to strength again over the past 12 months. EM Ireland is proud to have been associated with the Programme from its inauguration and welcomes the opportunity to continue working closely and successfully with the Steering Committee and our Programme partners to drive and develop the potential of the Programme even further.



Blue Star

Programme

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