



Blue Star Programme

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

2018-2019

July 2019

Table of Contents

Executive Summary - 2018-2019	4
Background to the Programme	5
Initial Concept.....	5
Steering Committee	5
Implementation of Year 8, 2018-2019	7
Work Programme Timetable.....	7
Registration Phase	10
Resources.....	11
VIP Visits.....	12
Blue Star Programme Year 8 National Launch.....	13
5-Year Achievement Award	14
Irish Girl Guides' 'Europe Badge'.....	14
Blue Star Programme Garden - Bloom 2019.....	15
Blue Star Programme	15
Programme Content	15
Europe Day.....	18
Assessment.....	19
Participating Schools 2018-2019.....	20
Expressions of Interest for 2019-2020	27
Mentoring & Support	28
School Queries.....	28
Teacher Training Workshop	28
Brussels Trip	29
Communications & PR	31
PR & Media Coverage.....	31
Blue Star Programme Social Media and Website.....	31
Media Coverage Snapshot	32
Conclusion & Recommendations	33
Teacher Feedback	33
European Movement Ireland Recommendations.....	35

Executive Summary - 2018-2019

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

- To provide a full review of the eighth year of the Blue Star Programme to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and other stakeholders;
- To outline the learning objectives and achievements of the participating schools and pupils;
- To analyse the outcomes and accomplishments of the eighth year of the Programme;
- To document media coverage of the Programme;
- To offer observations and recommendations for the Programme in the future.

The Programme benefitted greatly from strong working relationships with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Office of the Minister of State for European Affairs, the European Commission Representation in Ireland, the European Parliament Liaison Office in Ireland and the Department of Education and Skills.

The idea of the Blue Star Programme is simple: to encourage Irish primary school pupils to get creative about Europe. The hope is that through the Blue Star Programme, pupils will foster a better understanding and knowledge of the European Union and how it affects our lives. This is achieved through classroom-based projects, activities and tasks centred around a number of different themes and concepts, culminating in events to mark Europe Day on or around 9 May each year. Over the course of the 2018-2019 school year, as in previous years, the Blue Star Programme introduced participants to the EU, what it means and how it works. Year-on-year, the Programme succeeds in fostering a sense of EU citizenship and of 'belonging' within participating schools, extending also beyond the school walls into the wider local communities. At the heart of the Programme also, is how the Programme helps pupils embrace the ever-increasing cultural diversity in the Irish classroom.

The eighth year of the Blue Star Programme saw 243 primary schools participate. This, for the second year running, was far above the agreed SLA target of 180 schools. Within the two years, we have achieved the agreed SLA target of 500-700 schools over the three years of the tender (2017-2020). Almost half of the 243 schools were first-time schools, striking a good balance between repeat schools doing the Programme year-on-year and demonstrating the strong awareness of the Programme around the country due to continued successful promotion. For the fifth year in a row, all 26 counties in Ireland were represented.

22 schools from around the country have now taken part in the Programme for five or more years. We were delighted to honour seven of these schools with a specially commissioned trophy for reaching this milestone during Year 8. We also had a record-high number of VIP visits this year, reaching 115. Many schools considered these VIP visits to be the highlight of their Blue Star Programme experience this year.

At the time of writing, 113 schools have submitted their Final Report and successfully completed the Blue Star Programme 2018-2019. Each of these schools have been awarded Blue Star Programme Certificates of Achievement, in both English and Irish. Based on the information given by the participating schools, we estimate that approximately 18,000 pupils from across Ireland participated in Year 8.

EM Ireland is delighted to have been the National Implementation Body for this eighth year and is proud to have played its part in ensuring that the Programme continues to go from strength to strength. EM Ireland welcomes the opportunity to continue developing the potential of the Programme even further into the future.



Noelle O Connell
Executive Director of European Movement Ireland
July 2019

Background to the Programme

Initial Concept

The Blue Star Programme seeks to inform young Irish people about Ireland's engagement with Europe. The Programme aims to foster better understanding and knowledge of the European Union among Irish primary school pupils through classroom projects and activities. It also aims to help mitigate the information and communications deficit regarding European affairs that exists among this key demographic in Ireland. At the heart of the Programme, is how it helps pupils embrace the ever-increasing cultural diversity in the Irish classroom.

The Blue Star Programme asks schools, teachers and pupils to focus on four key areas of European 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. The additional civic society element of the 2018-2019 year of the Blue Star Programme were the European Elections taking place around the EU in May 2019. Pupils are encouraged to engage with the Elections in order to showcase the importance of exercising your democratic right as a citizen of the European Union to vote in European elections.

Steering Committee

The Blue Star Programme was implemented for the eighth year by EM Ireland on behalf of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Minister of State for European Affairs.

The Steering Committee, established in the pilot year of the Programme, continued into the eighth year. As in previous years, the Steering Committee decided the initial strategy and marketing plan of the Blue Star Programme, monitored its progress and offered counsel to EM Ireland on the Programme's implementation and delivery. The Programme benefitted greatly from strong working relationships at all levels with the Department, the Minister's Office, as well as the European Commission Representation in Ireland, the European Parliament Liaison Office in Ireland and the Department of Education and Skills. Good partnerships with all Blue Star Programme Steering Committee members were vital for the coordination of VIP visits, the teacher training day, the teacher Brussels trip, etc. The Minister of State for European Affairs carried out VIP visits to Blue Star Programme schools around the country. The European Commission Representation in Ireland continued to provide much of the resource material which was extremely important as source documentation and information for the participating schools.

The members of the Steering Committee included:

- Minister of State for European Affairs and officials from the Minister's Office;
- Officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade;
- Officials from the European Commission Representation in Ireland;
- Officials from the European Parliament Liaison Office in Ireland;
- Officials from the Department of Education and Skills;
- Members of staff from EM Ireland.

The Steering Committee convened in July 2018 and met formally twice over the course of the 2018-2019 Blue Star Programme. At these meetings, parameters and targets were agreed, and buy-ins to the project from key stakeholders was secured.

Several informal bilateral meetings were also held as needed. In addition, EM Ireland continued to provide the Committee with regular updates by email and phone, ensuring that the organisation remained true to the overall goals and objectives of the Programme's successful delivery.



**An Roinn Gnóthai
Eachtracha agus Trádála**
Department of
Foreign Affairs and Trade



Roinn an Taoisigh
Department of the Taoiseach



**An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna**
Department of
Education and Skills

Implementation of Year 8, 2018-2019

Work Programme Timetable

EM Ireland divided the work programme for Year 8 into a number of different phases and implemented changes to the school year calendar in order to maximise our efforts. These changes were focused on bringing forward numerous events, giving the National Implementation Body more time to engage directly with the work being done on a day-to-day basis with each participating school.

The timetable below was based on our experience over previous years of successfully running the Blue Star Programme and was agreed and signed off by the Steering Committee.

Dates	Action	Lead
July - August 2018	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update Blue Star Programme and EM Ireland websites with latest information, material and graphics 2. Meeting of the Blue Star Programme Steering Committee / Agree strategy and implementation plan with the Steering Committee 3. Incorporate and finalise proposed changes from the Steering Committee 4. Communicate with all primary schools in the Republic of Ireland inviting them to participate in the Programme 5. Contact teacher publications to publicise the Programme 	<p>EMI</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>EMI</p> <p>EMI/DES</p> <p>EMI</p>
September 2018	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Contact Irish MEPs, Oireachtas Members and European Ambassadors encouraging them to promote the Programme and to make themselves available for VIP visits throughout the year 7. Point of contact for all school queries, including in relation to what is involved in undertaking the Programme 8. Registration of participating schools, collate responses and file all registration forms 9. Identify 5-Year Achievement Schools and notify their Blue Star Programme Coordinators 	<p>EMI/MoS</p> <p>EMI</p> <p>EMI</p> <p>EMI</p>
October 2018	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Send out Action Plan to all participating schools along with Curriculum Guide 	<p>EMI/ECR</p>

November 2018	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Collate Media Consent Forms from participating schools 12. Send out resource packs with Programme materials to all participating schools 13. Point of contact for all school queries, including with regard to completing Action Plans 	<p>EMI</p> <p>EMI/ECR</p> <p>EMI</p>
December 2018	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Begin coordinating VIP visits with the office of the Minister of State for European Affairs, Irish MEPs, Oireachtas Members and European Ambassadors, etc. 15. Point of contact for all school queries, including in relation to engagement with media and starting projects 16. Begin monthly newsletters for participating schools 17. Teacher training day for participating Blue Star Programme teachers 18. National Launch of the Blue Star Programme with the Taoiseach, Minister of State for European Affairs and Minister for Education and Skills 	<p>EMI/MoS</p> <p>EMI</p> <p>EMI</p> <p>EPIO/EMI</p> <p>MoS/DFAT/EMI</p>
January - February 2019	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 19. Point of contact for all school queries, including in relation to VIP visits 20. Meeting of the Blue Star Programme Steering Committee 	<p>EMI</p> <p>All</p>
April 2019	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. Communications push regarding Europe Day on 7 May, including the 'Handshake for Europe' 22. Contact Irish MEPs, Oireachtas Members and European Ambassadors encouraging them to make themselves available for VIP visits on and around Europe Day 23. Point of contact for all school queries, including in relation to Europe Day 	<p>EMI</p> <p>EMI/MoS</p> <p>EMI</p>

	24. Meeting of the Blue Star Steering Committee	All
May 2019	25. Europe Day events on or around 9 May with the 'Handshake for Europe'	EMI
	26. National Blue Star Programme Europe Day event with the 'Handshake for Europe' - along the lines of hugely successful events that have previously taken place with the Minister of State for European Affairs	EMI/MoS/ DFAT
	27. Point of contact for all school queries, including in relation to completing Final Reports	EMI
	28. Collate submitted Final Reports	EMI
June - July 2019	29. Send out Certificates of Achievement and EU flags to successful schools	EMI
	30. Point of contact for all school queries, including in relation to Final Reports	EMI
	31. Trip for teachers to Brussels to visit the European Commission, European Parliament and the Irish Permanent Representation to the EU	ECR/EMI
	32. Submit Report and Review of the Eight Year of the Blue Star Programme to the Minister of State for European Affairs and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	EMI
	33. Meeting of the Blue Star Programme Steering Committee	All
	34. Initiation of planning for 2019-2020 Programme	All

Registration Phase

EM Ireland initiated the marketing and public awareness campaign of the Programme in August 2018. Every primary school in Ireland (approximately 3,200) was contacted about the Blue Star Programme. This was done by inviting them to register and participate in the Programme by email, as well as by post using the mailshot kindly made available by the Department of Education and Skills. EM Ireland also followed up with some schools by phone, targeting schools in counties with traditionally lower levels of participation in the Programme, as well as sending bespoke invitations to schools who previously participated in the Programme. We also reached out to bespoke primary school websites such as *Seomra Ranga* to publicise the Programme.

In addition, EM Ireland contacted Irish MEPs as well as European Ambassadors to request support in making schools around the country aware of the Programme and encouraging them to take part. Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee TD, kindly contacted Oireachtas Members about the Blue Star Programme. Other Oireachtas Members also contacted local schools about the Programme and promoted it across their social media platforms, demonstrating the great political support for the Blue Star Programme.



A concerted public relations campaign was once again carried out by the EM Ireland communications team at national, regional and local level around the registration drive. Targeted press releases, which received media coverage in newspapers and on radio, and various social media promotions helped to further increase awareness of the Blue Star Programme around the country. A promotional video that EM Ireland put together (aided by drone footage from a Blue Star Programme school on Europe Day) got very good online traction.

As a result of this structured and coordinated outreach, the 2018-2019 year of the Blue Star Programme was far above the agreed SLA target of 180 schools, with 243 schools registering to take part. As a result, we have now reached the agreed SLA target of 500-700 schools over the three years of the current tender (2017-2020). This target has been achieved within two years.

For the second year running, we had to create a waiting list due to the extreme high level of interest in the Blue Star Programme. The schools on the waiting list will get priority for registration in the 2019-2020 year of the Programme.

Almost half of the 243 registrations were first-time schools, striking a good balance between repeat schools doing the Programme year-on-year and first-time schools. This demonstrates the strong awareness of the Programme around the country due to continued successful promotion. As such, we have reached the agreed SLA target of 200 first-time schools over the three years of the current tender (2017-2020), within two years.

For the fifth year in a row, all 26 counties in Ireland were represented, with many achieving their highest ever participation figures to date. Already this year, we delivered double figure registrations in 8 of the 9 counties as agreed in the SLA for over the three years of the current tender (2017-2020).

Year 8 of the Blue Star Programme was officially launched nationally by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar TD, in November. Fifth class children from Castleknock Educate Together National School paid a visit to Government Buildings as part of the launch, and they were joined by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar TD; Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee TD; Head of the European Commission Representation in Ireland, Gerry Kiely; Head of the European Parliament Liaison Office in Ireland, James Temple-Smithson; European Movement Ireland Chair, Maurice Pratt; and Executive Director, Noelle O Connell, to kick off the eighth year of the programme.

Resources

Once schools had registered to participate in the eighth year of the Blue Star Programme, they were provided with a designated resource pack with materials kindly supplied by the European Commission Representation in Ireland and the European Parliament Liaison Office in Ireland. These colourful materials included wall-charts, DVD's, EU country guides, story books, etc.



In addition, all schools were supplied with EM Ireland's comprehensive Curriculum Guide, which was developed in conjunction with Blue Star Programme Champion Teachers. The Curriculum Guide includes advice and recommendations on all elements of the Programme. Together, the resource packs offers ideas and tips on projects pupils could undertake, and guidance for teachers as how best to facilitate the pupils and integrate the Programme into their curriculum.

In general, feedback from teachers on the resource packs was extremely positive.

Participants were also invited to visit the bespoke Blue Star Programme website for information, advice and material: www.bluestarprogramme.ie. Launched in 2014 and updated regularly by EM Ireland, alongside the monthly newsletter. It provides a means by which all participants can be easily updated. The website also serves as a useful source of information for schools interested in taking part in the Programme.

Participants were also encouraged to interact with the bespoke Blue Star Programme Twitter account, [@bluestarprog](https://twitter.com/bluestarprog), which was launched in October 2018. Given the increase in social media activity among primary schools, the dedicated Twitter account gives schools a direct online contact to share their work and thoughts as they work through the Blue Star Programme.

Further to this, EM Ireland responded to school queries on a daily basis by phone and through the dedicated email address: bluestar@europeanmovement.ie.

Participating schools were asked to submit an Action Plan to give EM Ireland an idea of the projects and activities they were planning to undertake. The Blue Star Programme also issued Media Consent Forms when schools registered, so that the Programme could have permission to share photos or videos of the pupils and their work. EM Ireland is committed to practices which protect children from harm. We also recognise that good child protection policies and procedures are of benefit to everyone involved in the Blue Star Programme.



Throughout the year, teachers were required to ensure that the four key areas of the Programme (Historical; Geographical; Cultural and Creative and Institutional), as well as the Europe Day activities, were carried out during the year through projects and events. Once evidence of this was shown in a Final Report, all successful schools were awarded two specially commissioned Blue Star Programme Certificates of Achievement which they could display. One of the Certificates of Achievement were in English and the other in Irish, with both signed by Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee TD, and Executive Director of EM Ireland, Noelle O Connell.

First-time schools also received an EU flag, with special thanks to the European Commission Representation in Ireland for their continued support in providing them.

VIP Visits

VIP visits is a longstanding tradition of the Blue Star Programme where the Minister of State for European Affairs, Irish MEPs, Oireachtas Members and European Ambassadors (and many more!) visit participating schools and speak to the pupils about their work in relation to Europe. The National Implementation Body regularly receives feedback that VIP visits are a great opportunity for pupils to showcase their Blue Star Programme work and to learn about the EU in a practical, personable way. Many schools have said that they consider these visits to be the highlight of their Blue Star Programme experience, and the best way to address the institutional section of the Programme.



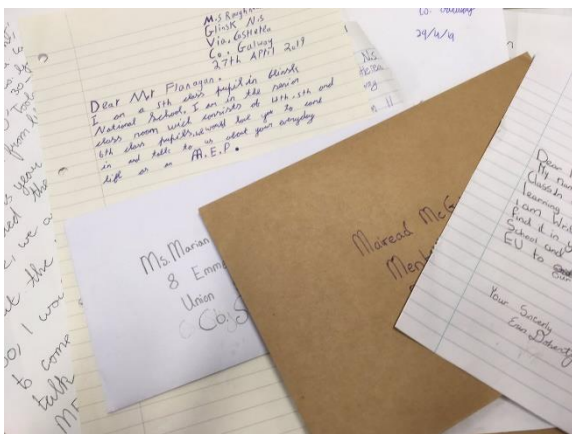
Over the course of the 2018-2019 Programme, a record-high 115 VIP visits took place in Blue Star Programme schools. This is well above the agreed SLA target of 50 VIP visits per year. Having worked to ensure a good geographical scope of VIP visits across the country again this year, we were delighted that VIP visits took place in 21 counties.

This year, we saw a continuation of the scope of VIP visits broadening to include student teachers from other EU countries through the e-Twinning programme for example, as well as past pupils and parents whose work is related to Europe. EM Ireland is exploring the possibility of linkages with other programmes, including the European Commission

'Back to School' scheme with thanks to the European Commission Representation in Ireland for their assistance in this regard.

As well as VIP visits contributing hugely to the success of the Blue Star Programme among participating schools, they also add to the profile of the Programme beyond this, particularly in terms of harnessing media coverage. A number of the Blue Star Programme VIP visits received media coverage this year, such as the 'Blue Star Programme Garden' that was on at *Bloom 2019*.

Blue Star Programme schools are asked to submit a VIP visit form when a visit is confirmed to allow EM Ireland to keep track. Below is a selection of some of the VIP visits which took place over the course of the year, as showcased on social media.



Blue Star Programme Year 8 National Launch

Year 8 of the Blue Star Programme was officially launched nationally by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar on 22 November 2018. Fifth class children from Castleknock Educate Together National School paid a visit to Government Buildings as part of the launch, and they were joined by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar; Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee, TD; Gerry Kiely, Head of Representation of the European Commission Representation in Ireland; James Temple-Smithson, Head of the European Parliament Liaison Office in Ireland; and European Movement Ireland Chair, Maurice Pratt, and Executive Director, Noelle O Connell, to kick off the eighth year of the programme.

During the visit, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar TD said: "I am pleased to launch the eighth year of the Blue Star Programme, which helps children to understand how the EU works and how it affects their lives. It's a great way for young people to learn about what it means to be European, as well as being an Irish citizen. Initiatives such as the Blue Star Programme are more important than ever at a time of Brexit and other challenges facing the EU. The Programme gives young people not just an understanding, but an appreciation of the benefits of EU membership, which is something I hope will stay with them as they progress through their lives."



Speaking at the launch, Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee TD, said: "The Blue Star Programme helps children, their teachers, parents and families to learn about the EU through history, geography, art and music. As well as teaching children about the EU, it shows them that they are part of a European family. This is especially important for the many children with non-Irish backgrounds as it gives them a chance to tell their classmates about the countries they're from and to have their heritages celebrated."



"As Minister for European Affairs I am delighted to support this Programme and have seen at first hand the enthusiasm that our young people are bringing to the EU. I want to commend the work of European Movement Ireland who manage this excellent Programme and I look forward to visiting some schools that are participating in the Programme this year."

During the visit, the Taoiseach and members of the Steering Committee met with the pupils and teachers from Castleknock ETNS, while also providing them with a tour of Leinster House.

5-Year Achievement Award



22 schools from around the country have now taken part in the Blue Star Programme for five or more years. During Year 8, we were delighted to honour the seven schools who reached the five-year milestone this year with a specially commissioned 5-Year Achievement Award trophy. EM Ireland further assisted each of the seven schools in organising a celebration around this special occasion.

An initiative of EM Ireland, the 5-Year Achievement Award has become an important part of the Programme in rewarding schools which participate year-on-year. Next year, there are potentially 20 more 5-Year Achievement Award schools.

Three of this year's 5-Year Achievement schools – Boolavogue NS, Co. Wexford; Feakle NS, Co. Clare; and Wolfhill, Co. Laois, – showcased their project work at the national Blue Star Programme Europe Day event at Iveagh House, Dublin. Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee TD, presented them with their 5-Year Achievement Awards. Special thanks to the selection of Ambassadors who were at the event in Iveagh House.

Irish Girl Guides' 'Europe Badge'

During the Blue Star Programme's 'Handshake for Europe' event, the Irish Girl Guides launched their newly designed 'Europe Badge' in Iveagh House, Dublin, the headquarters of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, ahead of Europe Day (9 May) with Minister Helen McEntee TD and the Blue Star Programme schools in attendance.

The badges, which have been developed by Irish Girl Guides in partnership with EM Ireland, will help girls from age five upwards gain an understanding of the EU and how it affects the lives of Irish citizens.

In association with the Blue Star Programme, the National Implementation Body intends to integrate promotion of the Programme via the Europe Badge by working with the Irish Girl Guides going forward.



Blue Star Programme Garden - Bloom 2019

The Programme was honoured to have one of the participating schools – St Oliver Plunkett NS in Co. Meath – design a Blue Star Programmethemed garden at Bloom 2019. The garden was on-show in Phoenix Park between 30 May-2June, in the ‘Postcard Garden’ section at the prestigious event.

St Oliver Plunkett NS received a certificate of distinction for the garden and were also interviewed by *Virgin Media News*, showcasing their Blue Star Programme work and the garden.



Blue Star Programme

Programme Content

The Blue Star Programme is composed of four key areas of European knowledge:

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

When researching their projects, pupils were encouraged to use all means available to them, including online resources. Many projects were presented using interactive tools such as PowerPoint, videos and websites. The use of technology among participating schools was impressive, highlighting the success of the Blue Star Programme in increasing the use of technological resources in the classroom and bringing 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 2018-2019.

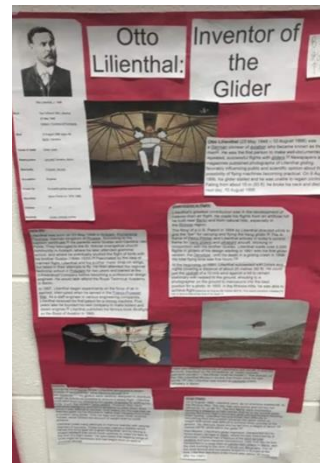
The civic society element in 2018-2019 was ‘European Elections’. This allowed Blue Star Programme pupils to get creative and run mock elections, draw up ballot papers for candidates and conduct debates to showcase the importance of exercising your democratic right as a citizen of the EU to vote in European elections. From this, pupils learned about the nominations of candidates and who can become a Member of the European Parliament (MEP), voting procedures in the elections, the different political parties that make up the parliament, how you vote at a European election, and how votes are counted.



1. Historical

For this module, many 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 formation of the European Union, World War II, the Russian Revolution, Ancient Rome, Joan of Arc, the French Revolution, the Renaissance, and the Berlin Wall, among many others.

The broad scope of the Blue Star Programme meant that pupils were able to focus on a historical theme appropriate to their age and class. In this way, the Programme afforded teachers the necessary flexibility to adapt it to suit their requirements and curriculum.



2. Geographical

For the geographical section of the Blue Star Programme, many pupils prepared projects on different European countries. The projects focused on a number of topics, including the countries' flags, populations, capital cities, national anthems, and famous landmarks. Many projects made comparisons between their chosen country and Ireland.

This section of the Programme was particularly successful as pupils with heritage from other European countries were encouraged to share knowledge of these countries with classmates. This helped to further integrate them into the school community, as well as increasing awareness and knowledge of different nationalities and cultures among participating schools. In addition, parents were often invited to present to classes and some pupils corresponded with their classmates' relatives in other European countries. This in turn helped to make Europe a more tangible concept for the pupils and involved the wider community in the pupils' learning process.



For this module, some schools also used interactive maps and technology to learn about the capital cities of European countries; we were pleased to see this continued integration of technological teaching resources to aid pupils' learning.

3. Cultural and Creative

In this module, pupils explored the music, food, literature and art of Europe. Classroom activities included preparing and tasting food from different European countries and performing traditional dances and songs from various European countries.



This module led to some interesting and high-quality submissions ranging from renditions of songs in different European languages to pupils' excellent interpretations of European art, including by Pablo Picasso and Leonardo da Vinci.

Feedback from teachers and principals was very positive regarding this module. A number of participants said that the Cultural and Creative element allowed teachers 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 helped to engage the wider community as parents were invited to contribute to the Programme by, for example, assisting their children in putting their projects and performances together.

4. Institutional

In 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 created group projects on one of the European Institutions and then presented their chosen institution to their classmates. This was sometimes followed by a classroom election on Europe Day, 9 May.

Pupils also engaged with public representatives to learn about European politics. A number of Irish MEPs, Oireachtas Members and European Ambassadors visited schools to speak about Europe and answer pupils' questions on their work.





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 showcase their pupils' Blue Star Programme projects, including to the wider community.

Following the resounding success of the initiative, which was first introduced during the Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2013, it was decided that the nationwide 'Handshake for Europe' would be carried out once again on Europe Day.

All Blue Star Programme schools were encouraged to take part in this initiative. Pupils were asked to wish each other a "Happy Europe Day!" as they joined together in the group handshake. The purpose of this initiative is to acknowledge the diversity and solidarity that exists amongst the classmates, highlighting that they are all connected as citizens of the EU. All schools were provided with information for Europe Day which outlined the theory behind the handshake. The 'Handshake for Europe' once again proved to be a popular initiative with schools across the country and received press coverage, details of which are provided in the press section of this Report and Review.



In addition, a national Europe Day celebration took place in Iveagh House Dublin, hosted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee TD. The event took place on Tuesday 7 May and was called 'Handshake for Europe Celebrations'. Pupils and teachers from three of this year's 5-Year Achievement schools - Boolavogue NS, Co. Wexford, Wolfhill, Co. Laois, Feakle NS, Co. Clare - joined the celebrations. The pupils showcased some of their Blue Star Programme project work to event attendees which included a select number of Ambassadors, members of the Irish Girl Guides, and students who went on the most recent *Euroscola* trip. For the Blue Star Programme pupils in

attendance, they were awarded with their specially commissioned 5-Year Achievement Award trophy by the Minister. Pupils also took part in a 'Handshake for Europe' with Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee TD, and EM Ireland Executive Director, Noelle O'Connell.

During the celebrations at Iveagh House, Minister Helen McEntee also launched the 'Europe Badge' for the Irish Girl Guides. The badges, which have been developed by Irish Girl Guides in partnership with European Movement Ireland, will help girls from age five upwards gain an understanding of the European Union and how it affects the lives of Irish citizens.

Assessment

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

- 1) Participating teachers were asked to send a Final Report (in hard or soft copy), including evidence of projects and events carried out during the year covering the four key areas of EU knowledge and Europe Day;
- 2) These submissions were reviewed and then assessed;
- 3) Two Blue Star Programme Certificates of Achievement - one in English and the other in Irish - were awarded to schools who submitted these Final Reports to the satisfaction of the team. EU flags were awarded to first-time schools and to repeat schools who specifically requested one.



At the time of writing, 113 schools have been deemed to have successfully completed the Blue Star Programme 2018-2019. Each of these schools has been awarded Blue Star Programme Certificates of Achievement. Similar to previous years, we expect a number of additional Final Reports to be submitted over the coming months.

It should be noted that a number of schools who did not complete the Blue Star Programme 2018-2019 explained that it was due to their preference to carry out the Programme over the course of two school years, which is something that is becoming increasingly common.

Participating Schools 2018-2019

St Brigid's NS, Grange	Carlow
Scoil Phádraig Naofa	Carlow
Dernakesh NS	Cavan
St Aidan's NS	Cavan
St. Conaire's NS	Clare
Ballyvaughan NS	Clare
Doonaha NS	Clare
Scoil na Maighdine Mhuire	Clare
Kilmurry McMahan NS	Clare
Bodyke NS	Clare
Convent Primary School, Killaloe	Clare
Scoil Iosef Naofa	Clare
Bansha NS	Clare
Iniscealtra NS	Clare
St Jospeh's NS	Clare
Ogonnelloe NS	Clare
Gaelscoil Mhichíl Cíosóg	Clare
Clonmoney NS	Clare
Feakle National School; Scoil Mhuire	Clare
Carrigboy NS	Cork
Bunscoil Rinn an Chabhlaigh	Cork
Scoil Chroi Iosa, (Blarney NS)	Cork
Scoil Niocláis	Cork
Gaelscoil Uí Drisceoil	Cork
Glantane NS	Cork
St Michael's Church of Ireland NS	Cork
Scoil Maria Assumpta	Cork
Scoil Iosagain BNS	Cork
Scoil Mhuire na nGrást	Cork
Knockskeagh NS	Cork
Ardfield National School	Cork
Carrigaline ETNS	Cork

St John's GNS	Cork
Dromleigh NS	Cork
Scoil Mhuire Agus Eoin	Cork
Scoil Chliodhna CNS	Cork
Gaelscoil an Teaghlaigh Naofa	Cork
Blarney Street CBS	Cork
St Joseph's NS	Cork
Gaelscoil Mhainistir na Corann	Cork
Drimoleague NS	Cork
Grange NS	Cork
Castletown NS	Donegal
St. Patricks BNS	Donegal
St Mary's NS, Castlefinn	Donegal
Scoil Náisiúnta na Croise Naofa	Donegal
Scoil Cholmcille	Donegal
Buncrana NS	Donegal
Glenmaquinn NS	Donegal
Glentogher NS	Donegal
Cloughfin NS	Donegal
Robertson NS	Donegal
Gartan N.S.	Donegal
Holy Family NS	Dublin
Holmpatrick NS	Dublin
Scoil Mhuire GNS	Dublin
St Ultans NS	Dublin
Powerstown ETNS	Dublin
St Mary's NS	Dublin
CUS Junior School	Dublin
Naul NS	Dublin
Balrothery NS	Dublin
Castleknock Educate Together	Dublin
Mary Queen of Ireland NS	Dublin
St Augustine Special School	Dublin

St Brigid's Primary School	Dublin
St David's BNS	Dublin
Gardiner Street School	Dublin
St Louis Infant School	Dublin
Rush National School	Dublin
Ballyboughal NS	Dublin
Pelletstown ETNS	Dublin
St Patrick's NS, Chapelizod	Dublin
Our Lady Immaculate JNS	Dublin
Scoil Íosa	Dublin
International School of Dublin	Dublin
Gaelscoil Inse Chór	Dublin
Inchicore NS	Dublin
Alexandra College Junior School	Dublin
Crannóg Nua School	Dublin
Scoil Fhursa	Dublin
St Michael's NS	Dublin
Scoil Moibhi	Dublin
Holy Spirit Senior School	Dublin
St Mary's BNS	Dublin
Christ the King GNS	Dublin
Kiltiernan Cofl NS	Dublin
St Raphael's NS	Dublin
Kildare Place Rathmines	Dublin
Gortanumera NS	Galway
Castlegar NS	Galway
Claregalway NS	Galway
Scoil Bhriocáin	Galway
St Brendan's NS	Galway
Scoil Iosaif Naofa	Galway
Killimor NS	Galway
Clydagh NS	Galway
Lettergesh NS	Galway
Glinsk NS	Galway

Scoil Náisiúnta Aird Mhoir	Galway
Collinamuck NS	Galway
St Cuana's	Galway
Kilbeacanty NS	Galway
Creggs NS	Galway
St Patrick's PS	Galway
Scoil Mhuire, Clarinbridge	Galway
St John the Apostle, Knocknacarra NS	Galway
Scoil Chaitriona Senior	Galway
Milltown NS	Galway
Glenflesk NS	Kerry
Castledrum NS	Kerry
St Bridgid's NS, Duagh	Kerry
Scoil Chaitlín Naofa	Kerry
Scoil Mhuire	Kerry
Moyderwell Mercy Primary School	Kerry
St John's NS	Kerry
St Oliver's NS	Kerry
Kilgobnet NS	Kerry
SN Léana Mhoir	Kerry
Muire Gan Smál Presentation Primary School	Kerry
Two Mile Community National School	Kerry
Fossa NS	Kerry
Faha NS	Kerry
Gaelscoil Mhic Easmainn	Kerry
Rathmore NS	Kildare
St David's NS	Kildare
Maynooth Educate Together	Kildare
Scoil na Naomh Uilig	Kildare
Tiermohan NS	Kildare
Scoil Bhríde Kilcullen	Kildare
Ballyshannon NS	Kildare

Ballyragget NS	Kilkenny
Scoil Iognáid De Rís	Kilkenny
Lisnafunchin National School	Kilkenny
St Beacon's NS	Kilkenny
Scoil San Nioclás	Kilkenny
St Senan's NS	Kilkenny
Wolfhill National School	Laois
Arles NS	Laois
St Paul's NS	Laois
Camross NS	Laois
Gaelscoil Phortlaoise	Laois
Scoil Mhuire	Leitrim
Creora NS	Limerick
St Patrick's NS, Bruree	Limerick
Meenkilly NS	Limerick
St Mary's BNS	Limerick
Askeaton Senior NS	Limerick
Garydoolis NS	Limerick
Scoil Chríost Rí, Caherdavin Boys School,	Limerick
Scoil Mhathair Dé	Limerick
Ahane NS	Limerick
Kiloughteen NS	Limerick
Scoil Bhríde, Glen	Longford
Scoil Bhríde Killasonna	Longford
Redeemer Girls School	Louth
St Joseph's NS	Louth
St Oliver Plunkett NS	Louth
Le Chéile ETNS	Louth
St Malachy's BNS	Louth
S.N. Naomh Fheichín (Attymass NS)	Mayo
Foxford NS	Mayo
Claremorris Boys NS	Mayo
Tanveena NS	Mayo

St Aidans NS	Mayo
Gaelscoil na gCeithre Maol	Mayo
Bofield NS	Mayo
St Patricks NS, Cloonlyon	Mayo
Culmore NS	Mayo
St Colman's NS	Mayo
Facefield NS	Mayo
Scoil Iosa	Mayo
Midfield NS	Mayo
St Joseph's Primary School	Mayo
Scoil Mhuire, Robinstown, NS	Meath
St Fiach's NS	Meath
Kilbride NS	Meath
Bunscoil Buachaillí Réalt na Mara	Meath
Duleek GNS	Meath
St Brigid's NS, Cortown	Meath
St Patrick's NS, Castletown	Meath
Scoil Mhuire, Carlanstown	Meath
St Joseph's NS	Meath
St Oliver Plunkett NS	Meath
O Growney NS	Meath
Dunderry NS	Meath
Gaelscoil na Cille	Meath
Our Lady of Mercy Primary School	Meath
St Brigid's NS	Meath
Deravoy NS	Monaghan
Scoil Mhuire, Latton	Monaghan
St Oliver Plunkett's NS	Monaghan
Scoil Mhuire Naofa	Offaly
Cloneyhurke NS	Offaly
Daingean NS	Offaly
Coolderry Central School	Offaly
Scoil Bhríde	Roscommon

Ballyfeeney NS	Roscommon
St Paul's NS	Roscommon
St Patrick's NS	Roscommon
St Mary's Primary School	Roscommon
Scoil Mhuire, Brusna	Roscommon
Cloverhill NS	Roscommon
Tulsk NS	Roscommon
Tibohine NS	Roscommon
St Michael's & St Pat's (Cootehall NS)	Roscommon
St Joseph's BNS	Roscommon
Taunagh NS	Sligo
Coolbock NS	Sligo
Gaelscoil Chluain Meala	Tipperary
St John the Baptist BNS	Tipperary
Corville NS	Tipperary
Sacred Heart Primary School	Tipperary
Scoil Mhuire, Portroe	Tipperary
St Michael's GNS	Tipperary
Scoil na Maighdine	Tipperary
Scoil Iosef Naofa	Tipperary
Scoil Mhuire Kilvemnon	Tipperary
Golden NS	Tipperary
Scoil Mhuire Tipperary	Tipperary
Foxford NS	Waterford
Knockmahon NS	Waterford
St James NS	Waterford
Drumraney NS	Westmeath
St Thomas' NS	Westmeath
Scoil na gCeithre Máistrí	Westmeath
St Mary's NS	Westmeath
St Brigid's NS, Ballynacargy	Westmeath
Presentation Senior School	Westmeath
Scoil Mhuire Westmeath	Westmeath
St Oliver Plunkett's BNS	Westmeath

Scoil Mhuire, Davidstown	Wexford
Kilrane NS	Wexford
Scoil Naisiunta Baile An Phiarsaigh	Wexford
Arles	Wexford
Boolavogue NS	Wexford
Danecastle NS (Scoil Mhuire)	Wexford
St Patrick's NS	Wexford
Tombrack NS	Wexford
St Anne's, Rathangan	Wexford
Scoil Mhuire Horsewood	Wexford
Greystones Community NS	Wicklow
Sacred Heart NS	Wicklow
St Saviours NS	Wicklow
Carysfort NS	Wicklow
Marino Special School	Wicklow
Gaelscoil na gCloch Liath	Wicklow

Expressions of Interest for 2019-2020

We have already received expressions of interest from approximately 20 schools who would like to participate in the Blue Star Programme 2019-2020. 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.

Not included in this 20 are the many current Blue Star Programme teachers who have already expressed intent to enrol their school again next year as they found the Programme to be so beneficial and enjoyable.



Mentoring & Support

As in previous years, EM Ireland carried out a significant role in mentoring and supporting all the participating teachers and wider school community during the 2017-2018 year of the Blue Star Programme.

School Queries

This entailed providing advice and guidance to teachers looking for additional information and resources, as well as responding to school queries on a daily basis by phone, through the dedicated email address (bluestar@europeanmovement.ie) and Twitter account ([@bluestarprog](https://twitter.com/bluestarprog)) throughout the year. All EM Ireland staff members were regularly briefed on the Programme so as to ensure that queries could be dealt with efficiently and accurately by the whole EM Ireland team. In addition, regular phone contact was maintained with the schools.

Other key elements of EM Ireland's mentoring and support role were ensuring that schools were ready for VIP visits and for their Europe Day celebrations, and providing advice and support to help schools interact with the visitors on these occasions.

Teacher Training Workshop

Following the success of previous years, it was decided that another Teacher Training Workshop would be held for participating Blue Star Programme teachers in November 2018. This is the earliest the workshop has ever been done, due to feedback from teachers who requested for it to occur earlier in the school term calendar. The European Parliament Liaison Office in Ireland kindly supported a teacher training day for 30 teachers on Saturday, 17 November 2018 in Europe House.



Teachers, who travelled from around the country, were addressed by officials from the European Parliament. Staff from EM Ireland presented on various relevant topics including ideas for projects and media training to provide teachers with the skills to reach out to local media directly as part of the Programme. Roisin Curneen, a Blue Star Programme Champion Teacher spoke to the teachers at the workshop, giving a first-hand account of what it is like to implement the Programme in the classroom. As in previous years, this day was much welcomed by the teachers involved, who found it to be a useful forum to share ideas regarding best practice and problem-solving techniques.



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

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

The full timetable for the training day is outlined below:

Saturday, 17 November 2018	
Europe House, 12-14 Mount Street Lower, Dublin 2	
10:00am	Meet and Greet with MEPs
10:30am	Overview of the Blue Star Programme
11:30am	Classroom experience: Blue Star Programme Champion Teacher
12:00pm	Lunch
12:30pm	How to Maximise Media Opportunities for the Blue Star Programme
1:00pm	Training Module and Best Practice Sharing

Brussels Trip

As part of the Blue Star Programme, the European Commission Representation in Ireland will once again kindly support a study trip to Brussels for participating teachers.

23 teachers from all corners of the country will take part. Many thanks also to the European Parliament Liaison Office in Ireland for organising such interesting visits to the House of European History and the European Parliament.

The full itinerary for the trip, which will take place from 8 to 10 July 2019, is outlined below:

Monday, 8 July 2019 - Brussels

21:00	<u>ARRIVAL IN BRUSSELS AIRPORT</u> Mr Julio Gonzalez Romero European Commission Representation in Ireland
-------	---

Tuesday, 9 July 2019 - European Commission

8:45	<u>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION</u> Mr Marat SHARDIMGALIEV Visitors' Centre, European Commission
9:15	<u>THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION: THE POLITICAL EXECUTIVE OF THE EU</u> Ms Susan DOWNHILL, Budget Officer Budgetary Procedures and Execution, Relations with Budget Committees Directorate-General for Budget
10:45	<u>THE EU DEVELOPMENT POLICY</u> Dr Christos Marazopoulos Development Financing Effectiveness, Relations with Member States Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
11:45	<u>THE LEARNING CORNER</u> Ms Gwenn STRASZBURGER, Information and Communication Officer Editorial Service and Targeted Outreach Directorate-General for Communication
12:45	<u>WORKING LUNCH</u> Mr Kevin Keary Policy Adviser in Cabinet of Commissioner Hogan
15:00	<u>THE ROLE OF THE EU IN EDUCATION</u> Ms Susanne CONZE, Deputy Head of Unit Strategy and Investments Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture

Wednesday, 10 July 2019

9:00	<u>VISIT TO THE HOUSE OF EUROPEAN HISTORY</u> Organised by the European Parliament Information Office in Ireland
10:30	<u>INTRODUCTION TO EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT</u> Olav Gade, Visitors' Service, European Parliament
11:00	<u>Q&A WITH MEPS AND LUNCH</u> European Parliament
14:00	Departure to Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU
19:00	<u>VISIT TO PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF IRELAND TO THE EU</u>
21:00	<u>DEPARTURE FROM BRUSSELS AIRPORT</u>

Communications & PR

PR & Media Coverage

The Blue Star Programme 2018-2019 received significant coverage across local, regional and national print and broadcast media, particularly around the registration drive.

From the outset, participating schools were encouraged to publicise their participation in the Programme to highlight the work they were doing. A number of the participating schools received media coverage in local newspapers, particularly in light of VIP visits.

Most notably, *Virgin Media News* covered one of the Blue Star Programme schools as they had created a Blue Star Programme themed garden for *Bloom 2019*.

Furthermore, European Movement Ireland ran a broad publicity campaign across our social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. We received a number of high-profile re-tweets, shares and mentions from Irish public representatives and media accounts, which played an important role in further promoting the Programme. In addition, given that a number of participating Blue Star Programme 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 to promote their Europe Day activities. We were pleased to see a high level of online engagement with regard to the Programme as more and more schools use such platforms.



Blue Star Programme Social Media and Website

During the 2018-2019 school year, the Blue Star Programme launched a bespoke Blue Star Programme Twitter account [@bluestarprog](https://twitter.com/bluestarprog), which was officially started in October 2018. Given the increase in social media activity among primary schools, the dedicated Twitter account gives schools online that direct contact to share their work and thoughts as they work through the Blue Star Programme.



As the implementation body running this account, we showcased the ongoing work of Blue Star Programme schools on a daily basis, tagging in all relevant Steering Committee partners. Teachers were encouraged through the monthly newsletter to send in photo or video examples of the Blue Star Programme work their pupils were doing, as well

as tagging the Blue Star Programme account in work they are tweeting online. We were delighted to receive a tremendous response to this social media initiative, and upgrade from the previous 'One-A-Week' feature, to a daily version.

Media Coverage Snapshot

Date	Publication
25 August 2018	Cork's Evening Echo - Newspaper article by teacher on the Blue Star Programme
30 August 2018	Life FM - Ryan Levis (Blue Star Programme Coordinator) spoke on air spoke about the Blue Star Programme
31 August 2018	Roscommon's Ros FM - Ryan Levis spoke on air about the Blue Star Programme
31 August 2018	Limerick's Live95FM - Ryan Levis spoke on air about the Blue Star Programme
03 September 2018	Near FM - Ryan Levis spoke on air about the Blue Star Programme
03 September 2018	Cork's CRY FM - Ryan Levis spoke on air about the Blue Star Programme
03 September 2018	Galway's Connemara Community Radio - Ryan Levis spoke on air about the Blue Star Programme
16 September 2018	Ocean FM - Ryan Levis spoke on air about the Blue Star Programme
13 October 2018	New Ross Standard (Independent.ie) - Deirdre Clune MEP raised Horsewood NS's Blue Star Flag
21 February 2019	Cork's 96fm - Blarney NS pupils were interviewed during their Mock MEP Elections Day.
23 March 2019	Donegal Democrat - Donegal pupil's letter prompts a visit from Mairead McGuinness MEP
08 May 2019	Irish Examiner - Handshake for Europe Celebrations in Iveagh House
08 May 2019	Irish Daily Mirror - Handshake for Europe Celebrations in Iveagh House
10 May 2019	Connaught Telegraph - Hungarian Ambassador visits Facefield NS
16 May 2019	Donegal Daily - Marian Harkin joins Glenmaquin NS for Europe Day
23 May 2019	Offaly Express - Handshake for Europe Celebrations in Iveagh House
31 May 2019	Virgin Media News - St Oliver Plunkett NS, Meath, were interviewed at Bloom 2019

Conclusion & Recommendations

Teacher Feedback

As part of the Final Report, teachers were asked to give feedback to the National Implementation Body 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 many appreciating how compatible it is with the school curriculum. The phrase “curriculum-friendly” once again featured heavily in many of these teacher surveys this year. Overall, the responses indicate that both teachers and pupils thoroughly enjoyed this Programme, and many mentioned the VIP visits and the resources received at the start of the term as being highlights of the term.



Regarding areas to improve on, teachers have requested clearer guidance with regards to set-dates for Final Report submissions. This is something the National Implementation Body will seek to work on in conjunction with teachers in future years of the Programme.

Below is a verbatim sample of the feedback provided by teachers, based on their experience of the Blue Star Programme in 2018-2019:

- *The beauty of this Programme for us was that it afforded all our families the opportunity to celebrate our diversity, learn about and enjoy our cultural differences and understand where we've come from.*
- *As always the children really enjoyed participating in the Programme and benefited greatly from it. They were highly motivated through the project work and took great interest in learning about various customs and traditions. The students thoroughly enjoyed the Europe Day celebrations and the role they had to play in them. Thanks again to all involved.*
- *The teachers involved in the Blue Star Programme were pleased with how well it can be integrated into the curriculum. The variety of activities helped to keep the children engaged. The level of awareness of other European countries and of the European Union has greatly increased*
- *The voting and election campaign gained huge support from the entire school and the VIP visit was really welcomed and celebrated by all teachers and students alike.*
- *The boys from European countries especially enjoyed coming on the intercom every week to teach the whole school useful phrases in their language.*

- *We enjoyed participating in this Programme. It is very much in line with the curriculum and so was easy to fit in to our packed timetable as it integrated very well. The show case EU day was a lovely way of consolidating and recognising all the work we had completed throughout the year. It was also a fantastic opportunity to invite in parents & the local community and gave the pupils a chance to speak in front of an audience. Well worth the effort!*
- *Thank you so much for organising such a wonderful Programme with excellent initiative. We have throughoutly enjoyed taking part again this year.*
- *This year we took the topic of Brexit and tried to understand it better. Personally I think a lot of the suggestions by the pupils were as good as any of the suggestions that were coming from the head negotiators from all sides!*
- *There was no pressure to adhere to deadlines or copius amounts of paperwork and I found this a huge relief.*
- *It was fantastic that there were so many resources available to schools and that this Programme recognised that an initiative can take place throughout the school for a whole year. It is a very appealing Programme as it does not require excessive extra work on the part of the school but it simply celebrates Europe and the EU. I found the timeframe to be very fair.*
- *The children learnt a great deal and the teachers were very happy that the topic was so easily planned for and fitted in well with the curriculum. The fifth and sixth class teacher also felt the work completed was particularly appropriate because of the upcoming elections.*
- *Is deis iontach é an clár gorm chun na leanaí ar chuir ar an eolas faoi an tábhacht a bhaineann leis an Aontas Eorpach. Bheadh sé úsáideach dá ma rud é go raibh níos mó bratacha móra ar fáil dos na leanaí ar na tíortha atá in san Aontas Eorpach.*

European Movement Ireland Recommendations

This Report and Review has enabled EM Ireland to assess and evaluate the success of the eighth year of the Blue Star Programme in our role as the National Implementation Body.

The eighth year of the Blue Star Programme was extremely successful with the number of participating schools being well above the SLA target. The pilot programme began in 2011-2012 with 32 schools. In 2018-2019, this number had increased hugely to 243 schools. The participating schools ranged from two teacher rural schools to large urban schools with hundreds of pupils. Approximately 18,000 pupils from across Ireland participated in the eighth year of the Programme.

Undoubtedly, the Blue Star Programme is an exceptional way of promoting Ireland's engagement with Europe in a curriculum-friendly manner that reaches beyond the participating primary school pupils and teachers into wider school and local communities.

From its humble beginnings, the Blue Star Programme continues to grow, both in terms of numbers and in terms of impact. Already, approximately 20 schools have contacted EM Ireland to enquire about getting involved in the 2019-2020 Programme.



EM Ireland is proud to have been continuously associated with the Programme from its inauguration and we greatly look forward to the opportunity to continue driving and developing the potential of the Programme even further into the future.

It is vital that the Blue Star Programme remains curriculum-friendly in order to continue the high level of interest in the Programme. As the National Implementation body, EM Ireland has dealt first-hand with the participating teachers on a daily basis and is aware that the ease of integration of the Programme into the existing curriculum is a critical factor. This is particularly

important for the start of the school year when principals and teachers are deciding what programmes to undertake over the year.

The four key areas of EU knowledge (Historical, Geographical, Cultural and Creative, and Institutional) and the Europe Day celebrations continue to work extremely well as the main elements of the Programme. This is highlighted by the high levels of participation, including repeat participation, over the eight years of the Programme, and is borne out in positive teacher feedback. These four elements represent the foundation blocks of the Blue Star Programme, and they should be cemented as an ongoing, constant feature of the Programme.

One of the growing trends of the Blue Star Programme is the Programme's ability to harness discussion on cultural diversity within the EU, and as a result, the Irish classroom. Participating schools have used the Blue Star Programme as an opportunity to showcase multiculturalism in their lives to their classmates and to the wider community, which is something, as National Implementation Body, EM Ireland is dedicated to see continue.

This year we have seen the VIP visits take, once more, a prominent role in the programme with a 115 VIP visits taking place throughout this year. Many teachers mentioned this in their Final Report as the highlight of the Programme for them and an incredible learning opportunity for their pupils. EM Ireland intends to build on the social media campaign we have created to reach the teachers, in parallel to the monthly newsletter, promoting the VIP visits at as early a stage as possible in the Programme. We would hope this would allow for schools to become even more aware and engaged with the process of organising a VIP visit and thus be even more willing to do so.

The civic society element in 2018-2019 was 'European Elections 2019'. Pupils were encouraged to engage with the Elections in order to showcase the importance of exercising your democratic right as a citizen of the European Union to vote in European elections.

Our recommendations for possible additional civic society elements for the coming years include:

- Brexit negotiations and process;
- Celebrating European Multiculturalism;
- 'Importance of voting', participation in EU democracy;
- The new European Parliament and Commission.

EM Ireland also proposes to continue with the 5-Year Achievement Award for repeat Blue Star Programme schools, of which there are many, as an incentive for them to continue participating year-on-year. In addition to the bespoke Blue Star Programme award they receive, the National Implementation body suggests:

- Website badges;
- Visits to Leinster House with Oireachtas Members or the Minister of State for European Affairs;
- Visits to Europe House.

EM Ireland again recommends exploring the possibility of allowing some schools, mainly smaller 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 involve only one or two classes in the Programme. Repetition of material year-on-year can be a problem for the type of schools mentioned above, and this would allow schools to explore completely new elements each year.

EM Ireland would also be strongly in favour of implementing a regional teacher workshop in Connacht and/or Munster, in cooperation with our Steering Committee partners. This is based on consistent feedback year-on-year from teachers that they would like an option outside Dublin. We further suggest that this workshop could take place in January. We would also recommend that the Dublin-based workshop remain in November, as based on feedback that more information on what is involved in undertaking the Blue Star Programme being available at that point of the school year is considered very helpful.



EM Ireland would continue to encourage schools to further explore e-Twinning - a European Commission platform that allows teachers to communicate, collaborate, develop projects and to share ideas with teachers in other European countries - as well as other programmes. Teachers can register and use the e-Twinning online tools to find each other, meet virtually, team up in groups, learn together and engage in online-based projects. It would help to bring all elements of the Programme to life in a real cross-border sense. The possibility of funding being made available for schools' e-Twinning activities under the Europe for Citizens programme could also be explored by schools.

EM Ireland also recommends developing further the Programme's relationship with the Irish Girl Guides, and exploring the possibility of working with *Active Flag*, who do Europe-based projects as part of their work which could work very well with the Blue Star Programme.

In addition, given the significant increase in interest and demand in terms of registrations from hundreds of schools throughout the country, as evidenced this year, there will be more pressure on EM Ireland as the Programme's National Implementation Body to strategically manage resources so as to ensure a consistent level of quality and service.

The above observations for the future of the Blue Star Programme are based on EM Ireland's experience in coordinating the Programme over the last eight years and could be introduced to complement the current delivery strategy. The challenge, as ever, will be to match the undoubted growth potential of the Blue Star Programme at a national level, while keeping within the budget and resources allocated to the Programme.

EM Ireland is delighted to have been the organisation which implemented this year of this Programme and to have helped the Programme go from strength to strength again over the past 12 months and indeed eight years. We are proud to have been associated with the Programme from its inauguration and we welcome 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 throughout the country.

DRAFT



Blue Star

Programme

A: 8 Lower Fitzwilliam Street, Dublin 2, Ireland
T: 01 662 5815 E: blueStar@europeanmovement.ie
W: www.bluestarprogramme.ie