



## Youth Voices for Civic Action FIRESIDE EVENT



### Briefing Notes

**W8 Conference Room | Manorhamilton | Co Leitrim | F91 P03C**  
**Friday 23 May 2025 | 6.30pm**

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### **1. About the Peer Civic Project**

**Peer Civic** is a transnational youth engagement initiative co-funded by the European Commission through the *Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV)* programme. The project brings together young people from **six EU countries**—Ireland, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, and Italy—to strengthen youth participation in democracy and civic life. Through national incubators, policy debates, and a European dialogue platform, the project empowers youth to explore EU values, engage with institutions, and co-create solutions on key societal issues.

### **2. The 11 European Youth Goals**

The **European Youth Goals** were developed in 2018 by thousands of young people during the EU Youth Dialogue process. They represent the most urgent priorities for youth across Europe and serve as a policy compass for youth strategies at both national and EU levels. The goals include:

1. Connecting EU with Youth
2. Equality of All Genders
3. Inclusive Societies
4. Information & Constructive Dialogue
5. Mental Health & Wellbeing
6. Moving Rural Youth Forward
7. Quality Employment for All
8. Quality Learning
9. Space and Participation for All
10. Sustainable Green Europe
11. Youth Organisations and European Programmes

### 3. Irish Youth Findings

As part of Peer Civic, a national youth survey was conducted in Ireland between February and April 2025. The survey captured views from Irish young people (aged 18–25) on their needs, priorities, and policy ideas across the 11 Youth Goals.

Key issues that emerged include:

- The need for **fairer access to education**, especially SUSI reform and rural training investment.
- **Mental health service gaps**, particularly long wait times and lack of therapy access.
- A strong demand for **climate action with youth at the centre**, including community-led green initiatives.
- Calls for **more transparent and meaningful youth participation** in national policymaking.
- Barriers to accessing **EU programmes**, especially due to poor information and bureaucracy.

### 4. Youth Resolution & EU Engagement

In March 2025, a delegation of Irish young people travelled to **Brussels** as part of the Peer Civic exchange. There, they presented their **Youth Resolution**—a document summarising national findings and proposing actionable policy priorities—to MEPs and EU officials.

This event marked a milestone in youth-led EU engagement and reinforced the need to connect that dialogue with national-level action.

### 5. About the May 23rd Fireside Conversation

This local event brings the conversation *home*. In an informal, fireside-style setting, Irish youth will present the key findings from their national survey and EU engagement to you—**national decision-makers** and civic leaders.

Each young speaker will focus on one priority aligned with a Youth Goal, followed by a brief question to prompt reflection and response. Your role is not only to share your perspective but to explore **how national policy can respond to youth priorities** in a meaningful and practical way.

## EVENT RUNNING ORDER

<b>Time</b>	<b>Segment Title</b>
<b>6:30 – 6:50pm</b>	Arrival, Greetings and Networking
<b>7:00 – 7:05pm</b>	Welcome and Introductions
<b>7:05 – 7:15pm</b>	Youth Research Findings & Priority Issues
<b>7:15 – 7:25pm</b>	Panel Responses
<b>7:25 – 7:45pm</b>	Audience Q&A on Priority Issues
<b>7:45 – 7:55pm</b>	Open Dialogue
<b>7:55 – 8:00pm</b>	Wrap-up and Commitment to Action
<b>8:00pm</b>	Food, Refreshments and Informal Networking

# Peer Civic – Irish Youth Survey Summary Report

## Analysis of Responses Across 10 European Youth Goals

### Introduction

This report synthesises feedback from young people in Ireland who participated in the Peer Civic Youth Priority Survey. Their responses were mapped to the European Youth Goals represented in the survey, offering a bottom-up perspective on the needs, preferences, and proposed actions for youth-focused EU policy.

### Thematic Findings by Youth Goal

#### 1. Youth Participation in Democratic Life

- **Preferred models for EU engagement** included:
  - *Annual EU Youth Summits*
  - *Youth Advisory Councils*
- **Top priority outcome:**
  - *Greater transparency in how youth input is used in policymaking*
- **Best tools for engagement:**
  - *Workshops on advocacy and civic engagement*

#### 2. Mental Health and Wellbeing

- **Most needed service:**
  - *Free or subsidised individual therapy sessions*
- **Top priority for improvement:**
  - *Reducing wait times for accessing mental health professionals*
- **EU's perceived role:**
  - *Funding mental health programmes across member states*

#### 3. Equality and Inclusion

- **Most impactful initiative:**
  - *Providing financial assistance for disadvantaged youth*
- **Top area to prioritise:**
  - *Support for marginalised or vulnerable youth groups*

#### 4. Quality Learning

- **Highest ranked educational reform:**
  - *Access to quality education and inclusive learning environments*
- **Common request:**
  - *More funding for rural schools and training centres*

- **Popular tools:**
  - *Peer mentoring and civic responsibility projects*

## 5. Gender Equality

- **Most essential support service:**
  - *Counselling and trauma support for survivors of gender-based violence*
- **Key prevention focus:**
  - *Support for organisations combatting gender discrimination*

## 6. Moving Rural Youth Forward

- **Top rural inclusion priority:**
  - *More funding for rural schools and training centres*
- **Most requested infrastructure:**
  - *Improved digital connectivity and public transport*

## 7. Youth and the Digital World

- **Best engagement method:**
  - *Social media campaigns led by youth influencers*
- **Top issue:**
  - *Digital education and critical thinking for navigating misinformation*

## 8. Sustainable Green Europe

- **Most impactful ideas:**
  - *Renewable energy and green tech innovation*
  - *Tree planting and reforestation programmes*
- **Youth involvement preference:**
  - *Hands-on, community-driven environmental projects*

## 9. Quality Employment for All

- **Top employment intervention:**
  - *Skills development through youth-specific programmes*
- **Preferred support method:**
  - *Career guidance and mentorship for job-readiness*

## 10. Youth Organisations and European Programmes

- **Biggest barrier:**
  - *Lack of information about available opportunities*
- **Most popular solution:**
  - *Launching awareness campaigns in schools and youth centres*

- **Support needed:**
  - *Access to grants and financial aid*

## Emerging Hierarchy of Need

From the frequency of top responses, we can identify the most commonly repeated youth priorities:

Need	Frequency (Mentions)
More funding for rural education and training	7
Awareness campaigns in schools/youth centres	7
Building stronger local community networks	6
Funding mental health programmes (EU-wide)	6
Personal skill-building and knowledge	6
Renewable energy and green tech innovation	6
Support for anti-discrimination organisations	6
Transparency in how youth input is used	5
Tree planting & reforestation initiatives	5
Lack of funding & resources (general barrier)	5

This hierarchy reveals a dual focus

- **Structural investment** (education, mental health, digital access, community networks)
- **Communication and access** (awareness, transparency, simplified engagement)

## Conclusion

Irish youth express clear, consistent calls for better access to resources, inclusion in decision-making, and opportunities for growth in education, employment, and wellbeing. Their proposals favour transparency, local connection, and EU-supported equity initiatives. These findings should directly inform future planning and policy formation

## Q&A: Propositions and Questions

### ◆ 1. Quality Learning

**Proposition:** Many young people in rural Ireland face systemic barriers to education due to underfunded local schools and limited training centres.

**Question:** *What national measures can be introduced to ensure sustained investment in rural learning environments and reduce the urban-rural opportunity divide?*

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### ◆ 2. Youth Organisations and EU Programmes

**Proposition:** Lack of awareness and complex processes prevent young people from accessing EU programmes intended to support their growth.

**Question:** *How can Ireland embed EU youth programme awareness into schools and youth services to reach marginalised and rural youth more effectively?*

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### ◆ 3. Moving Rural Youth Forward

**Proposition:** Rural youth feel disconnected from civic, economic, and cultural opportunities due to limited infrastructure and representation.

**Question:** *What policies can better connect rural youth to digital infrastructure, transport, and decision-making spaces at national and EU levels?*

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### ◆ 4. Mental Health and Wellbeing

**Proposition:** Long wait times and limited services are preventing young people from accessing mental health support when they need it most.

**Question:** *What specific steps will be taken to expand youth mental health services in Ireland, particularly therapy access and school-based supports?*

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### ◆ 5. Equality and Inclusion

**Proposition:** Financial vulnerability remains a major barrier to participation, with marginalised young people calling for targeted supports.

**Question:** *Can Ireland commit to youth-focused funding models that prioritise marginalised and disadvantaged young people in local development plans?*

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## ◆ 6. Sustainable Green Europe

**Proposition:** Young people want hands-on involvement in climate action through green innovation and local reforestation projects.

**Question:** *How will youth be directly involved in designing and delivering local green initiatives under Ireland's climate action plan?*

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## ◆ 7. Gender Equality

**Proposition:** Survivors of gender-based violence need more trauma-informed support services and visible political backing for prevention work.

**Question:** *What will be done to increase investment in survivor supports and strengthen the role of youth-led gender equality campaigns?*

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## ◆ 8. Youth Participation in Democratic Life

**Proposition:** Young people feel disconnected from EU decisions and want meaningful structures like youth councils with real influence.

**Question:** *Will Ireland support the formal integration of youth advisory mechanisms within EU and national policymaking structures?*

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## ◆ 9. Quality Employment for All

**Proposition:** Many young people report that they lack the personal development supports needed to transition confidently into employment or business

**Question:** *What can be done to ensure all young people have access to skill-building, mentorship, job-readiness and entrepreneurship programmes?*

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## ◆ 10. Youth and the Digital World

**Proposition:** Misinformation and a lack of critical digital skills are creating trust issues and confusion among young people online.

**Question:** *How can schools and youth groups be better equipped to deliver critical digital education and combat online disinformation?*

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