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Executive Summary – 2021-2022

In its role as the National Implementation Body for the Blue Star Programme, European Movement (EM) Ireland is pleased to submit this report to the Department of Foreign Affairs for the 2021 - 2022 school year. This report has several different goals and objectives, namely:

- *To provide a full review of the eleventh year of the Blue Star Programme to the Department of Foreign Affairs and other stakeholders.*
- *To outline the learning objectives and achievements of the participating schools and pupils.*
- *To analyse the outcomes and accomplishments of the eleventh year of the Programme.*
- *To suggest observations and recommendations for the Programme in the future.*

The Programme benefitted greatly from strong working relationships with the Department of Foreign Affairs, 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. Their engagement is appreciated by EM Ireland and is vital in supporting the National Implementation Body deliver on its Blue Star Programme work.

The idea of the Blue Star Programme is to encourage primary school pupils in Ireland 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 several different themes and concepts, culminating in events to mark Europe Day on or around 9 May each year.

Over the course of the 2021-2022 academic term, 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 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 eleventh year of the Blue Star Programme saw 246 primary schools participate. This, for the fifth year running, was above the agreed SLA target of 220 schools. 69 of those schools were first-time participant schools, striking a good balance between repeat schools doing the Programme year-on-year and the inclusion of new first-time schools. For the eighth year in a row, all 26 counties in Ireland were represented by participating schools on the Programme. There was also an increase in the number of Gaelscoileanna (18) and DEIS schools (41) taking part this year. The Programme was also delighted to honour 13 of this year's schools with a specially commissioned award for participating in the programme for their fifth year.

While challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic were considerably less this term than during Year 9 and Year 10 of the Programme, the increased digital aspects and initiatives of the Programme remained intact – most notably the online 'Element Quizzes', and the VIP 'Pen-Pal' system.

As Ireland commemorates in 2022 the 50th anniversary since voting to join the EEC in a referendum on 10 May 1972, the Blue Star Programme marked this special anniversary along with Europe Day celebrations, by an event in Government Buildings with An Taoiseach Micheal Martin TD and Minister of State for European Affairs, Thomas Byrne TD. Blue Star Programme schools also participated in the 'Ireland EU50' school visits from Government Ministers and EU Ambassadors during Europe Week.

At the time of writing, 145 schools have taken part in the Element Quizzes and/or submitted their Blue Star Programme Report, and therefore successfully completed the Blue Star Programme 2021-2022. Each of these schools have been awarded Blue Star Programme Certificates of Achievement, in both English and Irish, with schools who completed the Programme for the first time receiving an EU flag. Based on the information given by the participating schools, we estimate that approximately 12,000 pupils from across Ireland participated in Year 11.

EM Ireland is delighted to have been the National Implementation Body for this eleventh year and is proud to have played its part in ensuring that the Programme continued through such challenging circumstances. EM Ireland welcomes the opportunity to continue developing the potential of the Programme even further into the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Noelle O Connell".

Noelle O Connell

*CEO of European Movement Ireland
July 2022*

Background to the Programme

Initial Concept

The Blue Star Programme seeks to inform young people in Ireland about Ireland's engagement with Europe. The Programme aims to foster better understanding and knowledge of the European Union among primary school pupils in Ireland through classroom projects and activities. 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 developing 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.

Throughout the year, teachers are required to ensure that the four key areas of the Programme, as well as the Europe Day activities, are carried out through projects and events. This year, for the second time, the online 'Element Quizzes' were also introduced as a new initiative for schools. There were four quizzes, one based on each of the four key areas of the Programme.

To successfully complete the Programme, schools either had to take part in all four of the 'Element Quizzes' and/or to submit a Blue Star Programme Report, detailing all the work they had done throughout the year under each of the four key headings of the Programme. All successful schools are awarded two specially commissioned Blue Star Programme Certificates of Achievement. One of the Certificates of Achievement is in English and the other in Irish, with both signed by Minister of State for European Affairs, Thomas Byrne TD, and CEO of EM Ireland, Noelle O Connell. Schools who successfully finish the Programme for the first time also receive an EU flag, which were kindly provided by the European Commission Representation in Ireland.

Steering Committee

The Blue Star Programme was implemented for the eleventh year by EM Ireland on behalf of the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of State for European Affairs. The Steering Committee, established in the pilot year of the Programme, continued to play an instrumental role in the eleventh 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.

Good partnerships with all Blue Star Programme Steering Committee members were vital for navigating the challenges still posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, such as ensuring that teaching resources could still be sent to schools in October, that the teacher training workshops could still be held, and in holding the virtual Europe Day celebrations. The European Commission Representation in Ireland continued to provide much of the resource material which was extremely important as teaching supports 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.*
- *Officials from the European Commission Representation in Ireland.*
- *Officials from the European Parliament Liaison Office in Ireland.*
- *Officials from the Department of Education.*
- *Members of staff from EM Ireland.*

The Steering Committee convened in August 2021 to launch the new year of the Programme. The full Steering Committee also met formally in February 2022 to discuss the progress of the 2021-2022 year of the Blue Star Programme. Both meetings were held online due to public health guidelines. At these meetings, parameters and targets were agreed, and buy-ins to the project from key stakeholders were 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.



Implementation of Year 11, Year 2021-2022

Work Programme Timetable

EM Ireland divided the work programme for Year 11 into several different phases and implemented changes to the school year calendar to maximise our outcomes, for example, this year we extended the registration phase of the Programme for an extra week.

The timetable below was based on EM Ireland's experience over previous years of successfully running the Blue Star Programme and was agreed and signed off by the Steering Committee. The work programme this year included one significant change from previous years in the form of the introduction of the online Element Quizzes in April.

Dates	Action	Lead
July – August 2021	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Updated Blue Star Programme and EM Ireland websites with latest information, material and graphics. 2. Meeting of the Blue Star Programme Steering Committee took place to agree strategy and implementation plan with the Steering Committee. 3. Incorporated and finalised proposed changes from the Steering Committee. 4. Communicated with all primary schools in Ireland, inviting them to participate in the Programme. 5. Contacted teacher publications and online platforms to publicise the Programme 	<p>EMI</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>EMI</p> <p>EMI/DES</p> <p>EMI</p>
September 2021	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Contacted 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 regarding what's involved in undertaking the Programme. 8. Ongoing media campaign to promote the Programme, through local newspaper articles and radio interviews. 9. Registration of participating schools, collating of responses, and filing of all registration forms. 	<p>EMI/MoS</p> <p>EMI</p> <p>EMI</p> <p>EMI</p>
October 2021	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Sent out resource packs with Programme teaching materials to all participating schools along with the Curriculum Guide. 	<p>EMI/ECR</p>

November 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Collected Media Consent Forms from participating schools. 12. Point of contact for all school queries. 13. Identified 5-Year Achievement Schools. 14. Hosted first online teacher training workshop for participating Blue Star Programme teachers. 	<p>EMI</p> <p>EMI</p> <p>EMI</p> <p>EPLO/EMI</p>
November-December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Began coordinating VIP visits with the office of the Minister of State for European Affairs, Irish MEPs, Oireachtas Members and European Ambassadors, etc. 16. Point of contact for all school queries, including regarding engagement with media and commencement of projects. 17. Began monthly newsletters for participating schools. 	<p>EMI/MoS</p> <p>EMI</p> <p>EMI</p>
January - March 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18. Point of contact for all school queries, including in relation to VIP visits. 19. Mid-Term Meeting of the Blue Star Programme Steering Committee took place. 20. Second online Teacher Training Workshop. 	<p>EMI</p> <p>All</p> <p>EPLO/EMI</p>
April 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21. 'Element Quizzes' launched - one quiz released each week throughout the month of April. 22. Communications push regarding Europe Day on 9 May, including the 'Handshake for Europe' initiative. 23. Contacted Irish MEPs, Oireachtas Members and European Ambassadors encouraging them to make themselves available for VIP visits on and around Europe Day. 24. Point of contact for all school queries, including in relation to Europe Day. 25. Recorded submission of Blue Star Programme Reports. 26. Recorded submission of participation in all four of the 'Element Quizzes'. 	<p>EMI</p> <p>EMI/MoS</p> <p>EMI</p> <p>All</p> <p>EMI</p> <p>EMI</p>

<p>May 2022</p>	<p>27. Europe Day events took place on or around 9 May with the 'Handshake for Europe'.</p> <p>28. Hosted 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.</p> <p>29. Point of contact for all school queries, especially regarding completion of the Programme and submission of Blue Star Programme Reports.</p> <p>30. Recorded submission of Blue Star Programme Reports.</p> <p>31. Recorded submission of participation in all four of the 'Element Quizzes'.</p>	<p>EMI</p> <p>EMI/MoS/ DFA/DoT</p> <p>EMI</p> <p>EMI</p> <p>EMI</p>
<p>June - July 2022</p>	<p>32. Sent out Certificates of Achievement and EU flags to successful schools.</p> <p>33. Point of contact for all school queries, including in relation to completing the Programme.</p> <p>34. Organised trip for teachers to Brussels to visit the European Commission and European Parliament.</p> <p>35. Submitted Report and Review of the Eleventh Year of the Blue Star Programme to the Minister of State for European Affairs and the Department of Foreign Affairs.</p> <p>36. Hosted 'End-of-year' meeting of the Blue Star Programme Steering Committee.</p>	<p>EMI</p> <p>EMI</p> <p>ECR/EPLO/ EMI</p> <p>EMI</p> <p>All</p>

Registration Phase

EM Ireland initiated the marketing and public awareness campaign of the Programme in August 2021. All primary schools in Ireland (approximately 3,200) were contacted about the Blue Star Programme. This was done by sending them an email inviting them to register and participate in the Programme. This campaign included targeted emails to all Gaelscoileanna in the country through Irish. 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* and *Schooldays.ie* to publicise the Programme, some of whom featured articles on 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. MEPs and 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.

Finally, 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. Press content was also made available trí Ghaeilge and issued to a list of Irish language media contacts which led to a series of features on Irish language media throughout the year.

To improve administration of the Blue Star Programme, every school that takes part in the Programme is issued a unique 'BSP Number' when they register. This improves the National Implementation Body's ability to monitor registration and determine which schools are due to receive which materials.

As a result of this structured and coordinated outreach, the 2021-2022 year of the Blue Star Programme reached above the agreed SLA target of 220 schools. Almost one-third of the 246 schools were first-time participant schools, striking a good balance between repeat schools doing the Programme year-on-year and the inclusion of new first-time schools.

For the eighth year in a row, all 26 counties in Ireland were represented, with many achieving their highest ever participation figures to date.

Teaching Resources and Media Consent Forms

Once schools had registered to participate in the eleventh year of the Blue Star Programme, they were provided with a special resource pack with materials kindly supplied by the European Commission Representation in Ireland. These colourful materials included textbooks, wall-charts, EU country guides, maps, story books, and more.

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 offer ideas and tips on projects pupils can undertake, and guidance for teachers regarding how best to support the pupils and integrate the Programme into their curriculum. These resource packs and curriculum guides were sent out to all participating schools on Monday 18 October 2021, giving teachers ample time to begin the Blue Star Programme work as early in the school year as possible.

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

In 2021-2022, EM Ireland continued to update the designated Blue Star 'Corner' section on the website specifically for 'Digital Teaching Resources'. This was as a result of our experience of implementing the Programme during the Covid-19 pandemic, we wanted to ensure that the Programme had a sufficient level of digital resources. This new page of the website provided teachers with access to all the necessary teaching resources such as downloadable activity worksheets, wordsearches, recipes for pupils to try at home, PDF versions of the different textbooks, quizzes and much more. These new resources also included a range of eight activity worksheets which correspond closely with the key learning objectives of the Programme, two for each element. Irish language versions of all eight activity worksheets are also available, having been translated by the team.

Participating teachers needed a password to access the 'Digital Teaching Resources' and the Blue Star 'Corner' pages of the website and this gave exclusivity to participating schools. The additional resources, conceived by the team, provides flexibility to teachers and pupils and is adaptable for schools of different levels of advantage and Gaelscoileanna. According to teachers' feedback, the activity worksheets were very easily accessible and greatly aided teachers in allowing them to complete their Blue Star 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. This year, 49 schools engaged with the Blue Star Programme account on Twitter, an increase from previous years. Further to this, EM Ireland responded to school queries daily by phone and through the dedicated email address: bluestar@europeanmovement.ie.

The Blue Star Programme also issued Media Consent Forms when schools registered, to allow for 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.



Shanahoe NS with their 'Let's Explore Europe' one of the Blue Star Programme teaching resources.

VIP Visits & Cross Programme Integration

VIP visits are 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 teach pupils about the institutional section of the Programme.

As a result of the positive feedback from Blue Star Programme teachers in 2020-2021, participating schools in 2021-2022 were given the option to engage with VIP visitors through three options: in-person visits, virtual visit, or utilising the questionnaire template to create 'VIP Pen-Pals'. All three options were popular with 49 VIP visits occurring throughout the eleventh year of the programme. The 'VIP Pen-Pal' initiative allowed schools to reach out to Ambassadors and MEPs by sending them written questions from their pupils based on their project work. Coordinating teachers were

provided with a special Blue Star Programme questionnaire template form as well as the contact details of all Irish MEPs and EU Ambassadors.

Blue Star Programme schools were asked to submit a form when a visit, whether virtual, in-person, or through the Pen-Pal system, took place.



Seán Kelly MEP visiting Loughfouder N.S., in person VIP Visit.



Minister of State Anne Rabbitte TD and Diplomat Josianne Farrugia, Deputy Head at the Consul of Malta visiting Scoil Eanna as part of Europe Week.



French Restaurateur reading a book in French to pupils in Kildare Place School.

This year, EM Ireland continued to encourage schools to broaden the scope of potential VIP visits to include student teachers from other EU countries through the *eTwinning* programme, as well as the involvement of past pupils and parents whose work is related to Europe. In the future, EM Ireland would encourage schools to also explore the potential for such visits to facilitate foreign language learning through presentations from native speakers from other EU countries.

EM Ireland is also 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.

In addition, EM Ireland have linked with Dr. Laura K. Taylor, School of Psychology, University College Dublin for the project: *Generation EU: European Identity and Children's Well-being and Social Inclusion in Europe*. As part of this collaboration, the Blue Star Programme is providing access to the annual reports and quizzes for an initial pilot research study by Dr. Taylor and her team. Dr. Taylor will share preliminary research findings in late 2022.

Blue Star Programme Content

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*

While 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 2021-2022.

1. Historical

For this module, pupils picked an event, time or person pivotal to European history and completed a project on this topic. These projects were researched in books, Blue Star Programme resources and child friendly search engines. Projects focused on a range of areas including the formation of the European Union, World War II, Women in History, Ancient Greece, the Renaissance, the Berlin Wall and the Vikings, 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. Pupils completed the 'Historical Element Quiz' which is part of a wider method of completion to the Blue Star Programme, introduced in 2021.



Pupils from Rush National School using their Blue Star Programme resources to learn about European History.

2. Geographical

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

This section of the Programme was particularly successful as pupils with links to other European countries were encouraged to share their 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 sometimes invited to present to classes virtually or in person 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. Additionally, pupils completed the 'Geography Element Quiz'.



European Country Fact Files from pupil from St Colman's NS.

3. Cultural and Creative

In this module, pupils explored the music, food, literature, culture and art of Europe. Classroom activities included preparing and tasting food from different European countries and learning about the cultural differences between their lives and pupils in other European countries.

This module led to some interesting and high-quality submissions ranging from learning basic phrases in European languages to pupils' excellent interpretations of European art, including that of Pablo Picasso and Leonardo da Vinci. Feedback from teachers was very positive regarding this module. Several participants said that the Cultural and Creative element allowed teachers to include the whole school in the Blue Star Programme and provided an opportunity for pupils from other European backgrounds 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. Pupils also completed the 'Cultural and Creative Element Quiz'.



Pupils' artwork inspired by Austrian artist, Friedensreich Hundertwasser from Mullingar Educate Together National School

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.

Pupils also engaged with public representatives to learn about European politics. Several Irish MEPs, Oireachtas Members and European Ambassadors visited schools to speak about Europe and answer pupils' questions on their work. Schools also utilised the 'Pen-Pal' initiative where pupils sent questions their MEPs, Oireachtas Members and European Ambassadors, to complete this section of the Programme. Similar to the previous three elements, participating pupils also completed the 'Institutional Element Quizzes'.



Frances Fitzgerald MEP, Emer Higgins TD and Vicky Casserly Councillor on their visit to Griffeen Valley Educate Together

Europe Week Celebrations

To successfully complete the Blue Star Programme, all participating schools are also asked to mark the celebration of Europe Day. Over the past 11 years of the Programme, there have been many wonderful Europe Day events, such as food fairs, school Eurovision competitions, art exhibitions inspired by famous European artists, and so much more.

On 9 May 2022 we encouraged teachers to mark Europe Day and schools did this by holding events such as the 'Handshake for Europe'. The traditional 'Handshake for Europe' symbolises the solidarity among European citizens and celebrates the diversity of a strong and inclusive Union. Schools also held a variety of other events, such as 'Dress-Up Days' where pupils were asked to dress up in European-themed outfits.



Pupils at St Mary's BNS celebrating Europe Day/.

Europe Day and Ireland EU50 Celebration at Government Buildings

In celebration of Europe Day and a special commemoration this year of the 50th anniversary of Ireland's vote to join the then European Communities (EC) in May 1972, pupils from St Andrew's National School, Curragha, Co. Meath were invited to visit to Government Buildings. The pupils met An Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD and Minister of State for European Affairs, Thomas Byrne TD; Eimear Ní Bhroin, European Commission Representation in Ireland; European Movement Ireland CEO, Noelle O Connell and Blue Star Programme Manager, Ryan Levis to celebrate 9 May, Europe Day.



Pupils from St Andrew's NS, Currigha with An Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD, Minister of State for European Affairs, Thomas Byrne TD and Blue Star Steering Committee Representatives, celebrating Europe Day and Ireland's 50th Anniversary of voting to join the EEC.

Ireland EU50 Blue Star Programme Visits

Europe Week and 'Ireland EU50' celebrations took place throughout the week of 9-13 May in primary schools across the country with many Government Ministers and EU country Ambassadors visiting Blue Star Programme schools. During Europe Week over 30 schools were visited by Government Ministers and EU country Ambassadors.



French Ambassador to Ireland visiting Scoil Nioclais, Cork to mark the 50th Anniversary of Ireland voting to join the EEC.

Assessment

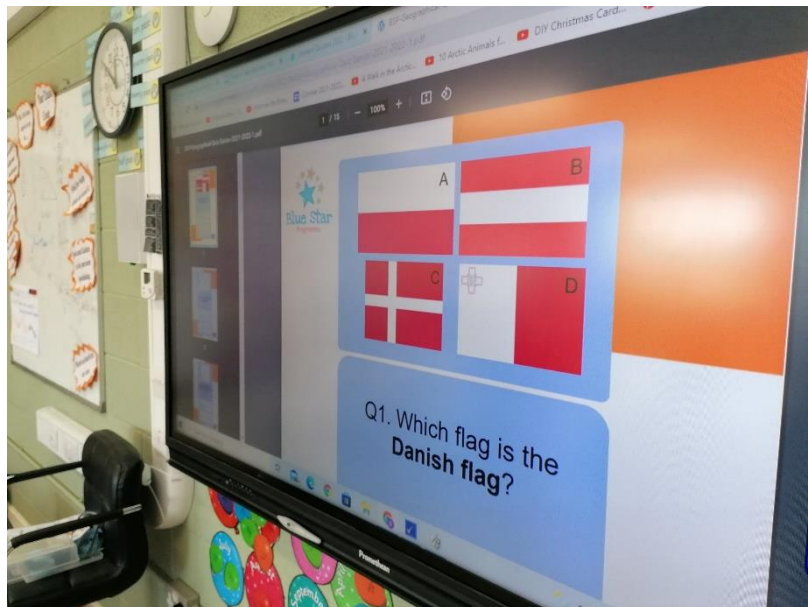
At the outset of the Blue Star Programme 2021/2022, the Steering Committee agreed the criteria for assessing each school's project submissions. The following process was agreed to be the fairest and most suitable for evaluating the submissions received:

- Schools were asked to take part in the 'Element Quizzes', covering the four key elements of the Programme - History, Geography, Culture and Creativity, and Institutional - and schools had to complete all four quizzes to be deemed to have successfully completed the Programme.
- Participants were asked to send a Blue Star Programme 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.
- These submissions were reviewed and then assessed.
- Two Blue Star Programme Certificates of Achievement - one in English and the other in Irish - were awarded to schools who submitted these Blue Star Programme Reports to the satisfaction of the team.
- Participants who successfully completed the Blue Star Programme for the first time received an EU flag.

Schools were given from 28 March - 13 May, to allow time for the Easter school break, to complete all four quizzes. Participants were also given the flexibility to decide for themselves how and when they completed the quizzes during this time period.

There were Junior and Senior versions of the quizzes so that pupils from all age groups could participate. The quizzes could be played online on an interactive platform. Alternatively, they were also available to download and print as a worksheet. The quizzes were available in both English and Irish. This meant that the quizzes catered to all levels of pupils and to the differing needs of schools.

All teachers that completed the Programme through their participation in the four Element Quizzes were still encouraged to submit a Blue Star Programme Report as well - because the report provided a means of giving extra details and feedback regarding their work for the year. However, this was not compulsory.



Geography Element Quiz from 2021/2022.

At the time of writing, 145 schools have been deemed to have successfully completed the Blue Star Programme 2021-2022, either through their participation in all four of the Element Quizzes and/or through their submission of a Blue Star Programme Report. 2021-2022 saw the highest ever percentage in terms of the number of schools that completed the Blue Star Programme.

5-Year Achievement Award

During Year 11, we were delighted to honour the 13 schools who reached the five-year milestone this year with a specially commissioned 5-Year Achievement Award trophy. An initiative of EM Ireland since 2016, the 5-Year Achievement Award has become an important part of the Programme in rewarding schools which participate year-on-year. Next year, there will potentially be 56 more schools eligible to receive the 5-Year Achievement Award.

The 13 schools that received the 5-Year Achievement Award for 2021-2022 were:

Ballyvaughan NS, Clare
Ballyhass NS, Cork
Knockskeagh NS, Cork
St. Patricks' BNS, Donegal
Holy Family NS, Dublin
Scoil Náisiúnta Bhaile Chláir na Gaillimhe, Galway
St Mary's Boys N.S., Limerick
Kilbride National School, Meath
Realt na Mara BNS, Meath
Ballyfeeney NS, Roscommon
St. Paul's School, Castlerea, Roscommon
Mullingar Educate Together NS, Westmeath
Gorey Central School, Wexford

Participating Schools 2021/2022

Holy Family GNS, Carlow
Myshall NS, Carlow
Rathoe National School, Carlow
St Brigid's NS, Carlow
Butlersbridge NS, Cavan
Carrigbruisse NS, Cavan
Killeshandra NS (C of I), Cavan
Mullahoran NS, Cavan
Scoil Mhuire NS, Cavan
St Brigids NS, Cavan
St Michael's NS Cliffferna, Cavan
St Patrick's NS, Cavan
Ballyvaughan NS, Clare
Bansha NS, Clare
Barefield NS, Clare
Bodyke NS, Clare
Clooney NS, Clare
Clouna NS, Clare
Dromindoorra NS, Clare
Inch National School, Clare
Scoil Na Maighdine Mhuire , Clare
St Cronnan's NS, Clare
Ardfield NS, Cork
Ballyhass NS, Cork
Ballymoney National School , Cork
Bweeng National School, Cork
Carrigaline Educate Together NS, Cork

Carrigboy National School, Cork
Coomhola NS, Cork
Drimoleague National School, Cork
Dromclough National School, Cork
Gaelscoil Dhroichead na Banndan , Cork
Gaelscoil Mhainsitir na Córann, Cork
Gaelscoil Uí Drisceoil , Cork
Glenahulla NS, Cork
Kealkill NS, Cork
Knockskeagh NS, Cork
Meelin NS, Cork
School of the Divine Child , Cork
Scoil Bhríde Eglantine, Cork
Scoil Maria Assumpta, Cork
Scoil Mhuire agus Eoin, Cork
Scoil Náisiúnta Inis Chléire , Cork
Scoil Naomh Eltin , Cork
Scoil Naomh Iosaf, Riverstown , Cork
Scoil Nioclais, Cork
Shanballymore National School , Cork
St Colmans Boys National School, Cork
St James' NS, Cork
St Joseph's GNS, Cork
St Michael's NS, Cork
Whitegate National School , Cork
Ayr Hill NS, Donegal
Ballymore National School, Donegal
Cloughfin NS, Donegal
Drumfad NS, Donegal
Robertson NS, Donegal
Saint Patrick's BNS , Donegal
Scoil Mhuire, Donegal
Scoil Na Croise Naofa, Donegal
SN Ghort a Choirce , Donegal
St Mary's NS Ardara, Donegal
St Mary's NS Castlefinn, Donegal
Trentagh National School, Donegal
Ballyowen Meadows Special School , Dublin
Dublin 7 Educate Together, Dublin
Gardiner Street Convent, Dublin
Glasnevin NS, Dublin
Griffen Valley ETNS, Dublin
Holmpatrick NS, Dublin
Holy Family National School, Dublin
Holy Family School for the Deaf, Dublin
John Scotus NS, Dublin
Kildare Place School, Dublin
Lucan Community National School , Dublin
Milverton National School, Dublin
Naul National School, Dublin
Our Lady Immaculate JNS , Dublin
Pelletstown Educate Together NS, Dublin
Rathmichael School, Dublin
Rush National School, Dublin
Scoil Eoin, Dublin
St Andrews N.S. , Dublin
St Augustine's School, Dublin
St Christopher's PS, Dublin
St Laurence's NS, Dublin

St Louis Infant School, Dublin
St Patrick's BNS, Dublin
St Raphael's National School, Dublin
St Vincents Girls, Dublin
Sutton Park Junior School, Dublin
Buaile Beag NS, Galway
Claregalway National School, Galway
Creggs National School, Galway
Gardenfield NS, Galway
Kilconly NS, Galway
Scoil an Linbh Íosa , Galway
Scoil Bhriocáin, Galway
Scoil Eanna, Galway
Scoil Mhuire Naofa, Galway
Scoil na Maighdine Muire gan Smál, Galway
Scoil Pádraig Naofa, Galway
St Annin's National School, Galway
St Brendan's NS, Galway
St Cuanas, Galway
The Glebe NS, Galway
Williamstown National School, Galway
Castledrum NS, Kerry
Dromclough NS, Kerry
Gaelscoil Aogáin, Kerry
Glenflesk NS, Kerry
Kilconly NS, Kerry
Kilcummin NS, Kerry
Knocknagoshel NS, Kerry
Loughfouder NS, Kerry
Muire Gan Smál NS, Kerry
Raheen National School, Kerry
Scoil Chaitlín Naofa, Kerry
Scoil Chorp Chríost , Kerry
Scoil Mhuire Brosna, Kerry
Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal, Kerry
Scoil Náisiúnta Léana Mhóir , Kerry
Spa National School, Kerry
St. Oliver's NS, Kerry
St. Oliver's NS Killarney, Kerry
Two Mile CNS, Kerry
Rathmore NS, Kildare
SN Colmcill Naofa, Kildare
St Conleths Infants School, Kildare
Bunscoil McAuley Rice, Kilkenny
Conahy National School, St.Colman's , Kilkenny
Piltown National School, Kilkenny
Scoil Naomh Móin Ruadh, Kilkenny
St Michael's NS, Kilkenny
St Patrick's NS, Kilkenny
St. Beacon's NS, Kilkenny
Camross NS, Laois
Gaelscoil Shlí Dála, Laois
Holy Family Junior School, Laois
Paddock NS, Laois
Saint Colmcille's National School Errill, Laois
Scoil Fionntáin Naofa, Laois
Shanganamore National School , Laois
St Paul's NS, Laois
Tobar an Léinn NS, Laois

Four Masters NS, Leitrim
Gaelscoil Chluainín, Leitrim
Gaelscoil Liatroma, Leitrim
Ahane National School, Limerick
Askeaton Senior National School, Limerick
Glengurt NS, Limerick
Kilbehenny NS, Limerick
Knocklong NS, Limerick
Nicker NS, Limerick
Patrickswell NS, Limerick
Scoil An Spioraid Naoimh, Limerick
Scoil Iosaf, Limerick
Scoil Naomh Iosef Dromcollogher, Limerick
St Joseph's National School, Limerick
St Marys BNS, Limerick
St Nicholas' NS, Limerick
Lanesborough Primary School, Longford
Scoil Samhthann, Longford
Monksland National School, Louth
Rampark NS, Louth
Scoil Aonghusa, Louth
St Brigid's and St Patrick's NS, Louth
St Peter's National School, Louth
Aghamore NS, Mayo
Carn NS, Mayo
Carramore NS, Mayo
Crimlin NS, Mayo
Facefield NS, Mayo
Foxford NS, Mayo
Gaelscoil na gCeithre Maol, Mayo
Midfield National School, Mayo
Scoil Phádraig, Mayo
St Aidans NS, Mayo
St Colmans NS, Mayo
Tavneena NS, Mayo
Ashbourne CNS, Meath
Bunscoil Buachaillí Réalt na Mara, Meath
Kilbride National School, Meath
Robbinstown NS, Meath
St Andrew's NS, Meath
St Mary's Special School, Meath
St Patrick's NS, Meath
St Peter's NS, Meath
Deravoy National School, Monaghan
Gaelscoil Ultain, Monaghan
St Enda's National School, Monaghan
St Patrick's NS Clara, Monaghan
Gaelscoil na Laochra, Offaly
Scoil Mhuire agus Chormaic, Offaly
Scoil Mhuire Naofa, Offaly
Shinrone NS, Offaly
Athleague National School, Roscommon
Ballyfeeney NS, Roscommon
Brideswell National School, Roscommon
Brusna NS, Roscommon
Clooneyquinn NS, Roscommon
Cloverhill NS, Roscommon
Croghan NS, Roscommon
Our Lady of Mount Carmel NS, Roscommon

St Patricks NS, Roscommon
St Paul's BNS, Castlerea, Roscommon
St. Mary's Primary School, Strokestown , Roscommon
Tibohine NS, Roscommon
St Edwards NS, Sligo
St Teresa's NS, Sligo
Ballinaclough NS, Tipperary
Cloneen National School, Tipperary
Our Lady of Mercy NS, Tipperary
Scoil Íosagáin, Upperchurch NS , Tipperary
Sisters of Charity, Scoil Mhuire na nAingeal , Tipperary
St Mary's Convent Primary School, Tipperary
Waterford Educate Together, Waterford
Waterpark National School, Waterford
Dalystown National School, Westmeath
Drumraney NS, Westmeath
Emper NS, Westmeath
Mullingar Educate Together NS, Westmeath
Rosemount NS / Kilcrumreragh N.S, Westmeath
Scoil Phádraig Naofa, Dysart NS, Westmeath
St. Thomas' NS, Westmeath
Ballyoughter NS, Wexford
Boolavogue NS, Wexford
Bunscoil Ris, Wexford
Danescastle NS, Wexford
Davidstown PS, Wexford
Gorey Central School, Wexford
Gusserane NS, Wexford
Kilrane NS, Wexford
Piercestown National School , Wexford
Rathangan NS, Wexford
Scoil Mhuire, Horeswood, Wexford
Scoil Na Maighdine Muire (Ballyduff NS), Wexford
Scoil Naomh Maadhóg , Wexford
St Iberius NS, Wexford
St. Garvan's NS, Wexford
St. Joseph's NS, Wexford
Ballycoog NS, Wicklow
Carysfort NS, Wicklow
Gaelscoil na gCloch Liath , Wicklow
Gaelscoil Ui Cheadaigh, Wicklow
St Saviour's NS , Wicklow

Mentoring and Support

As in previous years, EM Ireland carried out a significant role in mentoring and supporting all the participating teachers and the wider school community during the 2021-2022 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) throughout

the year. All EM Ireland staff members were regularly briefed on the Programme, to ensure that queries could be dealt with efficiently and accurately by the whole EM Ireland team.

Other key elements of EM Ireland's mentoring and support role were providing advice and support to help schools continue their Programme work during the school closures from January – March, ensuring that schools were ready for their Europe Day celebrations, and providing guidance in relation to submitting Blue Star Programme Reports and successfully completing the Programme.

Teacher Training Workshops

It was agreed among stakeholders at the Steering Committee meeting in July that there would be two interactive workshops for teachers taking part in the Programme – one in November and one in January. Based on our learnings from the Covid-19 pandemic both teacher training workshops were held online. The European Parliament Liaison Office in Ireland kindly offered to still support the online workshops and arranged for a MEP guest speaker to address the teachers.

The first interactive workshop was held on Wednesday 17 November and 38 teachers registered to attend teachers, who joined the workshop from across the country, were addressed by officials from the European Parliament and Deirdre Clune MEP. Staff from EM Ireland then 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. Teachers were given the opportunity to ask any questions that they had about the Programme and to share ideas for projects with other teachers in attendance.

The second workshop was held on Wednesday, 26 January and 34 participating teachers registered for this workshop. Again, the participants came from all corners of the country. The fact that the workshop was online made it much more accessible to teachers from all 26 counties.

As in previous years, the workshops were greatly 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. Teachers also gave positive feedback regarding the timing of the workshop – it suited them better to have it on a weekday evening. On this basis, EM Ireland, as the National Implementation Body, would recommend that the teacher training workshops stay in an online format going forward so that the most possible number of participating teachers are able to benefit from it.

Brussels Trip

The annual trip to Brussels is always a standout event for participating Blue Star Programme teachers and it provides a fantastic insight into the work of both the European Commission and European Parliament. The trip is kindly sponsored by the European Commission Representation. This knowledge really stands to teachers when participating in future years of the Blue Star Programme. It offers them the opportunity to interact with Irish MEPs and other VIP guests on the day. Teachers always express the positive experience they have on this trip and gather useful information to implement into the classroom when teaching about the EU.

Participating teachers gained a lot of information from the day by attending a range of interactive and engaging sessions on topics including Internet Safety for Kids, teaching resources and opportunities available to teachers through the Jean Monet Action and Erasmus+. A particular highlight of the trip was the question-and-answer session with Commissioner Mairead McGuinness who gave an insightful presentation into her work while also allowing questions and comments

from participants. The teachers also got the opportunity to meet with 7 Irish MEPs and find out about their role in the European Parliament.

The full outline of the trip can be seen below:

DATE	TIME	 
Monday 11 July	15.15	Official advice is to arrive at Dublin Airport Terminal 2 Departures 3.5 hours in advance of the flight time if checking in a bag. Please ensure you have checked-in online in advance and have a printed or digital copy of your boarding pass. For checked bags, go to the Aer Lingus self-service kiosks to tag your bag and bring it to the bag drop point. Meet the group airside at the boarding gate.
	18.45	Depart Dublin with Aer Lingus EI 638
	21.30 (Brussels time!)	Arrive Brussels (Zaventem airport) Bus transfer to hotel: NH Brussels EU Berlaymont
Tuesday 12 July	08.45	Meet in Hotel foyer after breakfast *Please <u>bring Passport</u> for security/access*
	09.00	Depart Hotel and walk to CCAB conference centre
	09:30 – 11.45	Info sessions hosted by the European Commission
	12.15 – 14.00	Lunch hosted by the European Commission
	15.00 – 17.30	Info sessions & meeting with Commissioner McGuinness at the Berlaymont.
	Evening	FREE
	Wednesday 13 July	08.15
	08.30	Depart Hotel and walk to House of European History
	09.45 – 13.00	Visit European Parliament and meet Irish MEPs
	13.00 - 14.00	Lunch hosted by the European Parliament
	14.30 - 15.30	Visit Irish Permanent Representation to the EU, Rue Froissart
	17.00	Depart Hotel for airport Please ensure you have checked in online & have your boarding pass.
	20.10	Depart Brussels (Zaventem) with Ryanair FR 1457
	20.45 (Irish time)	Arrive Dublin airport, Terminal 1

The Blue Star Programme's 2021-2022 teachers Brussels trip was a success with many teachers expressing the positive experience they had.



Teachers taking part in the Blue Star Programme trip to Brussels outside the European Commission.

Clár na Réalta Goirme agus an Ghaeilge

Maidir le tacaíocht a sholáthar do gach scoil atá ag déanamh an Chlár, táimid an-bhródúil i nGluaiseacht na hEorpa in Éirinn as a bheith in ann Clár na Réalta Goirme a chur ar fáil go hiomlán trí Ghaeilge chomh maith leis an mBéarla. Teastaíonn uainn go mbeidh gach scoil in Éirinn in ann páirt a ghlacadh go cothrom sa Chlár, na gaelscoileanna go léir san áireamh. Ina theannta sin, mar theanga oifigiúil de chuid an Aontais Eorpaigh, tuigimid go bhfuil sé ríthábhachtach go bpléitear agus go n-úsáidtear an Ghaeilge in aon chomhrá faoi thodhchaí na hEorpa, agus Éire mar chuid de – d’ionadaíocht na n-Éireannach san Eoraip mar chuid de stráitéis úr an rialtais i leith poist san AE agus i réimsí éagsúla eile.

Mar sin, i rith na bliana arís chuireamar leis an rannóg iomlán de shuíomh gréasáin an Chláir atá ar fáil i nGaeilge (<https://www.bluestarprogramme.ie/clar-na-realta-goirme/>), roinneamar eolas trí Ghaeilge go minic faoin gClár, chuireamar achmhainní uile an Chláir ar fáil i nGaeilge, chuireamar nuachtlitir an Chláir amach go dátheangach agus bhí ár bhfoireann i gcónaí ar fáil chun gach teagmháil/cumarsáid a dhéanamh le scoileanna trí Ghaeilge. Bhí an rogha ag scoileanna rannpháirteacha an Fhoirm Clárúcháin, an Tuarascáil Deiridh, Foirm Toilithe Meán agus na foirmeacha go léir eile a líonadh amach go hiomlán trí Ghaeilge más é sin a rogha freisin. An bhliain seo, chuireamar na ceithre Trath na gCeist Eilimint agus na h-ocht Bileoga Oibre nua ar fáil i nGaeilge chomh maith leis an mBéarla.

Communications & PR

PR & Media Coverage

The Blue Star Programme 2021-2022 received significant coverage across local, regional and national print and broadcast media, in both English and the Irish language 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.

Most notably, *RTÉ News2Day* and *Nuacht TG4* featured a segment on the Blue Star Programme commemorating Europe Day and the 50th Anniversary of Ireland voting to join the EEC (Ireland EU50). As part of this recording, *RTÉ News2day* and *Nuacht TG4* interviewed pupils from St. Andrews', Curragha at Government Buildings about their experience of the Blue Star Programme. Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD and Minister Thomas Byrne TD also met the school that day and spoke to *RTÉ News2day* and *Nuacht TG4* about the importance of the Blue Star Programme.

Furthermore, during the registration phase of the Programme, European Movement Ireland ran a broad publicity campaign across our social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. We received several high-profile retweets, shares and mentions from Irish public representatives and media accounts, which played an important role in further promoting the Programme.

Throughout the school year, we then encouraged schools to use social media, most notably Twitter, to highlight their participation in the Programme and to promote their Europe Day activities. EM Ireland were pleased to see a high level of online engagement regarding the Programme as more and more schools use such platforms.

This year, EM Ireland also issued a press release to highlight the celebration on Europe Day and the visits from Government Ministers and EU Ambassadors to primary schools across the country to celebrate Ireland EU50. This press release was issued to all local and national media contacts on the morning of the 9 May.

Blue Star Programme Social Media and Website

During the 2021-2022 school year, we continued using the Blue Star Programme Twitter account @bluestarprog. Given the increase in social media activity among primary schools, the dedicated Twitter account gives schools a direct contact to share their work and thoughts as they work through the Blue Star Programme.



Blue Star Programme

@BlueStarProg

The Blue Star Programme is an education initiative for primary school students across Ireland. Let's get creative about Europe! ❤️🌟

📍 Ireland 🔗 bluestarprogramme.ie 📅 Joined July 2018

From January to July 2022, the Blue Star Programme's Twitter account following increased by approximately 15%, from 494 followers to 574. As the National 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.

As with previous years, the Blue Star Programme's Twitter reach greatly increased during the month of May due to the 2021-2022 Europe Week celebrations with over 47.8k impressions throughout the month of May.

Media Coverage Snapshot

Title	Channel / Publication	Medium	Topic	Date	Link (where available)
Primary school pupils encouraged to 'learn and think' about Europe with new Blue Star Programme	Meath Chronicle	Local Newspaper	Opening of school registration period	31-Aug	https://www.meathchronicle.ie/2021/08/31/primary-school-pupils-encouraged-to-learn-and-think-about-europe-with-new-blue-star-programme/
Blue Star Programme now open to Longford primary schools	Longford Leader	Local Newspaper	Opening of school registration period	31-Aug	https://www.longfordleader.ie/news/national-news/660196/blue-star-programme-now-open-to-longford-primary-schools.html
Blue Star Programme now open to Kilkenny primary schools	Kilkenny People	Local Newspaper	Opening of school registration period	31-Aug	https://www.kilkennypeople.ie/news/home/660178/blue-star-programme-now-open-to-kilkenny-primary-schools.html
Kerry Schools Invited to Take Part in Blue Star Programme	Tralee Today	Local Newspaper	Opening of school registration period	31-Aug	http://traleetoday.ie/kerry-schools-invited-to-take-part-in-blue-star-programme/
Registration for the 2021-2022 Blue Star Programme now open to Louth & Meath primary schools!	LMFM	Local Radio Station	Opening of school registration period	31-Aug	https://www.lmfm.ie/news/scene-and-heard/registration-for-the-2021-2022-blue-star-programme-now-open-to-louth-and-meath-primary-schools/
Blue Star Programme now open to Laois primary schools	Leinster Express	Local Newspaper	Opening of school registration period	31-Aug	https://www.leinsterexpress.ie/news/schools/660324/blue-star-programme-now-open-to-laois-primary-schools.html
Chatroom	CRC FM	Local Radio Station	Opening of school registration period	01-Sep	
The Chat Show	Connemara FM	Local Radio Station	Opening of school registration period	01-Sep	https://www.connemarafm.com/podcasts-for-connemara-community-radio/
Blue Star Programme now open to Louth primary schools	Dundalk Democrat	Local Newspaper	Opening of school registration period	01-Sep	https://www.dundalkdemocrat.ie/news/local-news/660450/blue-star-programme-now-open-to-louth-primary-schools.html

Blue Star Programme	Seomra Ranga	Teachers' Website	Opening of school registration period	01-Sep	https://www.seomraranga.com/2021/09/blue-star-programme-4/
Kerry primary schools urged to register for Blue Star Programme	Radio Kerry	Local Radio Station	Opening of school registration period	02-Sep	https://www.radiokerry.ie/news/kerry-primary-schools-urged-to-register-for-blue-star-programme-249315
Registration for Blue Star Programme open to Clare primary schools	Clare Herald	Local Newspaper	Opening of school registration period	05-Sep	http://clareherald.com/2021/09/registration-for-blue-star-programme-open-to-clare-primary-schools-27340/
Blas na Cathrach	Raidió na Life	Local Radio Station	Opening of school registration period	07-Sep	
Town Talk	Dundalk FM	Local Radio Station	Opening of school registration period	09-Sep	
Northside Today	Near FM	Local Radio Station	Opening of school registration period	09-Sep	https://nearfm.ie/podcast/?cat=44
Bladhaire	Raidió na Gaeltachta	National Radio Station	Opening of school registration period	10-Sep	https://www.rte.ie/radio/rnag/clips/22003849/
Registration for the 2021-2022 Blue Star Programme now open to Waterford primary schools!	Dungarvan Leader	Local Newspaper	Opening of school registration period	03-Sep	
EU and Me: Meet Our Young Europeans - September 23rd, 2021	Radio Kerry podcasts	Local Radio Station	Blue Star Programme Element	23-Sep	https://www.radiokerry.ie/podcasts/kerry-today/eu-and-me-meet-our-young-europeans-september-23rd-2021-251989
EU and me podcast	Radio Kerry podcasts	Local Radio Station	Blue Star Programme Element	18-Nov	https://www.radiokerry.ie/podcasts/kerry-today/eu-me-episode-3-children-quiz-the-experts-on-climate-change-geography-november-18th-2021-258944
EU and me podcast	Radio Kerry podcasts	Local Radio Station	Blue Star Programme Element	09-Dec	https://www.radiokerry.ie/podcasts/kerry-today/eu-and-me-episode-4-culture-and-creativity-december-9th-2021-261688
Scoil Fionntáin Naofa, Shanahoe accepting applications for Junior Infants 2022-2023	Laois Today	Local Newspaper	Participation in the Programme	13-Jan	https://www.laoistoday.ie/2022/01/13/scoil-fionntain-naofa-shanahoe-accepting-applications-for-junior-infants-2022-2023/
Mention - Tony Murphy, ECA	Kildare Street	Government Website	Education and the EU	19-Jan	https://www.kildarestreet.com/committees/?id=2022-01-19a.88

Why aren't we teaching pupils more about the EU?	The Irish Times	National Newspaper	Education and the EU	25-Jan	https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/why-arent-we-teaching-pupils-more-about-the-eu-14776574
EU and me podcast	Radio Kerry podcasts	Local Radio Station	Blue Star Programme Element	27-Jan	https://www.radiokerry.ie/podcasts/kerry-today/eu-and-me-episode-5-all-about-how-eu-institutions-work-january-27th-2022-267377
'Teaching pupils more about the EU'	The Irish Times	National Newspaper	Education and the EU	30-Jan	https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/letters/teaching-pupils-more-about-the-eu-14789091
We need to do more to educate our primary and secondary students about the EU - O'Reilly	FineGael.ie	Political Party Website	Education and the EU	02-Feb	https://www.finegael.ie/we-need-to-do-more-to-educate-our-primary-and-secondary-students-about-the-eu-oreilly/
Wolfhill Ns - The Small School with A Big Heart - Now Enrolling	Laois Nationalist	Local Newspaper	Participation in the Programme	03-Feb	https://laois-nationalist.ie/2022/02/03/wolf-hill-ns-the-small-school-with-a-big-heart-now-enrolling/
Department of Education and Skills School Curriculum	Kildare Street (Dáil Minutes)	Government Website		03-Feb	
EU and me podcast	Radio Kerry	Local Radio Station	Blue Star Programme Element	24-Feb	https://www.radiokerry.ie/podcasts/kerry-today/eu-and-me-episode-6-shaping-europes-future-february-24th-2022-271555
Lanesboro pupils quiz politicians about Ukraine	Longford Leader	Local Newspaper	Participation in the Programme	28-Mar	https://www.longfordleader.ie/news/local-news/773224/lanesboro-pupils-quiz-politicians-about-ukraine.html?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter
Fada is Fairsing	Raidió na Life	Local Radio Station	Participation in the Programme	29-Mar	https://soundcloud.com/rnl/fada-is-fairsing-19u-marta-2022?utm_source=clipboard&utm_campaign=wtshare&utm_medium=widget&utm_content=https%253A%252F%252Fsoundcloud.com%252F%252Ffada-is-fairsing-19u-marta-2022
Nuacht TG4	TG4	National TV Programme	Europe Day and EU50	09-May	https://www.tg4.ie/en/player/categories/news-stories/play/?pid=6305841293112&title=Nuacht%20TG4&series=Nuacht%20TG4&genre=Currai%20Reatha&pcode=627024
News2Day	RTÉ	National TV Programme	Europe Day and EU50	09-May	https://www.rte.ie/player/series/news2day-e75/SI0000001210?epguid=IH000412428

Lithuanian Ambassador to Visit Schools in Laois Today - Monday	Laois Nationalist	Local Newspaper	EU50 VIP Visits	09-May	https://laois-nationalist.ie/2022/05/09/lithuanian-ambassador-to-visit-schools-in-laois-today-monday/
Spanish Ambassador Celebrates Europe Day in Donegal	Donegal Daily	Local Newspaper	EU50 VIP Visits	09-May	https://www.donegaldaily.com/2022/05/09/spanish-ambassador-celebrates-europe-day-donegal2/
H.E. Ambassador Charis Christodoulidou of Cyprus visit to Limerick	Patrickodanovan.ie/	TD Website	EU50 VIP Visits	09-May	https://patrickodanovan.ie/h-e-ambassador-charis-christodoulidou-of-cyprus-visit-to-limerick/
Minister Foley visits Kerry schools with Polish Ambassador to Ireland as part of Europe Day 2022 celebrations	Gov.ie	Government Website	EU50 VIP Visits	09-May	https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/7fa3f-minister-foley-visits-kerry-schools-with-polish-ambassador-to-ireland-as-part-of-europe-day-2022-celebrations/
Blue Star Award for Donegal school	Donegallive.ie	Local Newspaper	EU50 VIP Visits	09-May	https://www.donegallive.ie/news/local-news/808454/blue-star-award-for-donegal-school.html
Pictures: Two Callan schools celebrate Europe Day as embassy member visits	Kilkennypeople.ie	Local Newspaper	EU50 VIP Visits	09-May	https://www.kilkennypeople.ie/story-telling/multimedia/808612/pictures-two-callan-schools-celebrate-europe-day-as-embassy-member-visits.html
Laois schools to get Europe Day visit from Lithuanian Ambassador	Leinster Express	Local Newspaper	EU50 VIP Visits	09-May	https://www.leinsterexpress.ie/news/local-news/806394/laois-schools-to-get-europe-day-visit-from-lithuanian-ambassador.html
EU and me podcast	Radio Kerry podcasts	Local Radio Station	Europe Day and EU50	09-May	https://www.radiokerry.ie/podcasts/kerry-today/eu-and-me-episode-7-marking-europe-day-and-the-50th-anniversary-of-irelands-decision-to-join-the-eu-may-9th-2022-281085
In Pictures: Laois Minister brings Lithuanian Ambassador on Laois tour to celebrate Europe	Leinster Express	Local Newspaper	EU50 VIP Visits	11-May	https://www.leinsterexpress.ie/gallery/schools/811453/in-pictures-laois-minister-brings-lithuanian-ambassador-on-laois-tour-to-celebrate-europe.html
In Pictures: Lithuanian Ambassador to Ireland visits host of Laois schools	Laois Today	Local Newspaper	EU50 VIP Visits	17-May	https://www.laoistoday.ie/2022/05/17/in-pictures-lithuanian-ambassador-to-ireland-visits-host-of-laois-schools/
Amber and Blue Flags fly proudly at Bunscoil Ris in New Ross	Irish Independent: Wexford	Local Newspaper	Participation in the Programme	06-Jul	https://www.independent.ie/regionals/wexford/lifestyle/amber-and-blue-flags-fly-proudly-at-bunscoil-ris-in-new-ross-41814666.html

Dalystown Principal Joins Blue Star Tour To European Commission	Westmeath Examiner	Local Newspaper	Brussels Trip	13-Jul	https://www.westmeathexaminer.ie/2022/07/13/dalystown-principal-joins-blue-star-tour-to-european-commission/
3 Cork Primary School Teachers Visit European Parliament	Red FM	Local Radio Station	Brussels Trip	13-Jul	https://redfm.ie/post/3-cork-primary-school-teachers-visit-brussels/
Laois Teachers Meet Irish MEPs During European Parliament Trip	Laois Nationalist	Local Newspaper	Brussels Trip	13-Jul	https://laois-nationalist.ie/2022/07/13/laois-teachers-meet-irish-meps-during-european-parliament-trip/
Donegal School Teacher Meets MEPs In Brussels	Donegal Daily	Local Newspaper	Brussels Trip	14-Jul	https://www.donegaldaily.com/2022/07/14/donegal-school-teacher-meets-meps-in-brussels/

Teacher Feedback

As part of the Blue Star Programme Report, teachers were asked to give feedback to the National Implementation Body about their impressions of the Programme.

Particular reference to the Element Quizzes was the predominant trend throughout this year's feedback with many teachers referring to them as the highlight of the year. The phrase "curriculum-friendly" once again featured heavily in many of the teacher responses to the Programme this year. Overall, the feedback indicates that both teachers and pupils thoroughly enjoyed this Programme. Many also appreciated the online availability of the resources which the Blue Star Programme Team continued to create during the last academic term.

Below is a verbatim sample of the feedback provided by teachers, based on their experience of the Blue Star Programme in 2021-2022:

"The children really enjoyed learning about the European Union and each member country. They were able to make links right across the curriculum – English, Maths, History, Geography, Science, Art and Music were all covered as they learned about each country. Europe Day was a huge success – the children learned so much from working with a partner to research a country and prepare a display table. They were so proud of all their work and loved sharing all they had learned with parents and friends who came in to school to celebrate Europe Day with us. The Kahoot quizzes were another very popular part of the programme – the children demonstrated how much they had learned about Europe and had great fun competing against each other. At the end of our Blue Star Programme work, the children have great memories from Europe Day, and each have a beautiful project book recording all they have learned about the countries of European Union." - Cavan Primary School

"A wonderful project, a great way to create thematic curriculum delivery." - Donegal Primary School

"The Bluestar Programme has been a wonderful success in our school since we first took part in 2018. Pupils have developed a much deeper understanding of Europe, how it shapes us and how we shape Europe. We have found this year the most memorable so far. It was special as we relished the opportunity once more post covid to come together and celebrate as a school community. The school spirit and the European spirit was palpable on Europe Day. Standing in solidarity with our Ukrainian pupils and doing the handshake for Europe with our guests was poignant. The Programme is very much a project-based programme and it promotes collaborative learning. Pupils worked hard all year long on various aspects of the programme and it integrated very well into the curriculum e.g., 5th class had a Taste of Europe Food Festival in February. It tapped into

pupils' musical, dance and artistic talents. It gave pupils the opportunity to be creative and build their self-esteem." - **Cork Primary School**

"Our school really enjoyed working on the Blue Star Programme. Pupils were very motivated and enthusiastic working on their projects. Europe Day was a very special part of the programme for us - the excitement was immense, and families put a lot of effort into helping children get everything organised." - **Roscommon Primary School**

"We thoroughly enjoyed our Blue Star journey. All children in the school took part in it. As a programme it integrates very well with the Primary School curriculum and affords teachers and pupils opportunities to choose their own material. The information packs had lots of resources and our pupils loved getting their passports. The pupils in our school really enjoyed participating in the Blue Star Programme this year and really engaged in all the activities. They particularly enjoyed the special zoom visits from MEPs and the Kahoot quizzes. These were very interactive and lots of fun for the pupils. Yes, we would definitely participate in the programme again next year!" - **Dublin Primary School**

"My class and I thoroughly enjoyed this programme. I felt it was very attainable for my class as it integrated very well with the curriculum of 5th & 6th class. The children were very aware of events such as Brexit and of current issues in Europe and were very inquisitive in relation to these. They really wanted to understand these things better and I think the programme allowed them to do this as they could understand the history and background of Europe on a wider scale. I would definitely participate with my class again; I feel it is a great way to get them to become more aware of their own citizenship on a larger scale." - **Limerick Primary School**

"We will continue to participate in the Blue Star programme. Pupils & staff enjoy how interactive and broad the EU Blue Star programme is. We feel we are doing this project work anyway and the material and resources of the Blue Star co-ordinate it all." - **Kerry Primary School**

"We really enjoyed undertaking this teaching and learning experience. We particularly enjoyed the Europe Day celebrations; food tasting VIP visits and zoom class." - **Mayo Primary School**

"My class really enjoyed participating in the Blue Star Programme. This programme is curriculum friendly, it is easy to differentiate in the delivery of this programme. I look forward to participating in the programme next year." - **Laois Primary School**

"This year was our first year having an ambassador visit our school and the children really enjoyed learning from someone in such an important role. We completed projects and artwork based on the Blue Star programme also. Overall, we thoroughly enjoy participating in this programme as a school and look forward to working with you again next year." - **Waterford Primary School**

"We loved participating in the Blue Star programme this year as a school. As our school is particularly diverse, it was an amazing opportunity for children to feel valued and included as the school learned about different cultures and countries. Inviting the parents into our Europe Day concert gave the parents the opportunity to see all the hard work that the children had undertaken and enabled a celebration of all European nationalities for our whole school community." - **Dublin Primary School**

"The Blue Star Programme really inspired the children this year. The children are already asking "What European country will we be researching next year?". This programme has given the children the opportunity to research, create and understand information where they had an opportunity to direct their own learning. Again, this year the children learned many new facts about Denmark and other countries in Europe. In the various sections they researched historical, graphical, cultural and creative and institutional information. The Blue Star Programme is a wonderful way to introduce all the junior infants to 6th class children to Europe in a fun and interesting way." - **Monaghan Primary School**

Conclusion & Recommendations

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

The eleventh year of the Blue Star Programme was successful in terms of number of participating schools exceeding the SLA target. The pilot programme began in 2011-2012 with 32 schools. In 2021-2022, this number had increased to 246 schools. The participating schools ranged from two-teacher rural schools to large urban schools with hundreds of pupils. Approximately 12,000 pupils from across Ireland participated in the eleventh year of the Programme.

The Blue Star Programme proved once again in Year 11 that it's an effective project for 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.

EM Ireland is proud to have been continuously associated with the Programme from its inception, and in terms of our recommendations for the upcoming term of the Programme, we will now outline several suggestions both in relation to the content and administration of the Programme:

1. 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 a particularly significant consideration at the start of the school year when principals and teachers are deciding what programmes to undertake over the year.

2. 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 eleven 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.

3. 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 committed to seeing continue.

4. As part of the Blue Star Programme, additional elements related to active citizenship and political awareness are also suggested to be addressed by participating schools. This is something that EM Ireland has promoted during the eleven years of the Programme. Our recommendations for 2022-2023 is that the Blue Star Programme plays an active role in the 'MyEU50: Ireland EU50 Youth Awards', which will celebrate Ireland's 50th anniversary of EU membership.

5. In addition, in relation to the content of the Programme, we would also recommend building on the Cultural and Creative section and incorporating an extra emphasis on language learning into the Programme. This could be in line with the Department of Education's new 'language sampler module' which will introduce foreign languages to primary schools on a pilot basis from the 2021-2022 school year onwards. We recommend increasing the emphasis placed on the learning of basic phrases of different European languages in the Cultural and Creative element of the Programme. This could be done by providing schools with simple teaching resources and encouraging school visits with a guest speaker who could introduce pupils to basic phrases and pronunciation.

6. Regarding the administration of the Blue Star Programme, we recommend that the Programme should form a 'Teachers Advisory Group', who meet with the National Implementation Body during the academic term, speak to media during the promotion of the Programme and attend teacher training workshops as speakers alongside EM Ireland. After eleven years, the Programme has built up a network of teachers who are very engaged with the Programme, and their classroom knowledge and advice would be very beneficial for us to have and to formalise in the style of an advisory group.

7. Additionally, we would recommend continuing to build on the provision of digital resources from the past three years. The Programme should continue to increase the level of digital material available and continue to create new material such as the Activity Worksheets (which would include recipes, crosswords, word searches etc.). The National Implementation Body could work with all key stakeholders and colleagues in developing more appropriate digital teaching resources.

8. Finally, based on our experience from the past three years of implementing the Programme through Covid-19, we recommend maintaining a virtual component to the VIP visits. Over the past two years, schools have gained skills and experience in using online platforms such as Zoom, and Google Classroom and we want to encourage them to continue to use these new technologies in beneficial ways within the Programme.

9. Finally, we recommend that during the year, along with key stakeholders, we begin the process of updating the Blue Star Programme's logo ahead of the 2023/2024 academic term. After eleven years, we feel it is the appropriate time to refresh 'the look' of the Programme, while keeping the main components of the branding that are so distinct and well-known across all primary school.

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 eleven 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.