



GARRET FITZGERALD

# SUMMER SCHOOL



**DUNDALK**

10-12 JULY 2026



GARRET FITZGERALD SUMMER SCHOOL

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# CONTENTS

**04**

Foreword

**05**

House Rules

**06**

Standing  
Orders

**07**

Attendance  
Reports

**09**

Programme

**15**

Motions

**16**

Aspiring  
Candidates  
Programme

**19**

International  
Committee  
Report



# FOREWORD



**A chara,**

**Fáilte go dtí Scoil Samhraidh Óige Fhine Gael i nDún Dealgan, Contae Lú.**

I am delighted to welcome you to my home county of Louth for this year's Garret FitzGerald Summer School, for what will be a great weekend. This weekend we mark two important moments for Ireland as we assume the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and for Fine Gael as we celebrate 100 years since the birth of Garret FitzGerald, and we have reflected this by focussing our Clár on these two moments.

Firstly, this month marks the beginning of Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and over the coming months Ireland will be host to many important events and key meetings where European Policy will be decided. Our Clár this year focuses on some of the major issues defining European politics right now - how we can develop a more dynamic and competitive European Economy, the threats to European Defence and Security and how Europe is reacting, as well as the future of our European family and the prospects for future enlargement of the European Union. I hope you will enjoy these insightful discussions which have brought together speakers from across our party, our friends in Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), academia, and other perspectives.

The second moment we celebrate is the centenary of Young Fine Gael's founder, Iar-Taoiseach, Dr. Garret FitzGerald's birth. I know many of you will have enjoyed the discussions at the recent event in UCD which celebrated Garret's life and legacy, his work for our party, for Young Fine Gael, our country, and our island. It is on this last thing that we shift the focus of the Garret FitzGerald Seminar towards this year. One of the most important things in Garret's work as our Party Leader, as a Minister, and as Taoiseach was on working toward peace on our Island. That is why this year's Garret FitzGerald Seminar turns our focus to this matter and how by taking learnings from historical and contemporary voices from across different parties, we will ask a very simple question - **"What does the future of our Island look like?"** - and we will discuss the not so simple answers to it. I hope you will enjoy this discussion, that it will enrich your understanding of the different perspectives across our Island, and that we can work better together on our island for having had the discussion, and that it will feed into Fine Gael's new 'Blueprint for a Unified Island.'

As well as these incredible discussions we have lots of other incredibly exciting parts of our Clár lined up. We'll discuss and debate the policy motions that matter to you, some of our Aspiring Candidate Programme Graduates will battle it out for your vote in a Mock Selection Convention, you'll participate in a mock EU Council Negotiation Simulation, and we'll have some fun activities across the weekend too.

Is é an rud is tábhachtaí go bhainfaimid taitneamh as an deireadh seachtaine. Go raibh maith agat arís as teacht go dtí an ócáid speisialta seo.

Míle buíochas,

**Jamie Malone**  
President

# HOUSE RULES

## Behaviour and Standards

Young Fine Gael members are required to behave in a way that does not bring themselves or the reputation of the Fine Gael party or the YFG organisation into disrepute, whether online or offline.

While there is a possibility of alcohol consumption at the event and an element of fun is encouraged, there is ZERO tolerance for behaviour that is in any way abusive to other attendees, staff at the venues or the general public. Failure to meet standards may result in disciplinary action.

## Interaction and Questions

1. If you wish to make a contribution or raise a question during the event, please indicate to the Chair by raising your hand.
2. Wait until you are called on, and please include your first name, branch and the subject matter of your question. (e.g. "My name is Alex from Patrick Hogan, Galway East YFG and my question for the Minister is ...")
3. Members' questions and observations will be taken in batches of three and the guest will respond with answers. In the interest of fairness to all members and time keeping, we are asking contributions to be no longer than 60 seconds.
4. Your contributions during this event are very important and may form the basis of subsequent and further discussions within the party.

**Please note that aspects of this event will be recorded and/or photographed.**

If we wish to use your contribution in wider media at a later time, we will be in touch to advise.



# STANDING ORDERS

- 1.** A motion may be moved by any Unit, Organ, Network or Policy Committee of the Organisation.
- 2.** Quorum:
  - a) Where fewer than 15% of registered delegates are present, a session shall be deemed to be inquorate and the Chairperson shall adjourn that Session until he deems that Session to be quorate.
  - b) Any registered delegate may call a quorum count. Only one quorum count may be called at each Session.
- 3.** Speakers shall only be allowed to speak for the duration as announced by the Chairperson.
- 4.** If any registered delegate or any other person is directed to cease speaking on the grounds of irrelevancy, disruption or being in excess of the allotted time, that registered delegate or person must do so forthwith.
- 5.** Voting:
  - a) The Chairperson of a Session shall appoint tellers for the duration of that Session.
  - b) Voting at any Session shall be by a show of hands, only votes from registered delegates will be counted.
  - c) A motion will be deemed to have been carried when a simple majority of registered delegates present at the session vote in favour of the motion.
  - d) The Chairperson may order a re-vote where the outcome of a vote is unclear by a show of hands.
  - e) If the Chairperson orders a re-vote pursuant to subsection (d) of this part, then the tellers will count the votes and inform the Chairperson of the result of the vote.
  - f) In the event of a tie, a Motion shall not be deemed to have been carried, as a majority has not been attained.
  - g) Once a vote has been called and ruled by a Chairperson, and a result declared, no further requests for counts shall be considered.
- 6.** Amendments to the motions session:
  - a) No amendments shall be made from the floor.
  - b) Delegates may request an amendment to any motion by emailing [Barry.murphy@yfg.ie](mailto:Barry.murphy@yfg.ie) before 10pm on Friday 10th of July .
  - c) No amendments that substantially change the intent of a motion shall be considered.
  - d) Delegates who request an amendment must propose them to the session. If they fail to do so, the amendment shall fall.
  - e) Amendments must pass by a simple majority of delegates in attendance at the session.
  - f) A vote on any amendment will take place before voting on the motion

# ATTENDANCE REPORTS

## Young Fine Gael National Executive

Total Meetings	23/2	1/3	18/3	5/4	3/5	7/6	21/6	5/7	9/8	6/9	11/10	8/11	17/1	21/2	21/3	18/4	16/5	20/6	Apologies Received	No Apologies	
Location	Maynooth	Dublin, HQ	Zoom	Cashel	Castlebar	Swords	Zoom	Macroom	Monaghan	Dú Laoghaire	Galway	Zoom	Athlone	Cork	Galway	Dublin	Galway	Wexford			
17	Sun	Sat	Tue	Sat	Sat	Sat	Sat	Sat	Sat	Sat	Sat	Sat	Sat	Sat	Sat	Sat	Sat	Sat			
Jamie Malone	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Z	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	1	0
Isabelle Danes	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	0	0
Kuruvilla George	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	Z	P	P	P	P	P	1	0
Jamie Hamill	P	P	P	P	P	Z	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Z	P	A	Z	0	0	
Ben Sheehan	P	P	A	A	P	Z	P	Z	Z	A	A	P	P	P	P	A	P	A	5	0	
Queen Soyemi	P	P	A	P	P	A	A	P	Z	Z	P	A	A	Z	P	P	A	Z	5	0	
Sophie de Miranda	P	P	P	A	Z	Z	P	A	Z	P	Z	P	A	Z	A	P	P	Z	4	0	
Dean Kenny	P	P	A	P	P	A	P	Z	Z	Z	Z	P	P	Z	Z	A	Z	Z	3	0	
Bebhinn Lombard	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	Z	P	P	P	P	Z	Z	P	Z	1	0	
Ian Moran	P	P	P	P	A	P	A	P	Z	P	Z	P	P	P	Z	P	A	P	2	0	
Seán Martyn	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	P	Z	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	0	0	
Barry Murphy	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Z	P	Z	P	0	0	
Sarah Farren	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	P	P	Z	P	0	0	
Caolán Maguire	P	P	P	P	Z	Z	P	Z	P	Z	A	P	A	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2	0	



# ATTENDANCE REPORTS

## Executive Council

Meetings	4/3 2025	1/4 2025	6/5 2025	3/6 2025	17/06 2025	1/7 2025	17/7 2025	18/8 2025	2/9 2025	4/11 2025	2/12 2025	24/1 2026	3/2 2026	12/2 2026	3/3 2026	10/3 2026	14/4 2026	5/5 2026	4/6 2026	14/6 2026	7/7 2026	
Jamie Malone	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	A	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	P
Isabelle Danes	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	A	P
Kuruvilla George	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Caolán Maguire	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	

# PROGRAMME

## Friday

**15:00 – 18:00**     **Arrive and Check In**  
Gateway Hotel Dundalk

**19:00**             **Opening Ceremony**  
McGeoughs Pub Dundalk Centre

### Speakers:



**Paula Butterly TD:** In the 2024 General Election Paula was elected as a TD for the Louth constituency, having previously been a Councillor for the Ardee LEA.



**Dr Ahmad Jamal:** Dr Ahmed Jamal is a long-serving member of Fine Gael's National Executive Council, having first been elected in 2018 and currently serving as Vice Chair. In his professional life, he works as a Consultant in Emergency Medicine across Drogheda and Navan hospitals, bringing frontline experience, calm leadership, and a deep commitment to public service to his political work.



**Jamie Malone:** Jamie is the President of Young Fine Gael having previously served as Dublin Regional Organiser on the National Executive. Jamie is a Louth YFG member, graduate of Trinity College and works as political staff for a member of the Oireachtas.

**20:00**             **Mock Election Hustings Aspiring Candidates**

On Friday evening, we'll host a focused, high-level debate between the candidates. Each candidate will have three minutes to set out their strategy for winning a seat for the party - outlining their priorities as a candidate, the message they believe can win, and the approach they would bring to the campaign.

The emphasis will be firmly on big-picture thinking and strategic vision. There's no need to dive into the minutiae of local road upgrades - this debate is about your plan, your message, and how you intend to deliver a seat for Fine Gael.

**Cllr Rachel Kerley:** Rachel was co-opted as a Councillor for the Ardee electoral area, following her election to the Dáil. Rachel is passionate about representing rural communities and ensuring that smaller villages are not overlooked but instead given the opportunities and resources they deserve. Rachel is a previous Director of Recruitment and Leinster Regional Organiser on the YFG National Executive.



# Saturday

**9:30 – 10:00**      **Registration**  
DKIT Reception

**10:00 – 11:15**      **Motions Session**  
Lecture Room in Muirhevna Building

This is your chance to shape YFG policy — to raise the issues you think matter and influence the direction we take. Your vote genuinely counts and will shape what happens next.



**Joe Neville TD:** Joe was elected as a member of Dáil Éireann in November 2024. Joe is the Fine Gael spokesperson on Infrastructure and Delivery. He is Vice-Chair of the Oireachtas Committee on Infrastructure and also sits on the Public Accounts Committee and the Budgetary Oversight Committee.



**Barry Murphy:** Barry is a secondary school teacher from Wexford and has been a member of Young Fine Gael since 2013. He has served as Director of Policy on the National Executive since February this year, where he has coordinated the drafting of a Pre Budget Submission to be presented to Simon Harris this summer.

**11:15 – 11:30**      **Break**

**11:30 – 12:30**      **Panel Discussion 1**

## **Towards a more Competitive Europe in a Changing World**

Europe is facing increasing competitive pressures from the United States, China, and other emerging economies. At the same time, the European Union is pursuing ambitious goals in digital transformation, artificial intelligence, climate action, security, and industrial policy.

As Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union begins, this discussion will explore how Europe can strengthen its competitiveness while remaining committed to its values, innovation ecosystem, and social model.

The session will focus on practical policy priorities and the role Ireland can play in shaping the European agenda.

### **Speakers:**



**Regina Doherty MEP:** Regina is an MEP for Dublin. In the European Parliament, she is Vice Chair of the Subcommittee on Tax Matters, and the Special Committee on the Housing Crisis in the European Union. She is also a member of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, and the Delegation for Relations with the countries of South Asia. Regina had previously been a TD and Senator and sat at Cabinet as Chief Whip and Minister for Employment and Social Protection.



**David W. Higgins:** David is an independent economist based in Dublin. He now serves a range of clients across pharmaceuticals, energy, financial services, charities, healthcare, property and other sectors. He is a regular contributor to Irish media including the Irish Independent and the Brendan O'Connor Show on RTÉ Radio One. David is a former member of the YFG National Executive, having served as DRO between 2013 and 2015.



**Richard Bruton:** Richard is a former TD having been first elected to Dail Eireann in 1982 and retiring in 2024. Over his time as a TD Richard served in many cabinet positions such as Minister for Enterprise and Minister for Education and is a former Deputy Leader of Fine Gael



**Professor Dave Lewis:** Dr. Dave Lewis is an Associate Professor of Computer Science at Trinity College Dublin and Acting Director of the ADAPT Centre. A leading expert in trustworthy AI, data governance, and AI standards, he contributes to international AI standardisation efforts and advises on the responsible development and regulation of artificial intelligence.



**Kuruvilla George:** Chairing the discussion, Kuruvilla George is one of the Vice President and National Secretary of Young Fine Gael, a Software Engineer at Workday, and a PhD researcher in AI at Trinity College Dublin, with a keen interest in technology, public policy, and youth engagement.

## 12:30 - 12:45 Address from Nina Carberry MEP on the Multiannual Financial Framework + Q&A



**Nina Carberry MEP:** Nina is an MEP for Midlands-NorthWest. She is a champion jockey, a businesswoman, a sports enthusiast and an author. As a Member of the European Parliament, Nina services on three key committees: Transport and Tourism, International Trade and Budget. Nina is actively campaigning for robust online safety and child protection laws at both Irish and European levels.

## 12:45 - 14:00 Model EU Council Negotiation Simulation Workshop

Classrooms

Get ready to step into the shoes of an EU Minister and experience how decisions are made at the heart of European politics. To complement the Summer School's theme and Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, this interactive session will give members the opportunity to experience first hand how negotiations work within the Council.

Participants will represent Member States in a simulated meeting of the Council of the EU, negotiating the priorities of the EU's next long term budget, the Multiannual Financial Framework. Working in national delegations, participants will build alliances, negotiate compromises, and balance competing national interests in an effort to reach unanimous agreement on the allocation of an additional €100 billion investment package across key spending priorities.

The simulation will provide a practical insight into the realities of EU decision making, diplomacy, and coalition building dynamics, highlighting the importance of compromise and consensus in Council negotiations, as well as the role of the Irish Presidency in facilitating agreement.



## **14.00 - 14.45 Lunch and Mock Election Voting**

The vote for our election will take place over lunch — don't forget to bring your polling card!

## **15:00 – 16:00 Panel Discussion 2**

### **Enhancing Europe's Security and Defence Resilience**

With a war continuing on our continent in Ukraine, instability across the Middle East, and an increasingly volatile and uncertain Transatlantic partnership with the United States, the need for Europe to invest and collaborate more in security and defence has become clear.

The threats are of an evolving nature and there are risks in all of the conventional, maritime, cyber, energy, and other domains that we must confront as a Union.

During Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union enhancing this collaboration will be a priority and our guests for this panel will provide insights from an Irish Governmental, German, and an academic perspective on how we can rise to these challenges and enhance our collective security.



**Minister Helen McEntee:** Helen is the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and Minister for Defence since November 2025 and Deputy Leader of Fine Gael since October 2024. Helen previously served as Minister for Justice from 2020 - 2025. She served as Minister for European Affairs between June 2017 and June 2020, a period of intense and successful European diplomacy by Ireland as Britain left the EU. First elected to Dáil Éireann in March 2013, Helen has proudly served as a TD for Meath East since



**Maximilian Reiterer:** Maximilian Reiterer is a researcher and advisor to Roderich Kiesewetter MdB, one of the most outspoken CDU experts on security and defence policy. In his role, Reiterer supports parliamentary work with policy analysis, strategic advice, and research on international issues. He is a trained historian and political scientist, with an academic background in international relations and security policy. His work concentrates in particular on transatlantic relations as well as European foreign and security policy (CSDP).



**Professor Kenneth McDonagh:** Kenneth is an associate professor in international relations in the school of Law and Government in DCU. Kenneth's research has focused on EU foreign policy and on Common Security and Defence policy



**Jamie Malone:** Chairing the discussion, Jamie supported the International Committee in drafting their policy paper on the Future of Irish Defence which was presented to Minister McEntee in February of this year and received praise within and outside the party organisation.

## **16.15 - 17.00 - Garret Fitzgerald Seminar: A Discussion on the Future of our Island**

One hundred years after the birth of Dr Garret FitzGerald, Young Fine Gael reflects on the legacy of a Taoiseach who dedicated his public life to peace, partnership, and bridging the divide between nationalists and unionists in Northern Ireland. As part of this year's Garret FitzGerald Summer School in Dundalk, we turn our focus to the future of this shared island and the practical, respectful conversations needed to shape it.

**The 2026 Garret FitzGerald Seminar — A discussion on the Future of our Island** — will explore how we can work better together North and South, the challenges we face across communities, and the opportunities for deeper cooperation



**Mark Fitzgerald:** Mark is the son of Former Taoiseach and Fine Gael Leader Garret Fitzgerald. Mark is a former Chair and CEO of Sherry FitzGerald and currently chairs Fine Gael's Commission for Renewal. Mark is an experienced entrepreneur and a firm believer in brave and bold strategies for a better Ireland and a fairer world.



**Sinéad O'Neill:** Sinéad is Vice Chair of the SDLP, a teacher, and a passionate community advocate. A committed campaigner for a New Ireland, she believes in building a shared, inclusive future founded on equality, opportunity and social justice.

Alongside her work in education, Sinéad has been a strong voice on women's health issues, raising awareness of the challenges many women face and advocating for better healthcare provision and outcomes. Actively involved in community and political life across Mid Ulster, she is dedicated to ensuring local voices are heard and represented, and to helping shape a positive future for all who share this island.



**Emer Currie TD:** Deputy Emer Currie is the Assistant Government Chief Whip, Dublin West TD since November 2024 and Fine Gael Spokesperson for Childcare. She previously served as a Senator from 2020 as a Taoiseach's nominee, acting as the party's Seanad Spokesperson for Special Education and Northern Ireland. She served on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement Committee and chaired the Sovereign Matters Committee within the British–Irish Parliamentary Assembly. She also chairs the Fine Gael Northern Ireland Engagement Group who are a key stakeholder in the party's work to build a shared island and a unified island.



**Ian Moran:** Chairing the discussion, Ian is a Wexford YFG member and our Leinster Regional Organiser and National Executive Liaison to the One Island Committee. Last year Ian attended an event in Northern Ireland bringing together youth wings of political parties from the Republic of Ireland, Nationalists Unionists and non aligned parties in Northern Ireland and from the England.

**18:00**

**YFG is Up for the Match**

Louth v Mayo All Ireland Football Semi Final Watch Party

**20:00**

**Dinner & activity**

GR8



# Sunday

## 10:00- 11:00 Mock Count

We'll count all the votes on Sunday morning, when the final ticket for the election will be confirmed. During the count, members will also have the chance to learn the art of tallying - tracing where your votes came from, understanding where transfers are likely to go, and reading ballot papers to see how early tallies can signal the shape of the result.

## 11:00 Panel Discussion 3

### EU Enlargement: Growing our European Family

This panel will explore the future of EU enlargement, examining the opportunities and challenges facing candidate countries and what a larger European Union could mean for Ireland's role in Europe. As enlargement returns to the forefront of the EU agenda, the discussion will consider its geopolitical, economic, and institutional implications for both existing and aspiring member states



**Anna Zachariadou:** Anna is a Policy Officer at the European People's Party (EPP), where she works on European policy development with a focus on foreign affairs, defence and security. Prior to joining the EPP, Zachariadou worked as an EU Affairs Policy Officer at the European Smoking Tobacco Association (ESTA) (December 2021 – December 2023), where she conducted policy analysis on illicit trade and security issues and supported advocacy activities. She also gained experience in the European institutions as a trainee at the European Parliament and the European Commission, focusing on foreign policy, defence and security, including work on migration, hybrid threats and EU external relations. In parallel, Zachariadou has been active in Greek politics, serving since 2020 as Deputy Secretary for International Relations and the EU for New Democracy. In this capacity, she has engaged in a wide range of activities linking European and Greek politics, such as executing electoral strategy and engaging in political campaigning for the European elections.



**Gëzim Visoka:** Gëzim is the Associate Dean for Research in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and an Associate Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies in the School of Law and Government at Dublin City University (DCU). His research focuses on the making, remaking, and unmaking of states and peace processes in contemporary world politics.



**Darko Savović:** Darko is a Vice-President of Youth of Europe, youth wing of Montenegrin Movement Europe now, the latest associated member of EPP. He was a candidate on parliamentary lists for both parliamentary and local elections. He is working at the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation with the academic background in Food science with the MSc degree in Food Engineering in Republic of Turkiye and 1-semester BSc scholarship in USA as State of Department scholarship holder.



**Barry Ward TD:** Barry is a TD for Dún Laoghaire since the 2024 general election. Prior to that, Barry served as a Senator, and was Seanad spokesperson on Justice. A practicing barrister and Senior Counsel, Barry is originally from Deansgrange. He was first elected to Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council in 2009, representing the Blackrock Ward, which also includes Booterstown, Deansgrange, Foxrock, Monkstown and Stillorgan. Barry also served as Leader of the Fine Gael group on the Council. In 2020, he was elected to the Industrial and Commercial Panel of the Seanad. Barry is the Cathaoirleach of the Committee on European Union Affairs.



**Sophie de Miranda:** Chairing the discussion, Sophie is our Dublin Regional Organiser and National Executive liaison to the International Committee. Sophie is a UCD and was a member of the Washington Ireland Program Emerging Leaders Class of 2025. She is currently a political staff for a Minister in the Oireachtas.

## 12:00 Announcement of Mock Election Winner & National Assembly

# MOTIONS

- 1** YFG calls on the Government to introduce a graduated Employer PRSI relief for start-ups and small businesses operating in towns with populations under 20,000, helping local enterprises create jobs, revitalise town centres and strengthen regional economies.  
**Cork South Central, with similar motion from Waterford, Cork South West, Clare & Tipperary**
- 2** YFG welcomes the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Drugs Use Report and its recommendations for a health-led approach to drugs use in Ireland, including the decriminalisation of drugs for personal possession. YFG calls on Fine Gael in Government to implement the reports recommendations.  
**National Executive**
- 3** YFG calls on Fine Gael to refound and fund the Collins institute of public policy and to work with the Martens institute to better formulate a vision for the future of Ireland and policies to bring us to that future.  
**Dublin Fingal East**
- 4** YFG calls for the Irish government to reaffirm the integral nature of the merit-based approach that applies in EU enlargement processes. Ireland must ensure that there can be no fast tracking of potential EU member states and that the principles of the Copenhagen criteria around politics, economics and law are upheld over the push for enlargement solely due to geopolitical arguments.  
**International Committee**
- 5** YFG calls for a citizens assembly on the vision for a Unified Ireland.  
**Louth**
- 6** YFG calls for an amendment to the Fine Gael Constitution and Rules to allow public representatives to sit on the Executive Council as Young Fine Gael representatives and allow them to sit on the Young Fine Gael National Executive.  
**National Executive**
- 7** YFG calls on Fine Gael to support the forthcoming PMB to reversing Ireland's ban on nuclear energy as a first step to exploring the possibility of Nuclear energy as part of decarbonification and reducing our reliance on imported energy.  
**Galway East with similar motion from Dublin Fingal East, Tipperary, Cork South Central, Cork South West, LRC & Clare, Wexford & Waterford**
- 8** YFG further calls for a review of the eligibility criteria for Agricultural Relief to ensure that the relief remains targeted at bona fide farmers and supports the transfer of family farms to the next generation, in line with its original purpose of promoting active agricultural use and generational renewal.  
**Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee with similar motion from Tipperary, Cork South Central, Waterford, Cork South Central, Tipperary & Clare**
- 9** YFG calls on the Government to guarantee timely access to all apprenticeship training phases by establishing maximum waiting times for off-the-job training placements.  
**Cork South West with similar motion from Cork South Central, Waterford, Clare & Tipperary**
- 10** YFG calls on the Government to strengthen the Workplace Relations Commission's enforcement powers in cases of harassment and sexual misconduct.  
**Women's Network**
- 11** YFG calls on the government to introduce a Regional Graduate Tax Credit for graduates who take up employment outside of Dublin, supporting balanced regional development and helping regional employers attract skilled workers.  
**University College Cork with similar motion from Cork South Central, Waterford, Cork South West & Tipperary**



# ASPIRING CANDIDATES PROGRAMME



The Aspiring Candidates Programme was launched this year with the aim of equipping Young Fine Gael members with the skills, knowledge and confidence required to become future election candidates or play a leading role on campaign teams.

Over the course of four online sessions, participants heard directly from Ministers, Senators, Councillors, Fine Gael Headquarters staff and experienced campaigners, covering every stage of the political journey from candidate selection through to election day.

Each session focused on a different aspect of campaigning, including becoming a candidate, building and managing a campaign, utilising digital media effectively, and preparing for the realities of an election campaign. The programme also provided participants with the opportunity to ask questions, engage with experienced public representatives and learn from their practical experiences.

The feedback received throughout the programme was extremely positive, with strong engagement across all sessions. Members particularly valued the practical nature of the discussions, the opportunity to hear from experienced campaigners, and the accessibility of the online format.

Overall, the Aspiring Candidates Programme was a successful addition to this year's Young Fine Gael calendar. It has helped develop the next generation of candidates and campaigners while providing members with practical skills that will benefit both their local organisations and future election campaigns.

A sincere thank you to all of our speakers, moderators and participants who contributed to making the programme such a success.

**Ben Sheehan**

*Director of Events*



**Jamie Malone**



**Bebhinn Lombard**



**Seán Martyn**





# INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE REPORT



It has been another busy and productive year for the International Committee since we last gathered at Summer School. YFG is continuing to strengthen its influence across Europe, develop policy, and foster relationships with our international partners from Europe and beyond.

Rewinding back to May 2025, a strong five-member YFG delegation attended the YEPP Congress in Brussels. Eoin Scarlett was elected Deputy Secretary General of YEPP, securing one of the organisation's top 5 leadership positions, and ensuring a strong Irish voice at the heart of Europe's largest youth political network.

In August, IC members Eli and Harry represented YFG at the 2025 Solidarna Molod International Political Camp in Lviv, Ukraine. The programme focused on youth leadership, democratic resilience, and Ukraine's future in Europe. Alongside engaging with young political leaders from across the continent, they visited war-affected communities and rehabilitation facilities, strengthening YFG's ties with our Ukrainian counterparts and reaffirming our solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

In November, members of the International Committee and National Executive met with Palestinian Deputy Ambassador Baker Hijazi at the Embassy of Palestine in Dublin. The meeting provided a valuable opportunity to discuss the challenges facing young people in Palestine, and explore avenues for collaborative youth and political engagement in the future.

January saw one of the Committee's most significant achievements of the year with the launch of the new policy document on the Future of Irish Defence in Leinster House. Following months of work, the document was formally presented to the Minister for Defence and Foreign Affairs, Helen McEntee, who also participated in the launch panel discussion. We were delighted to be joined by Deputy Barry Ward, Deputy Maeve O'Connell, and Deputy Catherine Callaghan, while committee members presented the policy recommendations to a packed AV room. The event was attended by many TD's, Senators and MEPs, showing strong support for the document. The document was subsequently referenced in the Seanad by Senator Joe O'Reilly. Looking ahead, the committee will build on this momentum with a nationwide College campaign this autumn, coinciding with Fresher's week and the YFG Fresher's campaign. It will promote discussion on Irish defence policy, security, and Ireland's role in an increasingly uncertain world. Stay tuned for this.

In April, YFG proudly hosted over 90 delegates from sister parties across Europe for a highly successful YEPP Council Meeting in Dublin. This was the first Council Meeting in Ireland since 2008, and represented one of the largest international political events organised by YFG in recent years. It was a significant achievement for the organisation as a whole. Sophie, Exec Liaison to the International Committee, and Shane, International Secretary, represented YFG at the Council meeting. Over three days, delegates heard from a wide variety of speakers, and participated in policy discussions and political meetings

centred on the theme of driving economic growth and strengthening Europe's competitiveness. Beyond the formal programme, delegates experienced the best of Dublin and Irish hospitality, and the event was a great opportunity for us to showcase our organisation, capital city, and country. At the Council, Sophie and Shane presented two policy resolutions submitted by YFG. One focused on developing Europe's critical raw materials capabilities, and the other on the central theme of the weekend - strengthening Europe's economy by unlocking growth and restoring global competitiveness. Both resolutions passed successfully. YFG through the IC will continue to play a meaningful role in shaping policy discussions at the European level. Months and months of planning were involved in organising the weekend, and the successful delivery of the Council was only possible through the trojan efforts of members from across YFG, Fine Gael HQ, and YEPP. The event received overwhelmingly positive feedback from delegates and YEPP leadership.

June was a very busy month. Jamie and Shane attended the YEPP Council of Presidents in Vienna, Austria. 22 member organisations came together to agree the Declaration of Presidents, outlining YEPP's priorities for the years ahead. Competitiveness, enlargement, and European security emerged as the key challenges facing the continent. The event also provided opportunities to engage with Austrian political leaders and gain insight into the country's political landscape. Delegates met Austrian Federal Chancellor Dr Christian Stocker, Federal Minister for Europe and Junge ÖVP President Claudia Bauer, and representatives of the Austrian Parliament. The programme also included discussions with experts from the Bertelsmann Foundation on the impact of digital technologies, political communications, and the challenges posed by algorithmic manipulation and malign actors to democratic stability.

Our VP Isabelle Danes joined young leaders from across Europe for the YEPP "Women, Leadership, Politics" Camp - a week-long programme exploring women's political leadership, gender equality, the evolution of feminism, and the impact of AI on political campaigns. Later that month, Isabelle and IC member Billy Kavanagh represented YFG at the 45th anniversary congress of our sister party, the CDJA, in Utrecht, where they took part in political discussions, met Dutch political leaders, and attended a campaign strategy session with CDA officials. They also met the newly elected CDJA International Secretary.

As we look ahead, the International Committee is focused on ensuring YFG continues to play a leading role within YEPP and our wider European political family. With Ireland having just taken over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, further YEPP engagements, and the rollout of our defence campaign, the months ahead promise to be equally busy. We will continue to build relationships, develop policy, and ensure that YFG remains a respected and influential voice for young people both at home and across Europe.

I would like to thank all members of the International Committee for their hard work and commitment throughout the year, and all those who have represented YFG abroad. The strength of our international engagement is a reflection of our dedication, professionalism, and enthusiasm for promoting YFG's values on the European stage.

**Sophie de Miranda**

***National Executive Liaison to the International Committee***



# YOUR NATIONAL EXECUTIVE TEAM



**Jamie Malone**

*President*

Email: jamie.malone@yfg.ie

Branch: Louth YFG



**Ian Moran**

*Leinster Regional Organiser*

Email: ian.moran@yfg.ie

Branches: Wexford YFG



**Isabelle Danes**

*Vice President & Director of Communications*

Email: isabelle.danes@yfg.ie

Branches: Fingal & UCD YFG



**Sophie De Miranda**

*Dublin Regional Organiser*

Email: sophie.demiranda@yfg.ie

Branches: Dublin West & UCD YFG



**Kuruvilla George**

*Vice President & National Secretary*

Email: kuruvilla.george@yfg.ie

Branches: Dublin North West & TCD YFG



**Dean Kenny**

*North West Regional Organiser*

Email: dean.kenny@yfg.ie

Branch: Mayo YFG



**Jamie Hamill**

*Director of Branch Development and Engagement*

Email: jamie.hamill@yfg.ie

Branch: Dublin North West



**Seán Martyn**

*Director of Campaigns & Director of Agricultural and Rural Affairs*

Email: sean.martyn@yfg.ie

Branch: Clare YFG



**Queen Soyemi**

*Director of Recruitment and Diversity & Inclusion*

Email: queen.soyemi@yfg.ie

Branch: Fingal YFG



**Sarah Farren**

*College Branch Organiser*

Email: sarah.farren@yfg.ie

Branch: Dublin Bay South YFG



**Ben Sheehan**

*Director of Events*

Email: ben.sheehan@yfg.ie

Branch: University of Galway YFG



**Barry Murphy**

*Director of Policy*

Email: barry.murphy@yfg.ie

Branch: Wexford YFG



**Bebhinn Lombard**

*Munster Regional Organiser*

*Director of Women's Engagement*

Email: bebhinn.lombard@yfg.ie

Branch: Cork South Central & UCC YFG









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