



# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2024

## EXPANDING SUPPORT FOR OUR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

In this year of European Parliament elections, it is critically important that the role of Irish higher education and research is strengthened as the EU moves into its next governance cycle. In that context;

We urge all political parties and candidates for election to support three key objectives:

- ① Push for the expansion of FP10, the next EU Research Fund (2027+). The FP10 fund should be ring-fenced, with a particular focus on underpinning the Pillar 1 programme that funds discovery research.
- ② Secure a significant increase in Erasmus+ programme funding, to enable more Irish students to study abroad as part of their degree.
- ③ Step up competitive funding for the European Universities Initiative which enables Irish universities to develop pan-European teaching and research alliances.

Irish universities are key contributors to the economic, social and cultural success of Ireland. They produce the pipeline of high skills talent for our workforce and are essential partners in supporting foreign direct investment. Their research activities underpin the innovation needs of enterprise and are pivotal to tackling the major national challenges such as housing, health and climate action. They foster the creativity of the nation through the myriad of arts and culture courses that they run.

Our universities have also played a key role in the evolution of Ireland as an open knowledge economy and society, none more so than in their teaching and research work that connects us to Europe. Tens of thousands of Irish students have benefitted from their exposure to European culture and society through the Erasmus+ programme. Ireland has gained enormous advantages from the investment in research from successive EU funds, most recently through the Horizon funds.





## **PLEDGE SUPPORT FOR A LARGER, RING-FENCED FPIO, THE NEXT EU RESEARCH FUND**

The current €95bn EU Research and Innovation Fund, Horizon Europe, finishes in 2027. The incoming European Parliament will approve the successor fund, FP10. This Fund is hugely important to Ireland, especially the Pillar 1 Programme that funds ground-breaking, bottom-up research. Ireland is second in Europe in its drawdown per capita under the key Pillar 1 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) which funds young talent and researchers. It is essential that the EU budget for programmes like this is extended under the next EU Research Fund to enable Ireland to nurture the research talent pipeline. We also propose that the FP10 fund is ring-fenced.

Euro Election '24 candidates are asked to pledge their support to securing an enhanced FP10 Fund, and in particular, the key Pillar 1 programme. Ring-fencing the fund must also be a key priority for Ireland.

## **EXPAND ERASMUS+ FOR IRISH STUDENTS**

In 2022, almost 5,000 higher education students availed of Erasmus grant funding. However, since 2021/22, demand from Irish students has exceeded the available EU funding allocated to Ireland. This has resulted in the Erasmus grant to each student being diluted, and, in some cases, students being turned down, with particular impact on students from less advantaged backgrounds. Significant additional funding for Ireland is needed from the EU each year, to enable the benefits of Erasmus student mobility for significantly larger numbers of Irish students.

We urge all candidates, and their parties, for Euro Election '24, to pledge their support for increased Erasmus+ funding and, if elected, to work to secure the necessary funding.

## **STEP UP COMPETITIVE FUNDING FOR THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES INITIATIVE**

12 Irish higher education institutions are members of a European University Initiative (EUI), the flagship vehicle through which universities form pan-European alliances on teaching and research programmes. The EUI enables universities to expand student and staff mobility with the ultimate aim of providing joint degree programmes by participating universities. The current funding basis for these alliances is unsustainable, relying on a combination of unpredictable EU and member state funding, which in turn holds back these alliances from reaching their potential. The key to sustainability is the provision of guaranteed, multi-annual EU funding, through a competitive process for participating universities, backed by solid commitments by each member state to provide financial support for their own universities.

We seek the support of Euro Election '24 candidates and parties to actively campaign for a sustainable, competitive EUI funding regime that will open opportunities for Irish students and staff.