

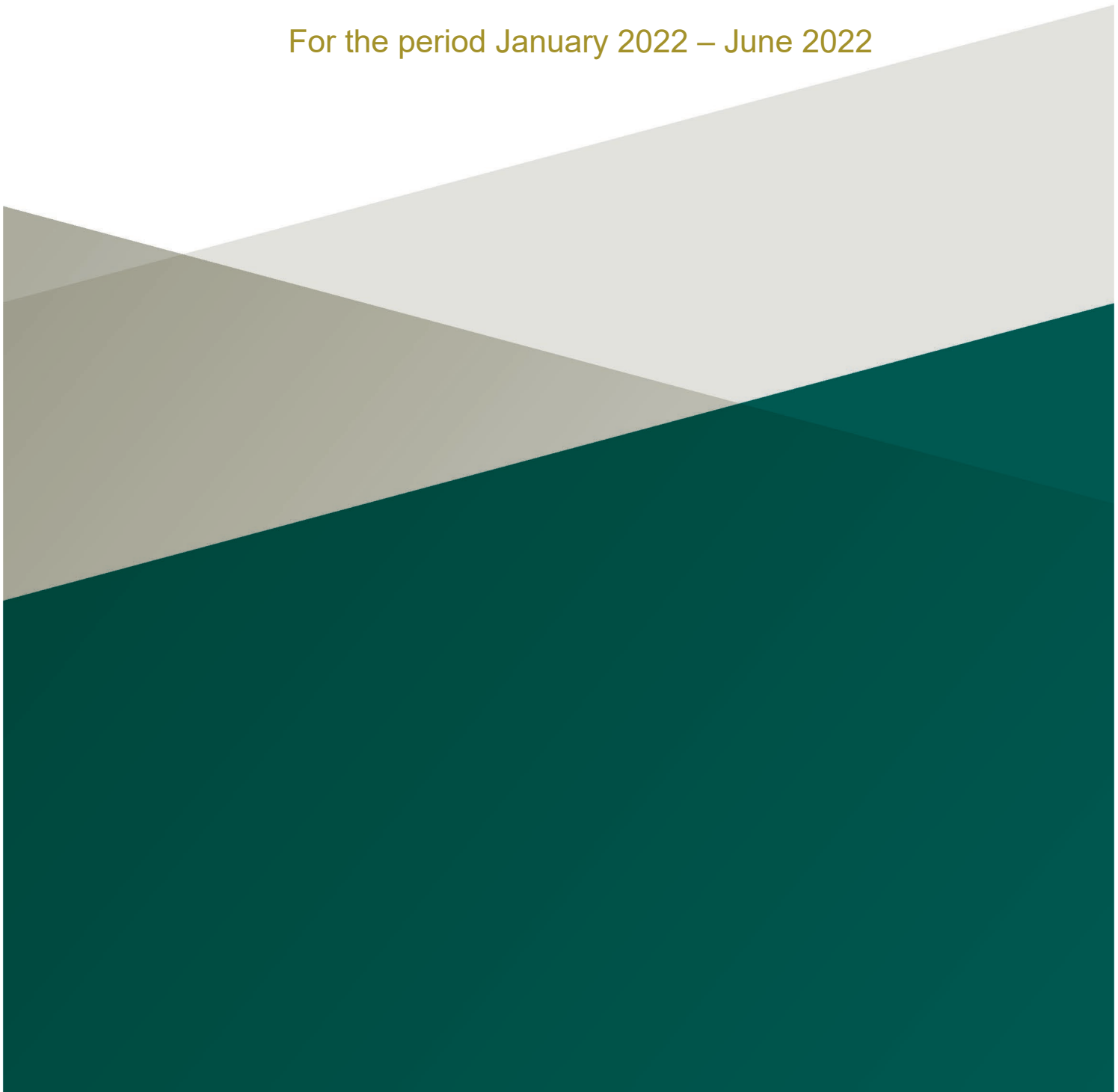


An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

Report of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to the Oireachtas

Under Section 2 (5) of the European Union (Scrutiny) Act
2002

For the period January 2022 – June 2022



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Introduction

The European Union and work of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) presents its fourth report to the Oireachtas under Section 2 (5) of the European Union (Scrutiny) Act, 2002 covering the period January 2022 – June 2022.

As well as the Programme for Government and other national policy considerations, the Department also operates in an international framework, provided primarily through Ireland's membership of the European Union, Council of Europe and the United Nations.

[The Department's Statement of Strategy 2021 – 2023](#) details involvement of the Department in matters related to the European Union.

1. Council Meetings During The Above Period

Youth Affairs

The Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (EYCS) Council meeting took place in physical format in Luxembourg on 4-5 April 2022. Due to scheduling conflicts, Minister Roderic O'Gorman was unable to attend. Minister Simon Harris represented Ireland during the Youth portion of the meeting.

Disability Policy

Meetings of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) took place in March and June 2022. The June EPSCO meeting included a policy debate on the Employment of Persons with Disabilities.

2. Summary of Draft EU Legislative Proposals

3. Summary Of Non-Legislative Developments

Disability Policy

The French Presidency hosted a meeting of EU Disability Ministers on ‘Improving accessibility and access to rights, implementing the European Strategy 2021-30’ in March 2022. The event was attended by Minister Rabbitte and officials. Meetings of the European Disability Platform took place in April and June 2022.

Youth Affairs

The French Presidency had two main priorities in the youth field that focused on Youth Goal #10 Sustainable Green Europe and Youth Goal #3 Inclusive Societies under the title “Engaging together for a sustainable and inclusive Europe”.

In an effort to progress these priorities, FR developed Council Conclusions on fostering engagement among young people as facilitators of change in order to protect the environment, which were adopted by the EYCS Council on 4-5 April 2022. These Council Conclusions call on Member States to promote young people’s participation in the development and implementation of environmental policies and programmes.

In addition, the FR presidency developed a Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union which was also adopted by the EYCS Council on 4-5 April. The objective of this Recommendation is to update the 2008 Council Recommendation of the same title, to take account of the evolving context since the original Recommendation was adopted.

FR also hosted the EU Youth Conference on Jan 24 – 26, in a virtual format, which was attended by three Irish youth delegates and a DCEDIY Official. This was followed by an Informal Meeting of Ministers on Education and Youth on Jan 27, which also took place online. The aim of this meeting was to discuss the topics of the Youth Conference, in particular the protection of the environment and young people’s engagement with sustainable development. Ireland was represented by a youth delegate and the Education and Skills Attaché for Ireland. The EU Director General Meeting took place on 5th – 6th May 2022 in Bordeaux and was attended by an official from the Department. Discussions on the European Year of Youth and the mobility and recognition of skills of youth workers took place.

EU and International

Publication of Ireland’s National Action Plan for the implementation of the European Child Guarantee

In 2019, the European Commission announced the creation of a European Child Guarantee with a view to ensuring that every child in Europe at risk of poverty or social exclusion has access to the most basic of rights like healthcare and education.

The objective of the European Child Guarantee, which was adopted by the Council in June 2021, is to prevent and combat social exclusion by guaranteeing the access of children in need to a set of key services:

- early childhood education and care
- education (including school-based activities)
- healthcare
- nutrition
- housing

The Child Guarantee is complementary to and consistent with a number of other EU initiatives. It represents a concrete deliverable of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and will contribute to achieving its headline target of reducing the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

It complements the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, which pools all existing and future initiatives on children's rights under one coherent policy framework.

Each Member State is required to nominate a national coordinator tasked with supplying the Commission with an action plan for the implementation of the recommendation establishing the European Child Guarantee by 2030. The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth has assumed this role for Ireland.

In December 2021, Minister O'Gorman launched a consultation in order to engage all key stakeholders in the preparation of a National Action Plan (NAP). The consultation was open to anyone to make submissions and, in particular, to comment on the barriers faced in accessing and taking-up the services covered by the European Child Guarantee. The consultation closed mid-January, by which time 21 organisations had responded.

Following this consultation, DCEDIY hosted two Inter-Departmental Group meetings. Key departments, with responsibility for policy and operational domains critical to the successful implementation of the Guarantee, were present in order to inform the preparation of the NAP.

The publication of the NAP is an important first step in the implementation of the EU Child Guarantee. DCEDIY will coordinate actions across Government in addition to holding responsibility for the delivery of actions contained in this Plan relating to Early Childhood Education and Care.

The delivery of other key actions in the plan will be a matter for the parent Department holding policy and operational responsibility. In this regard, the Departments of Social Protection, Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Education and Health are critical stakeholders.

Identifying the most appropriate and effective structures to pursue the reforms necessary to improve outcomes for our most disadvantaged children and young people will be a particular focus of work. In this regard, the successor framework to Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures and its cross government and cross sectoral engagement will inform the implementation of the Child Guarantee NAP and will be of critical importance.

The Government at its meeting of 31 May 2022 approved the NAP. It was submitted to the European Commission on 8 June, and subsequently published on its website. The NAP was also published on the gov.ie website.

4. Summary of Future Significant Events and Developments (July - December 2022)

Disability Policy

Council conclusions will be issued following a thematic conference on ‘Supporting people with disabilities to integrate into the labour market’. The conference will take place from 20 to 21 September 2022, hosted by the Czech Presidency. The Commission is also expected to present its proposals for an employment package for people with disabilities as part of the EU Disability Strategy around the same time.

The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) will meet formally on 8 December 2022.

Youth Affairs

The Czech Presidency intends to host the EU Youth Conference on the 11th - 13th July 2022 in Prague. The focus of the Conference will be on the themes of the 9th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue which are Youth Goals #10 Sustainable Green Europe and #3 Inclusive Societies under the title “Engaging together for a sustainable and inclusive Europe”.

The EU Director General Meeting is scheduled to take place on the 18th - 20th September. Topics up for discussion will be the links between non-formal learning and formal education in youth work, responses to the Covid-19 pandemic and the flow of Ukrainian refugees.

To mark the close of the European Year of Youth 2022, CZ will also host an inter-institutional conference on the Year in Brussels on 6th December.

In line with the Presidency’s thematic priorities in the field of youth, CZ also intend to develop Council Conclusions on promoting the intergenerational dimension in the youth field to foster dialogue and social cohesion. These Council Conclusions will be developed in consultation with Member States via the Youth Working Party and put forward for adoption at the EYCS Council Meeting on 28th - 29th November 2022.