

A photograph of a laptop computer on a desk. The screen displays the Graduate.ie website, which features a navigation menu at the top, a large banner image of a person at a computer, and several text-based sections. One prominent section is titled 'THE GRADUATE QUIZ' with the subtext 'Lots of valuable prizes to be won'. Another section asks 'Will you be with us in your 5th year?' and mentions 'graduates in Strategy'. The laptop keyboard is visible in the foreground, with a person's hands typing. The background is slightly blurred, showing a wooden desk and some papers.

**Graduate.ie**

**Building on Success**

***\*New in 2013\****

***Active Citizenship and  
Democracy Programme***

**Online Student Civic Awareness Programme since 2001**



***“Article 12***

- 1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.*
- 2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.”*

**(Article 12, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989)**

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# Graduate.ie

## Active Citizenship and Democracy Programme

Interactive opportunities for young people to develop their understanding and involvement in their communities, counties and country through active citizenship and democratic participation

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The image is a composite graphic. On the left, a human eye with a green iris is visible, looking towards the right. The background is a dark blue world map. Overlaid on the map and eye are glowing blue lines and nodes, resembling a digital circuit or data network. The text 'DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP' is written in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font with a black outline, positioned on the left side of the image.

# DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

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*'Valuing what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts'*  
Statement of Learning 7, A Framework for Junior Cycle, Department of Education and Skills, 2012 p. 6

# Graduate.ie: Active Citizenship & Democracy Programme

**Graduate.ie** is an online civic awareness competition for post-primary students. It has been operating successfully in schools all across Ireland since 2001. Thousands of students compete in the competition for a chance to win a free trip to the European Parliament in Strasbourg where they take part in a youth parliament (Euroscola) with students from the other European Union member states. There are a total of twenty-five trips to be won each year. Students can also win Laptops, iPads, iPods, xBoxes and Educational Software while taking part in the **Graduate.ie** competition.

We have recently introduced an Active Citizenship and Democracy quiz to the competition. While the **Graduate.ie** competition was operated on a national basis, the new Active Citizenship & Democracy quiz operates on a local basis. This online quiz aims to increase students' knowledge about their local communities, local government, local politics, local elected representatives, political parties, constituencies, TDs, Government Departments, The Houses of the Oireachtas, etc.

The new **Graduate.ie** online quiz also enables young people to become aware of and engage with the work of State Agencies and local and national organisations.

*“An active citizen... is someone who not only believes in the concept of a democratic society but who is willing to translate that belief into action. Active citizenship is a compound of knowledge, skills and attitudes: knowledge about how society works; the skills needed to participate effectively; and a conviction that active participation is the right of all citizens.”*  
(Commonwealth of Australia, **Education for Active Citizenship**, p. 7, Canberra: Australian Government, 1989)

*“ Citizenship Education is not just a matter of learning the basic facts about the institutions and procedures of political life: it also involves acquiring a range of dispositions, virtues and loyalties that are intimately bound up with the practice of democratic citizenship.”*  
(Kymlicka, W., ‘Education for Citizenship’, in Halstead, J. M. and McLaughlin, T. H. (eds.) **Education and Morality**, London: Routledge, 1999)

## 1.0 Graduate.ie: Proven Track Record

**2001:** Graduate.ie, the brain-child of Castlebar man, Martin Heneghan, and Limavady man, David Simpson, first appeared in September 2001. They introduced this creative and innovative approach to Civic Awareness to schools in County Mayo on a pilot basis in September 2001. The pilot project ran for twenty weeks of the school year until March 2002. With the support of Mayo County Council and the Western Health Board a prize fund of €10,000 was established.

During the pilot project students from all post-primary schools in Mayo took part in the online competition. Each week, throughout the twenty weeks students logged on to **Graduate.ie** where they were presented with questions about civic awareness and the sponsoring organisations. Students were directed by hyperlinks to the webpages of the sponsors where they researched and came up with the correct answers, which they then submitted. A computer then randomly selected weekly winners for all of the correct answers. Sponsors then presented the winning students with their prizes. The local media provided very generous coverage of these presentation events.

**2002:** In September 2002 **Graduate.ie** was expanded to include Counties Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Leitrim and Donegal. During this phase the prize fund was increased to €25,000 which included cash prizes, laptop computers, educational software and computer games, etc.

Once again there was a very high participation rate from the local schools in each of the participating counties with very generous local media coverage of the prize presentation events. Such was the interest at regional level that it was decided then to test the concept of a national online competition.

**2003:** The Office of the Ombudsman was approached in 2003 to establish if there would be an interest in a national online civic awareness competition. Following discussions there was a very positive response and they agreed to provide sponsorship for **Graduate.ie**. Mr. Pat Whelan, the then Director General of the Office of the Ombudsman, wrote a very strong letter of endorsement, which was very helpful in attracting sponsorship from other State Agencies and organisations.



As this phase was about developing a national roll out strategy it was thought that having a national media partner would be a good idea. RTE 2fm were contacted to see if they would be interested in getting involved. The response from RTE 2fm was extremely positive towards the whole concept as the online civic awareness quiz fitted very well with their public broadcasting remit.

In September 2003 **Graduate.ie** - the national online quiz, was launched live on RTE 2fm with a ten minute interview with Ms. Patsy Sweeney who was the National Co-ordinator of the Department of Education and Skills for Transition Year at the time. RTE 2fm also agreed to announce the weekly winners live on air each Monday evening after the 9:00 pm News on The Rick O'Shea Show. Occasionally the announcement would be made a little later and as a result RTE 2fm received phone calls from many students across the country wondering when the announcement was going to be made!

The involvement of RTE 2fm had a huge impact on student participation in **Graduate.ie** raising weekly participation significantly. The securing of sponsorship also was now much less challenging as a result of the coverage on RTE 2fm.

**2004:** The European Parliament Representation in Ireland came on board as a sponsor in 2004. This gave **Graduate.ie** enormous status as the prizes provided were twenty-five places to attend the European Parliament in Strasbourg for a Youth Parliament (Euroscola) with students participating from all of the EU Member States. These prizes were most sought after and students from schools in every county competed for them each week.

At this stage Microsoft and Dell Computers decided to get involved as sponsors of **Graduate.ie**. So, in addition to the European Parliament Euroscola prizes **Graduate.ie** was now in a position to offer lots of additional prizes including Dell laptop computers, Microsoft software and games, games consoles and educational software.

**2006:** **Graduate.ie** introduced trips to the United States of America (USA) as prizes. Twenty lucky young people went to Washington, Philadelphia and New York as prize winners.

**2007:** A further twenty young people were sent as prize winners to the USA by **Graduate.ie** and visited the same cities. While there on both occasions (2006 & 2007) the students visited the White House, Capitol Hill, Independence Hall, Liberty Bell, the United Nations Building, Ground Zero, Ellis Island, etc.



*“Children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.”*

*(National Children's Office (2000), National Goal 1, **Our Children - Their Lives: The National Children's Strategy**, Dublin: National Children's Office)*



*“..The [Graduate.ie] material seems ideally suited to inspiring interest among young people in this important facet of our democratic system. [It] seems eminently suited to the aspirations of the Local Government Act, Section 64 (2) (d), namely ‘to promote interest among young people ... in local government and in community and civic affairs generally.’”*

*(Director General, General Council of County Councils)*

Also in 2007 **Graduate.ie** was in a position to send thirty students as prize winners to Cite de Science in Paris.

**More Recently:** **Graduate.ie** has continued to successfully run an online civic awareness programme in the form of a weekly quiz. **Graduate.ie** continues to offer the twenty-five places to Euroscola in Strasbourg each year and some digital technology equipment as much sought after prizes.

From humble beginnings in the west of Ireland **Graduate.ie** has continued to grow so that today students from more than 350 schools are taking part in the online competition each school year.

**January 2013:** **Graduate.ie** launched an Active Citizenship and Democracy quiz for students. This quiz operates on a local basis and involves local government bodies and political representatives as well as students from the relevant electoral areas. The **Graduate.ie** prize fund has been enhanced to enable visits abroad , e.g. Euroscola (Youth Parliament) in the European Parliament in Strasbourg, other parts of Europe and the USA.

The new quiz aims to increase students' knowledge about their local communities, local government, local politics, local elected representatives, political parties, constituencies, TDs, Government Departments, The Houses of the Oireachtas, etc.

**Graduate.ie** also aims to enable students to develop their awareness and understanding of State Agencies and organisations that operate in their local areas and other organisations that operate nationally.



Online Student Civic Awareness Programme  
in operation since 2001

**BUILDING ON SUCCESS**  
NEW PROGRAMME LAUNCHING IN 2013  
ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND DEMOCRACY

Interactive opportunities for young people to develop their understanding and involvement in their communities and country through active citizenship and democratic participation



inspire YOUTH PARLIAMENT  
POLITICAL PARTIES Inform  
engage community involvement  
local representatives inspire  
positive politics engage  
inspire LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
voter participation Inform

[www.graduate.ie](http://www.graduate.ie)

## 2.0 Graduate.ie: New Programme in Active Citizenship and Democracy

The quest for young people to have a say and to participate in issues that affect them has always existed. However, the last 15-20 years have seen a rapid growth in interest in the participation of young people, both as a good in itself, and as a lever to raise achievement more generally. The active citizenship/participation debate has emerged through numerous strands:

### 2.1 The Meaning of Citizenship

Young people should be regarded as citizens of today rather than citizens in waiting - the citizens of tomorrow. They are born with rights that are enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and as a result in Ireland's National Children's Strategy and as they grow into adulthood, new rights and responsibilities are acquired.

Everyone belongs to various types of community, both communities of place, from local to national to global, and communities of interest, rooted in a common concern or purpose. Citizenship involves enjoying rights and exercising responsibilities in these various types of community. This way of seeing citizenship encompasses the specific idea of political participation by members of a democratic state but it also includes the more general notion that citizenship embraces a range of participatory activities, not all overtly political, that affect the welfare of communities. Examples are, voluntary work, personal engagement in local concerns such as residents associations, community campaigns, neighbourhood watch schemes or parent council activities, or general engagement in civic society.

Citizenship is about making informed choices and decisions, and about taking action, individually and as part of collective processes.

### 2.2 Education for Citizenship

Education for citizenship is important because every society needs people to contribute effectively, in a variety of ways, to the future health and wellbeing of communities and the environment, locally, nationally and globally. In the rapidly changing society of the twenty-first century the process of developing a healthy and vibrant culture of democratic participation is dependant upon the fostering of active and responsible citizens.

*“Young people are not merely citizens in waiting. It is imperative that we hear their voices and concerns. They should be given the chance to shape the world they wish to grow up in.”Rajeeb Dey, Inquiry*

*Commissioner*

**(Carnegie Trust, Making Good Society: Final report of the Commission of inquiry into the Future of Civil Society in the UK and Ireland, Dunfermline: Carnegie Trust, 2010)**

*“To develop education for democracy we must develop democratic education...Our learners must understand that democracy means more than voting... (and)... that they cannot simply receive democracy from those who rule their society. Instead, they must build, nurture and protect it. And they must learn that they can never take it for granted... To teach about democracy our teachers and our education system as a whole must practice democracy.” (Nujoma, S. and Angula, N., in Namibia Ministry of Education & Culture, Foreword in **Toward Education for All**, Gamsberg MacMillan, Windhoek, 1993)*

The citizenship that formal education should seek to promote and foster needs to be thoughtful and responsible - rooted in and expressive of, a respectful and caring disposition in relation to people, human society generally, the natural world and the environment. It should also be active, in the sense of people being able to act and participate in various communities, wherever it seems to them desirable or appropriate to do so.

Being a capable active citizen is more than just about possessing knowledge and skills. It is about being able and willing to use knowledge and skills to make decisions and, where appropriate, take action. It is about being able to take action and make things happen for ends - and by means - that are infused with respect and care for people and a sense of social and environmental responsibility.

As Charles Quigley (Executive Director, Center for Civic Education, Los Angeles, USA) states:

*“The aim of civic education is therefore not just any kind of participation by any kind of citizen; it is the participation of informed and responsible citizens, skilled in the arts of deliberation and effective action.”*

### **2.3 Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE)**

The Junior Cycle course in Civic, Social and Political Education is very much about this educational process, as explained in the NCCA Discussion document (NCCA, 1993: p 11) outlining the rationale for the subject:

*“Civic, social and political education prepares students for active, participatory citizenship in local, national and international life. It should help students to use their minds well in a constantly changing and complex society. It should produce students who can explore, examine and analyse, who are skilled and practised in moral and critical appraisal, and capable of making decisions and judgements through a clarified and reflective citizenship, based on human rights and responsibilities. Such students will be prepared for life in a world where traditional structures are being challenged and where students are being confronted with conflicting interests, impermanent structures and constant questioning.”*

The CSPE course, as it exists today, is constructed around seven core concepts: democracy; rights and responsibilities; human dignity; interdependence; development; law and stewardship.

*“The entire school system should constitute an initiation to democratic living - to the assumption of responsibilities, to the challenges of participation, to learning about the linkage between rights and duties, knowing and caring.” (Opening address of the Director General of UNESCO to the International Congress on Education for Human Rights and Democracy, Montreal, Canada, 8-11 March 1993)*

*“Every new generation must be won over to democracy ... it is important to examine if pupils feel they can influence their situation, if they have a desire to, and if they know what they need to accomplish this.” (Oscarsson, V., Teaching for Citizenship in Europe, Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1996)*

*“Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society.” (Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, Strasbourg: Council of Europe, Rec, 128, 2003)*



*“Children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.”*

(National Children’s Office (2000) National Goal 1, **Our Children - Their Lives: The National Children’s Strategy**)

*Photo: CSPE Students, in St. Aloysius’ College, Carrigtwohill, Cork with ballot boxes for their European Mock Election*

By taking up this course students should develop a broad understanding of these concepts and come to recognise how these concepts serve collectively though not exclusively to inform and clarify the concept of citizenship. In the syllabus the concepts are presented in the form of concept descriptions rather than as a specific list of topics to be covered. By doing this the course committee set out clear directions and expectations for exploring the course concepts but left considerable scope for teachers to respond effectively to their students' needs and interests within the communities to which they theoretically belong. The two concepts quoted here (from the CSPE Syllabus, DES, 1996: p 10) illustrate this:

*“Democracy: Pupils should be aware that through the democratic process, at all levels of society, every individual can exercise power through participation. Participation at an individual or group level represents a central right and responsibility in an ordered democratic society. Non-participation or exclusion can lead to alienation, apathy and lack of responsibility on the part of the individual.*

*Rights and Responsibilities: Pupils should be aware that every individual is entitled to basic social, cultural, economic, civic, religious and political rights and to the safeguarding and protection of these rights. Denial of human rights results in the domination and oppression of people. Responsibilities go hand in hand with the rights accorded to individuals. Every person is responsible for their actions towards other people at all levels. Irresponsibility results in self-interested or careless actions which can be damaging to other people at all levels.”*

Through the course concepts of *Democracy* and *Rights and Responsibilities*, the active learning pedagogical approaches which CSPE espouses and the Action Projects which are central Civic, Social and Political Education offers a perfect vehicle through which the aim of **Graduate.ie**, which is the development of active citizenship and democratic participation, may be achieved.

As part of the senior cycle developments, the NCCA has developed a draft syllabus for a new subject in the area of social and political education, ***Politics and Society*** which has been presented to the Minister for Education and Skills. Politics and Society aims to develop the student's ability to be a reflective and active citizen, in a way that is informed by the insights and skills of social and political sciences. While it will undoubtedly complement a number of existing subjects, it will also bring a social science perspective that is entirely new to senior cycle education.

*“Citizenship does not happen somewhere else... [e.g.] through good work in [the] local community while the schools themselves remain authoritarian and antidemocratic. Citizenship practice is learned through practice: through the lived experience of belonging and participating, of listening and speaking, of being valued and included. The rhetorics of active citizenship, lifelong learning and social inclusion will have to be converted into realities which are not compartmentalised moments of ‘subject’ teaching but threaded, organisationally and culturally, through the experiences of individual lives.” (Devlin, M., **Young People and Politics: Background Paper**, Youth Ministers’ Conference, Dromoland Castle, March 2004)*



*“Acquiring a level of political literacy is key to accessing democratic society... and to demystify political systems and to provide both the language and the skills needed for democratic participation.”*

Harrison, C. and Wilson, M. (2011), **Make A Difference! Teachers’ Resource Book**,  
Dublin: Folens Publishers

## **2.4 The Council of Europe and the European Union**

Citizenship Education has undergone somewhat of a revival since the 1990s. The creation and overhaul of Citizenship Education programmes was a distinct feature of curricular change across Europe at this time, and indeed beyond Europe. From this time onwards the creation of competent and responsible citizens became an explicit aim in education across Europe, so much so that Citizenship Education is now central to the aims of organisations such as the Council of Europe and the European Union.

The Council of Europe defines Citizenship Education or Education for Democratic Citizenship as “a set of practises and activities designed to help young people and adults play an active part in democratic life and exercise their rights and responsibilities in society” (Council of Europe, 2007).

Perhaps most importantly, the Council of Europe places emphasis on the same three pillars of knowledge, skills and action, as espoused in the CSPE Syllabus (1996). Although the guiding principles of CSPE were established first, this mirroring of aims and emphasis in the work and literature of the Council of Europe serves to add credibility to the Irish definition of, and approach to Citizenship Education.

## **2.5 European Year of Citizens, 2013 and Ireland’s Presidency of the European Council, January - July 2013**

In January Ireland took over the Presidency of the European Council from Cyprus. At the same time the European Union (EU) commenced the European Year of Citizens, 2013. The focus of this Year is to provide opportunities for people throughout Europe to:

- ◆ learn about the rights and opportunities open to them thanks to EU citizenship – particularly their right to live and work anywhere in the EU
- ◆ stimulate debate about the obstacles that prevent people from fully using these rights and generate specific proposals for addressing them
- ◆ encourage people to participate in civic fora on EU policies and issues

The better the men and women of Europe understand their rights as EU citizens, the more informed the decisions they can take in their personal lives, and the more vibrant democratic life in Europe can be at all levels.

*“Research confirms that participation and competence are mutually reinforcing, that taking part in political processes increases peoples’ knowledge, commitment and understanding. ‘Learning by doing’ can be achieved through democratic and effective student councils. Active citizenship, especially for young people, requires opportunities to be involved in democratic decision making processes.” (The Democracy Commission, **Disempowered and Disillusioned but not Disengaged - Democracy in Ireland, A Progress Report**, Dublin: The Democracy Commission, May 2004)*

Both of these European events provide excellent opportunities to raise awareness about active citizenship and democratic participation and to create real opportunities for the engagement of young people.

### **2.6 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and The National Children's Strategy**

Citizenship Education in Ireland is fundamentally about rights and responsibilities and two documents underpin it: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Citizenship Education is one of the appropriate spaces in the curriculum to focus on Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Goal 1 of the National Children's Strategy which state that young people up to the age of eighteen years have a right to a voice in matters which affect them and that their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.

### **2.7 Youth Participation**

Young people already have a voice at local and national levels. They have opportunities to participate in decision-making in youth clubs/organisations (National Youth Council, National Youth Federation, Foróige, City of Dublin Youth Service Board, uniformed organisations, etc.); in their local Comhairle na nÓg, under the remit of the local County Development Board and at national level through various youth fora and Dáil na nÓg. Young people at school also have a voice through the Union of Secondary Students while most students now have a voice through their Student Council in their own school.

Research on student participation for the Department for Education and Skills in England by Derry Hannem demonstrated that student participation is associated with higher than average achievement supported by better than average attendance and lower than average exclusions when compared with similar schools. His work showed that schools with high levels of student participation, where everyone feels involved and valued, produced better GCSE results across the board when compared to schools in similar situations, especially for the less academic students.

According to research carried out in the United Kingdom (***Young People in Politics***, CYPUP, 2002) this kind of participation of young people has benefits for wider society too: it gives young people a sense of civic responsibility; makes them more interested in national and local politics; increases the likelihood that they will vote in elections.

*“Evidence suggest that the turnout of voters, particularly young voters, is declining across the world and particularly in developed countries. What sets Ireland apart is the turnout of first-time voters. [An} ... analysis of electoral participation data showed that amongst the 15 countries analysed, Ireland had the lowest turnout of first-time voters (40%).”*  
*(NYCI, ***Voting at the Crossroads: The 21st Century, Politics, Democracy and Young People***, Dublin: NYCI, 2000)*

## 2.8 Democratic Participation

Voter turnout in General Elections in Ireland has seen a steady decline from 76.93% of voters participating in the General Election of 1969 to as low as 62.57% in 2002 with an increase over the 2007 and 2011 elections to 67.03% and 70.05% respectively (See Table opposite).

What is more worrying is the number of young people aged 18 to 25 years who are not participating in the democratic process. The figures presented here were compiled by the National Youth Council of Ireland in their *The Truth about Youth Survey*, 2009 where an entire chapter was dedicated to Voting Participation.

The main Voter Participation findings were as follows:

- ◆ 26% of potential Voters aged 18-25 years were not on the Electoral Register
- ◆ 36% of potential Voters aged 18-21 years were not registered to vote
- ◆ 17% of potential Voters aged 22-25 years were not registered to vote
- ◆ Online voting and automatic registration were seen as the most effective methods of encouraging voter participation
- ◆ Only 20% of young people aged 18-25 years have ever had personal communication with their local TD/Councillor.

A short module on the topic of voter participation and abstention in the 2011 general election was included in the *Quarterly National Household Survey* (QNHS) carried out by the Central Statistics Office in the second quarter (April-June) of 2011. 62% of those aged between 18 and 24 said they voted in the general election, while 45% of those who did not vote were not registered to vote.

## 2.9 Netizens and Digital Literacy

A citizen who uses the internet as a way of participating in society is now becoming known as a *Netizen*. S/he may also be referred to as a *Digizen* or *CyberCitizen*.

In the NYCI survey quoted above over 73% of young people stated that online voting was either a very important or important measure in encouraging voter participation. This is not surprising given that as digital natives they use and trust technology. The method favoured by young people is not the system of electronic voting machines that was abandoned after the 2001-2002 experience, but remote online voting, i.e. via the internet. It should be possible to create a safe

General Election	Voter Turnout %
2011	70.05
2007	67.03
2002	62.57
1997	65.92
1992	68.49
1989	68.51
1987	73.33
1982	72.86
1981	76.22
1977	76.31
1973	76.61
1969	76.93

*General Election Voter Turnout, 1969-2011*

*“If they [people] are unaware of some of the social justice issues in Ireland, then their capacity to act as responsible, active members of society will be curtailed. If they leave school without ever learning how and where and with what strategies they can make a difference, then their capacity to act as responsible members of a democratic society will be curtailed.”*  
(Tormey, R. and Haran, N., ‘Education and Social Justice in Ireland’, in Tormey, R. (ed.) *Teaching Social Justice: Intercultural and Development Education Perspectives on Education’s Context, Content and Methods*, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick and Ireland Aid, 2003)



*“... The Commission argues that there is a need to harness the potential of the internet. An extraordinary amount of innovation is taking place through the internet, SMS, twitter and social networking sites, turning them into tools for mobilisation, education and direct action. Funders should be backing this innovation, partly to ensure that it really does open up participation and deliberation, and partly to find better ways for the online world to connect into the largely offline world of councils, boardrooms, parliaments and global summits.”*

**Carnegie Trust (2010), Making Good Society: Summary of Final Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Future of Civil Society in the UK and Ireland, Dunfermline: Carnegie Trust**

and secure yet accessible and convenient online voting system. Using **Graduate.ie** as an online civic awareness programme educating young people through active citizenship and democratic participation while also engaging in local surveys/polls can enable their use of digital literacy and empower them as Netizens!

### **2.10 Government, Local Government and Local, National and European Representatives**

For a representative democracy to function properly it requires that its citizens get involved in the democratic process as actively as possible. The most obvious way in which active citizens participate in a democracy is through voting in elections (local elections, general elections, by-elections, Presidential elections, European elections and Referenda to the Constitution) where the citizens let their voices be heard.

It is in the best interests of all public and potential public representatives and political parties to engage in public awareness and education programmes so that they have the best informed electorate who are likely to exercise their right to vote.

**Graduate.ie** provides access to young people - today's citizens and the voters of the future once they reach 18 years of age. All of that may change soon as organisations like the National Youth Council of Ireland, Dáil na nÓg and the Irish Secondary Students Union continue their campaign to have the voting age reduced to 16 years of age as is the case in Austria and in 7 of the 16 Länder in Germany.

Some time ago, Mr. Liam Kenny, the then Director General of the General Council of County Councils stated that the **Graduate.ie** material seems ideally suited to inspiring interest among young people in this important facet of our democratic system. “[It] seems eminently suited to the aspirations of the Local Government Act, Section 64 (2) (d), namely ‘to promote interest among young people ... in local government and in community and civic affairs generally.’”

### **2.11 State Agencies, Local and National Organisations**

People also develop their roles as active citizens through their interactions with and participation in the work of State Agencies and also through their involvement in organisations which operate in local areas and organisations that operate nationally. Through their involvement in these State Agencies and organisations young people develop their understanding of society, their participation skills and their capacity and competencies as active citizens.

*“There is a global and European momentum towards extending the right to vote to young people at 16 and 17 years old. Austria has lowered the voting age for all elections to 16, seven of the 16 Länder (states) in Germany have lowered the voting age and one canton (region) in Switzerland has also done so. Other countries such as the UK are also considering such a move. In Germany the voter turnout from young people aged 16 and 17 was higher than for some older age groups.”*  
*(Seven Reasons, [www.voteat16.ie/seven\\_reasons](http://www.voteat16.ie/seven_reasons))*

### 3.0 Potential Sponsors

From January we have introduced an Active Citizenship and Democracy quiz to the competition. Until now the **Graduate.ie** competition has operated on a national basis, the Active Citizenship and Democracy quiz now operates on a local basis. The new **Graduate.ie** quiz aims to increase students' knowledge about their local communities, local and national government, politics, public representatives, political parties, constituencies, State Agencies and Local and National organisations.

#### 3.1 How Graduate.ie works

- ◆ Each week throughout the academic year students will log on to **Graduate.ie** and select their local area from a drop down menu
- ◆ Each week students will be presented with a question from each participating organisation/individual/political party
- ◆ Students will be directed by hyperlink to the webpage of the organisation/individual/political party where they research the correct answer
- ◆ They then submit their answer to **Graduate.ie**
- ◆ Each Monday the computer randomly selects winners from all the correct answers
- ◆ School Principals are notified of the winner and the winner is announced in the school
- ◆ Local media are informed about the winners and their sponsors
- ◆ Winners and their sponsors are displayed on school website/school magazine and on **Graduate.ie**
- ◆ Sponsors will have opportunities to present students with their prizes

#### 3.2 How to become involved as a Graduate.ie Sponsor

- ◆ Sponsor provides **Graduate.ie** with a total of twenty questions
- ◆ Sponsor provides **Graduate.ie** with the correct answer to each question
- ◆ Sponsor provides **Graduate.ie** with 4 possible answers to each question
- ◆ Sponsor provides **Graduate.ie** with the hyperlink to the sponsor's webpage where students can find the correct answer
- ◆ Sponsor provides local schools with information about the **Graduate.ie** online competition

### Graduate.ie Sponsors

BMW Regional Authority ◆ Castlebar Credit Union ◆ Coillte's Blanket Bog Restoration Project ◆ Connaught Telegraph ◆ Dell Computers ◆ Diocese of Achonry ◆ Donegal County Council ◆ European Commission ◆ European Parliament Representation in Ireland ◆ Financial Services Ombudsman's Bureau ◆ Forás na Gaeilge ◆ Galway County Council ◆ Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology ◆ An Garda Síochána ◆ Irish Business and Employers Confederation ◆ Irish Financial Services Regulator ◆ Mayo County Council ◆ Mayo Fire Service ◆ Mayo Library Service ◆ Microsoft ◆ Money Advice and Budgeting Service ◆ National Children's Office ◆ National Forum on Europe ◆ Office of the Data Protection Commissioner ◆ Office of the Ombudsman ◆ Office of the Ombudsman for Children ◆ Public Appointments Service ◆ RTÉ 2fm ◆ Roscommon County Council ◆ South Dublin County Council ◆ Southern and Eastern Regional Authority ◆ Western Development Commission

### 3.3 Benefits to Students of taking part in Graduate.ie

#### **Awareness/Knowledge**

- ◆ Increases their awareness/knowledge of Active Citizenship/Democratic Participation
- ◆ Increases students' awareness/knowledge of their local community/local organisations
- ◆ Increases their awareness/knowledge of Local Elected/Potential Representatives (Councillors/TDs/MEPs)
- ◆ Increases their awareness/knowledge of Politics
- ◆ Increases their awareness of State Agencies and Local and National organisations

#### **Skills**

- ◆ Improves students' Digital Literacy skills
- ◆ Improves their Literacy and Numeracy skills
- ◆ Improves their Research skills
- ◆ Improves their ICT/Word Processing skills
- ◆ Develops Critical Thinking skills

#### **Action**

- ◆ Enables students to participate democratically as Netizens
- ◆ Enables them to express opinions/take action on issues that affect them/are of interest to them
- ◆ Enables them to take part in a national online community

### 3.4 Benefits to Sponsor of Graduate.ie

#### **Audience of 320,000 Young People**

Access to a large student audience in a fun and engaging manner

- ◆ There are 320,000 young people involved in post-primary education at the moment
- ◆ Over 50,000 students become potential voters each year

#### **Greater Awareness of Local Community**

Students become more aware of their local community

- ◆ They learn who represents them in the Council/Dáil/Seanad/European Parliament
- ◆ They find out who the other candidates/potential representatives in their area are
- ◆ They discover information about State Agencies and Local and National organisations

*"Young people are young citizens. They live in the same areas, they use and receive the same services, and they have the same rights and responsibilities as other members of local communities. They represent a section of every community that has its own needs, views and aspirations. Young people have the right to express their views and to be heard." (Wade, H., Lawton, A. and Stevenson, M. (2001), **Hear By Right: Setting Standards for the Active Involvement of Young People in Democracy**, London: Local Government Association)*

*"Bad politicians are elected by good citizens who don't vote."  
(George Jean Nathan, 1882-1958)*

*"The world works by people who observe, who notice, who look, who intuit, who are wise and then who decide to do something about all the things they don't like, who get around to do it, who gather the little groups together, who create their own sense of dynamism and empowerment and who change the world."*

*(Mary McAleese, 1951-)*

*"One person can make a difference and every person should try."*

*(John Fitzgerald Kennedy, 1917-1963)*



*“We use ever more sophisticated digital technology to communicate with each other, express our thoughts and ideas and find the information we need. Now, my phone allows me to surf the net, speak to relatives in far corners of the world, scan documents that I’m researching, list to educational podcasts, read books, film and photograph in high definition, connect with others through social networking sites ... and make phone calls. The challenge for the Citizenship teacher is to harness these technologies in a way that engages our learners in real life issues, allows them to take action in creative ways and maximise their learning.”*

(Bhargava, M. ‘Digital Technology and Active Citizenship’ in **Teaching Citizenship**, Autumn 2011, p. 6)

### **Better understanding of Politics**

- ◆ Students learn about political parties
- ◆ They discover who the Independent/Non-Party representatives are and what they do
- ◆ They learn about constituency clinics

### **Awareness of State Agencies, Local and National Organisations**

- ◆ Young people discover what State Agencies do
- ◆ They learn about organisations in their area
- ◆ They find about about national organisations

### **Potential Voters**

Students are more likely to vote because they are better informed

- ◆ They will know more about who represents them/who might represent them in the future
- ◆ They are aware of the local/national/European issues
- ◆ They will have taken part in online polls/surveys

### **Potential Volunteers/Employees**

Young people are more aware of active citizenship and the associated skills

- ◆ They will be aware of organisations in their communities and the work they do
- ◆ They will have developed active citizenship and participation skills
- ◆ They may be interested in getting involved in/being employed by the State Agency/organisation

### **Online Surveys/Polls**

Allows you to survey young people about different issues that affect them

- ◆ Through the quiz itself
- ◆ Through online polls/surveys

### **Face-to-Face Meetings with Young People**

Allows you to engage with them periodically at prize presentations

### **Public Relations/Photo Opportunities**

Very positive PR on school websites, in school magazines, and in local media and possibly through the national media also

*"Is féidir linn! Yes, we can!"*

*(Barack Obama, 1961 - )*

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."*

*(Margaret Mead, 1909 - 1978)*

*"Active citizenship requires the will and the opportunity to participate at every level and in every way - to be the arrow; not the target."*

*(Michael D. Higgins, (1941-)*

*"If you think you're too small to make a difference, you haven't been in bed with a mosquito!"*

*(Anita Roddick, 1942-2007)*



*“There must be a means for students to apply their knowledge of democracy. Since students learn best by doing, the principles of democracy are best taught in such a way that they are practiced.”*

Drisko, J. (1993), ‘The Responsibilities of Schools in Civic Education’, **Journal of Education**, 175 (1).

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*“Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society.”  
(Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local & Regional Life, Council of Europe, Rec, 128, 2003)*

*Photo: Graduate.ie winning students attending Euroscola (Youth Parliament) at the European Parliament, Strasbourg*

## APPENDIX 01: Graduate.ie Feedback

From: Celina Buckley  
Sent: 11 May 2007 19:55  
To: [martin@graduate.ie](mailto:martin@graduate.ie)  
Subject: Thank you

Dear Martin,

I would just like to thank you so much for the trip to Strasbourg. It really was a once in a life time experience and wouldn't be possible if it weren't for you. It was an amazing opportunity; making new friends, seeing new places and most of all, even taking part in the European Youth Parliament.

Sincerely,  
Celina Buckley.

**From:** Darragh Shanahan  
**Sent:** 01 April 2009 11:34  
**To:** graduate  
**Subject:** Strasbourg Trip.

Martin,  
I'd like to send my sincere thanks for the excellent trip to Strasbourg. It was a once in a life time opportunity that I will never forget. I thoroughly enjoyed every aspect of the trip, with the highlight being the trip to The European Parliament. It was extremely interesting to find out the workings of the parliament and the chance to discuss our opinions was an honour.

I'm extremely grateful to my sponsor - 'The Ombudsman for Children', without their generous sponsorship none of this would have been possible. Also, I'd like to mention the enjoyment myself and my class had participating in the online quiz every week. We all learned a huge amount about the various agencies and we all hope to keep taking the quiz.

Thanks again,  
Darragh Shanahan.

**From:** Bernard Aherne  
**Sent:** 27 May 2006 14:00  
**To:** Martin T. Heneghan  
**Subject:** Re: Graduate Prize Presentation, May 06

Dear Martin Heneghan,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, the supervisors and also the sponsors for the wonderful trip that you supplied me with. It was an awesome experience.

We were asked to make recommendations for the next group and I just think that there was too much travelling involved. Everything else was brilliant!

You will be happy to know that my school has a section in *The Midland Tribune* every week and they had an article about the trip in it last Wednesday. They are also going to put another one in in the next week or two. I will send these on to you when I get them..

I would like to finish by saying thanks very much and I plan to take part again next year.

Kind Regards,  
Bernard Aherne

**From:** Anne O'Keeffe  
**Sent:** 26 March 2009 09:54  
**To:** [martin@graduate.ie](mailto:martin@graduate.ie)  
**Subject:** Strasbourg Trip

Hi Martin,

I'm just e-mailing you to thank you for the opportunity to travel to the European Parliament earlier this month. I really enjoyed the trip and thought it was of great benefit. I will continue to do the online quiz.

Thanks Again!

Anne O'Keeffe

From: Ciarán Lyng  
Sent: 26 April 2007 22:55  
To: [martin@graduate.ie](mailto:martin@graduate.ie)  
Subject: Paris Trip

Hi there, I'm just e-mailing you to thank you for organising a great trip for us in Paris this week, I'm only home an hour or so, and it was absolutely savage craic altogether! We all made lots of new friends and got to meet loads of different people from all over the country, gaining a perspective on what it likes in different counties! Thanks very much again, it was an absolutely brilliant 4 days, we all loved it! Fair dues to you and the supervisors who brought us for giving up your time and all that! We all really appreciate it!

Oh by the way, is there any chance that you wouldn't send the picture of me getting the certificate last Monday to my local paper, because I don't really like or want my picture being in the paper. Thanks very much!

Kind Regards,  
Ciarán Lyng

**From:** Shane O'Neill  
**Sent:** 08 November 2012 17:07  
**To:** [martin@graduate.ie](mailto:martin@graduate.ie)  
**Subject:** My thoughts on Strasbourg 2011

Hi Martin,  
Shane O'Neill here, I'm writing to you with my thoughts on the trip. I went to Strasbourg after winning the Graduate competition.

It was a fantastic experience for me because I had never been out of the country before, so it was a new experience. In Strasbourg we visited many different monuments in the city. We went to the European Parliament and that was a great feeling. It was exciting seeing the building and taking part in Euroscola. We got to meet people from all over Europe too. In general the experience for me was brilliant, I made new friends and experienced something completely different.

Thanks,

Shane

## APPENDIX 01: Graduate.ie Feedback

**From:** Eamonn Larkin  
**Sent:** 08 November 2012 19:15  
**To:** [martin@graduate.ie](mailto:martin@graduate.ie)  
**Subject:** Strasbourg Trip, 2012

Hi Martin,

I thought the trip to Strasbourg was a trip of a lifetime for any young student like myself.

It's a break from school and it's something very different that you would only get to do once if you're lucky!

The trip itself was a great experience, being in a different country for 4 days with no one you know is quite daunting but by the end of the trip you feel like you have known them all for years!

Visiting the European Parliament was very different and another great experience. It shows you what the MEPs do if you're into all that craic!

Strasbourg is a great city and also in Frankfurt there are savage shops.

One thing though you have to bring food I made that mistake! You'll be starving!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Éamonn Larkin

**From:** Nathan Lacey  
**Sent:** 29 March 2009 21:23  
**To:** [martin@graduate.ie](mailto:martin@graduate.ie)  
**Subject:** RE: Euroscola

Hey Martin,

I just wanted to say thanks for the pictures, and also for the whole trip in general, I had a fantastic time, it was a truly enjoyable experience and I would recommend it to anyone, thanks for the opportunity, and best of luck for the future.

Thanks,  
Nathan

**From:** Denis McDermott  
**Sent:** 27 March 2009 15:23  
**To:** [martin@graduate.ie](mailto:martin@graduate.ie)  
**Subject:** Trip to Strasbourg

Martin,

Thank you and my sponsor The Public Appointment Service for the trip to Strasbourg, I enjoyed it and the highlight of the trip was the tour of the European Parliament on Friday. It was a experience I will never forget! Please pass on my thanks to the sponsor for this wonderful opportunity. Good luck with the competition next year!

Denis McDermott, Colaiste Phobal Roscrea

**From:** Lauren Kilkelly  
**Sent:** 18 May 2011 13:51  
**To:** [martin@graduate.ie](mailto:martin@graduate.ie)  
**Subject:** Strasbourg 2011

Hi Martin, This is just a short message to say thank you very much for the time in Dublin/Strasbourg. I had a brilliant time and made friends for life. Thank you so much.

Lauren :)

**From:** Jo Jamieson  
**Sent:** 30 March 2009 10:47  
**To:** [martin@graduate.ie](mailto:martin@graduate.ie)  
**Subject:**

Dear Martin,

Thank you for the great time I had in Strasbourg. I also wish to thank my sponsor the Office of the Ombudsman. It was an enjoyable educational experience, where I met many new young people. I especially enjoyed the trip to the European Parliament, it was a lot more fun than I expected. I'll certainly be supporting the competition again next year. Keep up the good work.

Kind Regards,  
Jo Jamieson

**From:** Eamonn Bell  
**Sent:** 29 June 2006 13:43  
**To:** [martin@graduate.ie](mailto:martin@graduate.ie)  
**Subject:** Strasbourg Trip 2006

Dear Mr. Heneghan,

Firstly, I must apologise for the delay in writing to you. Between the Junior Cert and other diversions, I have only got around to writing now. I would like to sincerely thank you for all your work this year that resulted in the great time I had in Europe. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to experience the European Union at firsthand. Also, I'd like to thank NST through you for a seamless trip. I must thank the sponsor who covered the cost in addition.

The high point of the trip for me was certainly the visit to the Parliament which, I think, everyone involved enjoyed immensely for its novelty but also for the meeting place it was for so many fellow young people. Also, it was fantastic to see the little, but beautiful country of Luxembourg, even if in passing.

I hate to criticise a free lunch, but the consensus (reached about 3 hours into the bus journey) was that it was really unnecessary to stay in Valkenburg in the Netherlands. We arrived there late in the evening and were bundled out of the country early the next morning. Everyone felt it was a shame that we did not get a second of time in the town and in truth we did not "visit" the Netherlands. I'm sure you have heard this from other travellers, nevertheless, I feel to make a positive impact on future young Europeans, the overnight in Holland should be overlooked.

Despite that, for me at least, the eye-opening day in the EU cancelled out hours spent in transit and made the trip for me (as it should). I really enjoyed the time I spent there and I felt I was participating in something bigger, throughout the whole day.

Irish youth played many important roles that day as committee chairmen, rapporteurs and speakers, much more so than many of the other "bigger" countries and this group drive to take part was in no small part due to The Graduate quiz. By no means do I aim to sound selective, but open application and the quiz seems to have chosen the some of the most interested and willing 30 students in Ireland and so maximised the net impact the Euroscola programme made on the Irish youth. So, I think the quiz is good idea and should certainly continue in this country if not rolled out further.

I hope you find my opinion useful in some way and thank you all for all the work put in to making the trip happen. Also I wish oncoming years of potential Eurotrippers the best of luck on their journeys to Strasbourg.

Yours sincerely,  
Eamonn Bell, Sligo

## APPENDIX 01: Graduate.ie Feedback

**From:** Maureen O'Brien  
**Sent:** 18 March 2009 13:26  
**To:** Martin T. Heneghan  
**Subject:** Re: FW: Strasbourg trip

Hi Martin,

I would like to convey my thanks for the opportunity given to Ethan by the Graduate programme to experience the workings of the European Parliament. He thoroughly enjoyed his time in Strassbourg and is looking forward to partaking in the competition again next year.

If by any chance you could make available the photos taken in Dublin on the morning of the presentation and any others taken while away I would really appreciate a copy.

Many thanks again,

Regards  
Maureen O'Brien

**From:** Aoife Sharkey  
**Sent:** 03 May 2006 19:01  
**To:** [martin@graduate.ie](mailto:martin@graduate.ie)  
**Subject:** graduate us trip

Hi,  
Aoife Sharkey here from Donegal. Just thought I'd write to say thanks a million for the trip to America. It was absolutely fantastic. I was really worried at first about not knowing anyone but that soon changed at the airport. I'd like to say thanks as well to Bronagh and David, our leaders who were brilliant. Unfortunately, this is my last year at school so I won't get to enter next year's competition but I will have no hesitation in telling everyone in my school to enter it next time.

Once again it was one of the best times of my life, because I met such great people and I'm still in contact with many of them.

Thanks,  
Aoife :)

**From:** Catherine Waldron  
**Sent:** 29 May 2006 20:21  
**To:** Martin T. Heneghan  
**Subject:** Re: Graduate Prize Presentation, May 06

Dear Martin,

Thank you so much for those wonderful photos which we received. We as Brendan's parents want to let you know what a great experience the trip was for Brendan. He really was impressed with the whole trip from start to finish. He had a great opportunity to get to see so many countries in such a short space of time and most of all to meet up with the other kids from other countries including Ireland. He made friends with some of the kids and has already been in touch with them by email.

You mentioned our local paper. Ours is the Western People. We tried to highlight the quiz and trip in Brendan's school and I spoke to the Principal there, and I am sorry to say he didn't do anything about it. Our sincere thanks to you and all the wonderful teachers that went with them.

Sincerely,  
Catherine & Walter Waldron

**From:** Steven Dooley  
**Sent:** 25 April 2010 21:59  
**To:** [martin@graduate.ie](mailto:martin@graduate.ie)  
**Subject:** Re: Trip to Strasbourg 2

*Hi Martin,*

I just wanted to let you I had a wonderful time in Strasbourg and really enjoyed the experience. Thank you very much, for all your work and effort in organising the tour.

Strasbourg is a very beautiful city and the European Parliament experience was great.

Thanks again,  
All the best,

*Steven Dooley*

**From:** Raymond Gahan  
**Sent:** 28 May 2008 21:20  
**To:** [martin@graduate.ie](mailto:martin@graduate.ie)  
**Subject:** Strasburg Trip - Shane Gahan

Martin

Just letting you know that Shane had a very enjoyable and memorable trip last weekend. We would like to thank you for your hard work in facilitating the trip and South Dublin County Council for their sponsorship.

Please let us know which publications the photos were sent to so we can purchase copies.

Best wishes

Raymond Gahan

**From:** Paul McGrath  
**Sent:** 02 May 2006 20:19  
**To:** [martin@graduate.ie](mailto:martin@graduate.ie)  
**Subject:** RE: TRIP TO STRASBOURG

Dear Martin,

I cannot begin to express my gratitude and sincere thanks to you and your staff at The Graduate for my enjoyable trip to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. Without a doubt, this trip has been the best experience I have ever been a part of. I will never forget the experience, and I can honestly say that this trip really opened my eyes with regards to democracy within the Parliament.

I gained valuable political information and experience from this trip. I was really sad leaving and will never forget the experience and all of the new friends I made as a result of the trip. Again, a million thanks to you and your colleagues for making this trip possible and I hope your good work continues.

Thank you all so very very much.

Paul McGrath.



*“Democracy does not require that everyone is the author of every decision. It does require, however, that people can have their say on matters that affect them. An active democratic citizenry ensures broad deliberative participation and can strengthen democracy as decisions to which more people contribute are likely to be better and ones which people are more likely to adhere to. This is only possible if they are provided with accessible opportunities and mechanisms for participation.”*

(Harris, C. (ed.), (2005) **Engaging Citizens: The Report of the Democracy Commission**, Dublin: TASC at New Island, p. 24)

## APPENDIX 02: Letters of Support



### COMHAIRLE CHONTAE MHAIGH EO

Aras an Chontae, Caislean a 'Bharraigh, Contae Mhaigh Eo.  
Teileafóin (094) 24444 Fax (094) 23937

Your Ref.

Our Ref.

31<sup>st</sup> May, 2002

To Whom it May Concern:

Re: Graduate Treasure Trail

This is to confirm that Mayo County Council is committed to actively supporting the Graduate Treasure Trail.

This is an initiative for young people whereby they can use the internet to learn about local government.

The Treasure Trail involves a competition whereby the participants answer a series of questions, the answers to which are on the Local Authority website. Participants must read different articles on the website in order to find the answers to the questions.

This would give information about the Local Authority to young people through an avenue which would not normally be open to a Local Authority.

Mr. Martin Heneghan of The Graduate will be making contact with all Local Authorities. I would be grateful if you could meet with him in order to give the proposal consideration.

Yours sincerely,

  
J. Condon,  
County Secretary.

MAYO COUNTY COUNCIL, Aras an Chontae, Castlebar, Co. Mayo. Telephone (094) 24444



Mr. Martin Heneghan,  
Project Co-ordinator,  
The Graduate,  
'Asbeville',  
Breaffy Road,  
Castlebar,  
Co. Mayo.

SECOND LEVEL  
SUPPORT SERVICE

SEIRRHÍS TACAÍOCHTA  
DARA LEIBHÉAL

15<sup>th</sup> June 2004

Re The Graduate Treasure Trail



The Civic, Social & Political  
Education Support Service  
C D V E C  
Curriculum Unit  
Development Unit  
Sundrive Road, Dublin 12.  
Ph: +353 1 453 5487  
Fax: +353 1 453 7659  
email: cspe@cda.cdvec.ie

Dear Martin,

I am writing to you on behalf of the CSPE Support Team of the Second Level Support Service to express our continued support for *The Graduate Treasure Trail*. As you are already aware Civic, Social and Political Education actively promotes active participatory citizenship with students at Junior Cycle and in so doing encourages students to access information relating to society (local, national, European and international). We have had very positive feedback from teachers and students about this quiz. The generous prize fund is an added incentive to participate.

We, as a Support Team, are delighted to promote this quiz with CSPE teachers across the country. In the last academic year there were 3,977 teachers teaching CSPE to some 150,000 young people approximately. We intend circulating information about *The Graduate Treasure Trail* quiz to all CSPE Co-ordinators with our in-service schedule in early September 2004.

The participation of high profile state bodies, local authorities and other organisations and the publicity generated by 2FM has played a significant role in generating the interest of many young people countrywide in this project. We congratulate you and all involved on the success of *The Graduate* to date and wish you every success in the year ahead. We will continue to promote this worthwhile endeavour with CSPE teachers at in-service training, through our *CSPE News* newsletter and in our many other dealings with CSPE teachers.

Yours sincerely,



Conor Harrison,  
National Co-ordinator,  
CSPE Support  
Mobile: 087-2405710  
Tel./Fax: 01-6102805

  
The SLSS is funded by the Department of Education and  
Science and the National Development Plan

## APPENDIX 02: Letters of Support

ARDOCHOMHAIRLE na gCONTAETHA  
GENERAL COUNCIL OF COUNTY COUNCILS

Fitzmaurice Place, Portlaoise, Co. Laois, Ireland  
Telephone: 0502 71288 • Fax: 0502 62977  
e-mail address: info@gccc.ie



Mr. Martin Heneghan  
Asheville  
Breacly Road  
Castlebar  
Co. Mayo

June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

Dear Mr. Heneghan,

I write to confirm that I have read with great interest the material which you sent me regarding 'The Graduate' programme aimed at encouraging secondary school students to explore the world of local government in Ireland.

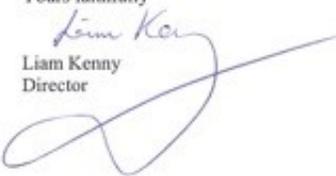
From a first glance the material seems ideally suited to inspiring interest among young people in this important facet of our democratic system.

I see from the testimonials from a variety of education bodies and other organisations that you have already made a positive impact with a large number of students in terms of engaging them in projects on the local government sector.

Certainly your project seems eminently suited to the aspirations of the Local Government Act Section 64(2)(d), namely 'promote interest among young people ... in local government and in community and civic affairs generally.'

I commend the venture to members and officials of county and city councils.

Yours faithfully

  
Liam Kenny  
Director

*Serving Ireland's County and City Councillors*



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Director Denis O'Boyle Secretary Patricia Grealis ICT Advisor Art Ó Súilleabháin

To Whom It May Concern:

**Re – Graduate Treasure Trail**

This is to confirm that Mayo Education Centre supports the initiative from **The Graduate**.

The initiative referred to as the Graduate Treasure Trail appears to be a valuable and innovative application of the Internet for educational use. For this reason Mayo Education Centre will be interested in assisting the project and including it as part of a strategy for integrated use of the Internet in its annual programme especially as part of Internet Initiatives such as [NetD@ys](http://NetD@ys) Europe and related Projects.

We will be promoting these initiatives through our official schools network and will be including the **Graduate Treasure Trail** in these programmes and will also be offering the facility to the countrywide network of schools through the National Network of Education Centres in Ireland.

Rath Dé ar do chuid oibre

Art Ó Súilleabháin M.Ed. ICT ICT Advisor Mayo Education Centre



## APPENDIX 02: Letters of Support



SECOND LEVEL  
SUPPORT SERVICE

SEIRBHÍS TACAÍOCHTA  
DARA LEIBHÉAL



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Bothernasup,  
Ballina,  
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18/03/03

To whom it may concern :

**Re : The Graduate Treasure Trail.**

The Transition Year Curriculum Support Service wishes to confirm its support of and commitment to The Graduate Treasure Trail. Transition Year aims to *"To promote the personal, social, educational and vocational development of pupils and to prepare them for their role as autonomous, participative and responsible members of society"*.

(Mission Statement, Department of Education Guidelines 1994/95). Since the cultivation of independent, self-directed learning skills is central to fulfilling these aims, any facility which incentivises and encourages young people to develop those competencies in their own time is to be lauded.

The Graduate Treasure Trail is an interesting and innovative Internet project which encourages students to engage not only with their own learning, but also through that, with their own community. Developing an awareness and appreciation of one's own community and environment is the first step towards good citizenship, and ultimately the cornerstone of developing an effective and responsible society.

The Transition Year Curriculum Support Service wishes to congratulate Martin Heneghan on this initiative and will be pleased to support it's implementation in our Transition Year Schools. We look forward to the project being extended nationwide.

With every good wish for continued success,

Yours sincerely

Patsy Sweeney  
National Co-ordinator  
Transition Year Curriculum Support Service

PARLAIMINT NA hEORPA-EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



OFFICE IN IRELAND

Mr. Martin Heneghan  
Project Co-ordinator  
The Graduate  
"Ashville"  
Breaffy  
Castlebar  
Co. Mayo.

30 August 2004

Dear Martin

Thank you for your letter of 23<sup>rd</sup> August with press cuttings and reports on the Graduate Competition prizewinners' participation in *Euroscola*. The Graduate online information quiz obviously caught the imagination of students and teachers as evidenced by the geographical spread of prizewinners.

As already indicated, this Office is pleased to be associated with the 2005 Competition and we will invite two groups of prizewinners to participate in *Euroscola* in Spring 2005. The second group will participate in a 'Junior' *Euroscola* for 14 - 16 years old students.

Congratulations on your initiative in organising the quiz and I know that future prizewinners will once again make an outstanding contribution to the *Euroscola* proceedings in the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Jim O'Brien  
Head of Office





