Press Release:

AER Summer Academy wins 2023 European Citizens' Prize

The 2022 AER Summer Academy is one of two Irish projects selected as winners of the prestigious 'European Citizens' Prize' for 2023.

Awarded every year by the European Parliament, the European Citizens' Prize goes to projects *"organised by people or organisations that encourage mutual understanding and closer integration between people in the EU, cross-border cooperation that builds a stronger European spirit, and EU values and fundamental rights."* The 2022 Summer Academy was selected alongside 'The Shona Project', social enterprise for womens' empowerment, as winners of the award for Ireland.

As part of the European Year of Youth, the theme of 2022 Summer Academy was *"A Europe for the Next Generation/Eoraip don Chéad Ghlúin Eile"*. Organised by the Assembly of European Regions (AER), the 2022 Summer Academy was hosted in Ireland for the first time by AER members, Donegal County Council and Údarás na Gaeltachta, the regional state agency for the Irish-speaking (*Gaeltacht*) regions of Ireland. 150 delegates from 19 regions across Europe were welcomed to the Atlantic Technological University (ATU) Letterkenny, and the gteic@Gaoth Dobhair enterprise hub.

Over a week of debate, discussion and study visits, delegates worked together to shape solutions to the major challenges for the next generation; empowering young people in decision-making by connecting them with regional leaders, ministers, members of the Irish and European parliaments, the Council of Europe and European Committee of the Regions.

The programme included debates on youth participation in regional politics, and a range of workshops on rural entrepreneurship, the bioeconomy, the Ukrainian refugee crisis, youth mobility, the future of skills, tourism and remote working. It also included study visits to Derry/Londonderry City to learn about cross-community initiatives to support the Peace Process, Glenveagh National Park and Údarás na Gaeltachta's *'gteic'* Gaeltacht remote working hub in Gweedore. The Summer Academy was supported in part through a grant from the Irish Government's 'Communicating Europe' Initiative.

Welcoming the news, **Mícheál Ó hEanaigh,** AER Vice President for Youth first thanked the members of the 2022 Summer Academy Organising Committee, and said *''The Assembly of European Regions is honoured to have been selected as a winner of the European Citizens' Prize alongside the Shona Project. The 2022 AER Summer Academy showed beyond doubt that initiatives led by young people are transforming Europe from the bottom-up and for the better. Whether it is in supporting refugees, addressing climate change or strengthening civic participation, their resilience, creativity and community spirit demand a greater say in decision-making at all levels. The AER will continue working with young people to ensure they have a real say in shaping the Europe they will inherit."*

From the hosts, Cathaoirleach of Donegal County Council, **Councillor Martin Harley** stated that *"On behalf of Donegal County Council, I would like to congratulate the Assembly of European Regions, Summer Academy Organising Committee, our co-hosts Udarás na Gaeltachta and my colleagues in Donegal County Council on this prestigious European Citizens' Prize award that recognises the diligent work and commitment of all concerned to creating a positive future for young people across Europe. We were delighted to host the Summer Academy in 2022 in County Donegal, which attracted over 150 participants from 19 different regions and 18 different*

countries, which along with this award demonstrates the wide reaching and diverse nature of the AER Summer Academy event."

Tomás Ó Síocháin, CEO of Údarás na Gaeltachta said *"It is wonderful that this prestigious prize has been awarded to the AER Summer Academy - a Europe for the Next Generation, which Údarás na Gaeltachta co-hosted in Donegal last year, in partnership with Donegal County Council. We were delighted to see so many young people from all over Europe gathered together in Donegal and we were honoured to welcome them to our flagship digital hub, gteic @Gaoth Dobhair in the heart of the Gaeltacht during the event. The Summer Academy in Donegal was an exceptional opportunity to prepare young people to face the common challenges facing all regions in Europe. These are the leaders of the future and the AER Summer Academy offers a chance for these young people to be heard and to engage with some of the most important issues facing us all. Creating the space for informed debate is hugely important in today's society with the often polarised views facilitated by social media."*

About AER:
The Assembly of European Regions (AER) is the largest independent network of regions in wider Europe, with 140 members in 25 countries. AER has been the voice of regional authorities since 1985, and has played a pivotal role in promoting regions as key players in the European project. Our network is present everywhere on the European continent, inside and outside the European Union. Currently, the AER has three members in Ireland: Donegal County Council, Údarás na Gaeltachta and Mayo County Council.

For more information, please contact AER Member Relations Coordinator, Justin Sammon by email at j.sammon@aer.eu and Programmes Coordinator, Lorène Weber at l.weber@aer.eu.

Partners for the 2022 Summer Academy:

Údarás na Gaeltachta
DONEGAL IRELAND'S DNA
Comhairle Contae Dhún na nGall Donegal County Council
Vojvodina (SRB)
Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta an Atlantaigh Atlantic Technological University
communicating europe
Gaeltacht na hÉireann
Consiliul Județean Maramureș
Region Jönköpings län
AER Assembly of European Regions
VIKEN FYLKESKOMMUNE
Nordland FYLKESKOMMUNE

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Preas Ráiteas:

Acadamh Samhraidh AER Buaiteoir Duais na Saoránach Eorpach 2023

Tá Acadamh Samhraidh AER 2022 ar cheann de dhá thogra Éireannach a roghnaíodh mar bhuaiteoir ar an ngradam iomráiteach ‘Duais na Saoránach Eorpach’ do 2023.

Gach bliain, bronnann an Pharlaimint Eorpach Duais na Saoránach Eorpach ar thograí “a *eagraíonn daoine nó eagraíochtaí, a spreagann comhthuiscint agus comhtháthú idir daoine san AE, comhoibriú trasteorann a threisíonn an spiorad Eorpach agus luachanna an AE agus cearta bunúsacha.”* Roghnaíodh an tAcadamh Samhraidh 2022 chomh maith leis an togra “Shona”, fiontar sóisialta do chumasú ban, mar bhuaiteoirí na duaise d’Éirinn.

Mar chuid de Bhliain Eorpach na hÓige, b’ é *“An Eoraip don Chéad Ghlúin Eile”* téama Acadamh Samhraidh 2022. B’é Comhthionól na Réigiún Eorpach (AER) a reáchtáil an tAcadamh Samhraidh 2022, a ndearna Comhairle Contae Dhún na nGall agus Údarás na Gaeltachta, an eagraíocht stáit ar a bhfuil freagracht na gceantar ina labhraítear Gaeilge in Éirinn (an Ghaeltacht) comh-óstú air. Cuireadh fáilte roimh 150 toscaire as 19 réigiún trasna na hEorpa chuig Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta an Atlantaigh (OTA), Leitir Ceanainn agus mol digiteach gteic@Gaoth Dobhair.

Le linn seachtaine díospóireachta, cur agus cúitimh agus cuairteanna eolais, d’oibrigh na toscairí le chéile le réiteach a fháil ar mhórdhúshláin na céad ghlúine eile; ag cumasú daoine óga i ndéanamh cinntí, trí nasc a chruthú idir iadsan agus ceannairí réigiúnacha, airí rialtais, teachtaí i bparlaimintí na hÉireann agus na hEorpa, Comhairle na hEorpa agus Coiste Eorpach na Réigiún.

Mar chuid den chlár, reáchtáladh díospóireachtaí ar rannpháirtíocht na hóige i bpolaitíocht réigiúnach, agus réimse ceardlanna ar an bhfiontraíocht faoin tuath, an bhitheacnamaíocht, géarchéim na dteifeach ón Úcráin, cumas gluaiseachta na n-óg, todhchaí scileanna, turasóireacht agus cian-obair. Eagraíodh cuairt ar chathair Dhoire, ag ar roinneadh eolas faoi thionscnaimh trasteorann a thacaíonn leis an bpróiseas síochána, cuairt ar Pháirc Náisiunta Ghleann Bheithe agus cuairt ar gteic Údarás na Gaeltachta i nGaeltacht Thír Chonaill. Fuair an tAcadamh Samhraidh tacaíocht ó thionscnamh rialtas na hÉireann “Ag déanamh cumarsáide faoin Eoraip” ‘Communicating Europe.’

D’fháiltigh **Mícheál Ó hÉanaigh**, leas-uachtarán AER don óige roimh an nuacht, ghlac sé buíochas le baill choiste eagair Acadamh an tSamhraidh AER 2022 agus dúirt: ‘’Is mór an onóir do Chomhthionól na Réigiún Eorpacha gur roghnaíodh muid mar bhuaiteoir ar Dhuais na Saoránach Eorpach, maraon leis an togra Shona. Léirigh Acadamh an tSamhraidh 2022 go cinnte go bhfuil tionscnaimh a bhfuil ceannaireacht ag daoine óga orthu ag athrú na hEorpa ón mbun aníos, chun a leasa. Más ag tacú le teifigh é, ag tabhairt aghaidh ar athrú aeráide nó ag neartú rannpháirtíocht an phobail, tá neart, spiorad, cruthaitheacht agus spiorad pobail na n-óg ag éileamh níos mó rannpháirtíochta dóibh i ndéanamh na gcinntí ag gach leibhéal. Leanfaidh AER orthu ag obair le daoine óga lena chinntiú go mbeidh glór fiúntach acu i múnlú na hEorpa a bheas acu mar oidhreacht.”

Ar son na n-eagraíochtaí a rinne ostú ar an gcomhdháil, dúirt an Cllr Martin Harley, Cathaoirleach Chomhairle Contae Dhún na nGall: “Ar son Chomhairle Contae Dhún na nGall, ba mhaith liom comhghairdeas a dhéanamh le Comhthionól na Réigiún Eorpach, Coiste Eagair an Acadaimh Samhradh, ár gcomh-óstálaithe, Údarás na Gaeltachta and mo chomhleacaithe ar Chomhairle Contae Dhún na nGall as an gradam iomráiteach seo, Duais na Saoránach Eorpach a bhuachaint. Is aitheantas é ar an obair dhíograiseach a rinne siad agus tiomantas gach a raibh baint acu leis an ócáid agus iad ag iarraidh todhchaí dearfach a chruthú do dhaoine óga ar fud an

hEorpa. Bhí muid an-sásta gur reáchtáladh Acadamh Samhraidh 2022 i Contae Dhún na Gall, agus go raibh breis agus 150 rannpháirteach ann as 19 réigiún agus 18 tír, rud a chruthaíonn, maraon leis an duais seo, chomh leathan agus chomh héagsúil agus atá Acadamh an tSamhraidh AER.'

Dúirt Príomhfheidhmeannach Údarás na Gaeltachta, **Tomás Ó Síocháin**: 'Is iontach an rud go bhfuil an duais iomráiteach seo buaite ag Acadamh an tSamhraidh AER - Eoraip don Chéad Ghlúin Eile, a ndearna Údarás na Gaeltachta comh-óstú air i nDún na nGall anuraidh. Bhí lúcháir orainn an oiread daoine óga as chuile chearn den Eoraip a bheith bailithe le chéile i dTír Chonaill agus ba mhór an onóir dúinn fáilte a chur rompu chuig gteic @Gaoth Dobhair i gceartlár na Gaeltachta le linn na hócáide. Ba deis eisceachtúil a bhí san Acadamh Samhraidh i nDún na nGall le daoine óga a réiteach le aghaidh a tabhairt ar na dúshláin chomónta atá roimh gach réigiún san Eoraip. Is iad daoine óga na linne seo ceannairí an lae amáirigh agus tá tábhacht ar leith le Acadamh Samhraidh AER sa chomhthéacs sin. Tugann sé seans dóibh fios feasa a bheith acu agus dianphlé a dhéanamh ar cheisteanna móra na linne seo. Tá tábhacht ar leith le plé dá leithéid don ghlúin óg, le cur i gcoinne bréag-nuachta agus guthanna imeallacha a bhíonn i réim san aimsir seo, ré na meán shóisialta.'

Eolas faoi AER:

Tá Tionól Réigiúin na hEorpa ar an gréasán neamhspleách is mó de réigiúin san Eoraip, agus 140 ball acu in 25 tír. Tá AER mar ghlór ag na húdaráis áitiúla ó 1985 agus bhí ról lárnach acu in aitheantas a fháil do na réigiúin mar ghné ríthábhachtach den Togra Eorpach. Tá ár ngréasán gníomhach i ngach páirt de mhór-roinn na hEorpa, taobh istigh agus taobh amuigh den Aontas Eorpach. Faoi láthair, tá trí bhall ag AER in Éirinn, Comhairle Contae Dhún na nGall, Údarás na Gaeltachta agus Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo.

Má theastaíonn breis eolais, is féidir dul i dteagmháil le bainisteoir cumarsáide baill AER, Justin Sammon ag j.sammon@aer.eu nó an Comhordaitheoir Cláracha, Lorène Weber ag l.weber@aer.eu

Páirtnéirí do Acadamh Samhraidh 2022: